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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 17 February 1935

Text: Song of Solomon 5 v 16

"His mouth is most sweet, yea He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Last Wednesday evening, as many of you will remember, I had the first clause of this text for my subject, got no further. I noticed that this really intends communications made by this sweet mouth to poor sinners; that vital religion consists in divine communications. It has its seat in the heart of God; it has its place in the heart of a sinner. Real religion has not its seat in the brain, but in the soul, and Christ's mouth conveys that religion and He communicates mercy by His most sweet speech. It is written in the Psalms that "Grace is poured into His lips"; poured there by the Holy Ghost who was given to Him without measure, in order that He might convey it, communicate it, to His people. This He does and it is this that enables and causes His people to say, out of experience, His mouth is most sweet. Communications do make His mouth sweet; it is sweet in itself, absolutely, but when He speaks, then the people to whom He speaks, know how sweet His mouth is. My brethren, God give to you and to me communications, and O that He would communicate life to the dead.

It follows "yea". As if the commendation were not sufficient in this first clause, the church says "yea", more than that, if possible, "He is altogether lovely". Happy the man who can say that; happy the man who, out of some experience of Him, can say, "He is altogether lovely", entirely so. Gather up all beauties and loveliness of the whole world, and they will not be entirely lovely. Creation, before marred by sin, was said to be very good. The Lord, at the end of His six days' labour said that all His work was very good. But that beautiful creation

lacked one thing; it was not entirely good. It lacked immutability; it was mutable. Everything in the world that is lovely, beautiful, worthy of esteem has a lack; Christ has no lack. Take it as relating to Himself, the Son of God; He is entirely lovely; Almighty God. Eternity is His dwelling place; He can know no increase; He can never have more love, more wisdom, more goodness, more justice, more power, more knowledge than He now has, and has had eternally. He can never be less than He is; He is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and for ever; and where He loves, He loves for ever. Altogether lovely in His goings; His goings were from everlasting. Christ indeed is the foundation of all the decrees and purposes and works and glory of God. Everything that God has done in creation and in providence and everything that He will do, Christ has been, and is, the foundation, and the worker and the glorious end. If we are given a faith's view of this, we shall see Jehovah, we shall believe that the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeding from both of them, and this will bow our souls in deepest reverence and worship. It may come to you very sovereignly and suddenly and powerfully, so that you will bow down and the world, for that moment, will go. He is altogether lovely.

He was lovely in His incarnation; though an infant He was lovely. He could, as to His human nature and body, He could, and did grow in stature and in wisdom, but it was a development, not an adding. Nothing was added to Him; He just developed as to His human nature. O the loveliness of the incarnation. If you get conducted to that manger by the Holy Spirit, you will do just in your hearts what the wise men of the east did literally; they worshipped Him. They opened their treasures and poured out as a libation, gold, frankincense and myrrh, and you will offer your very self, your best thanks, your adoration, your wonder, and your love.

"Altogether lovely" He was lovely in His life; He went about doing good; He healed all that had need of healing. He stopped the bier that was carrying the only son of a widow and said "Young man arise". What a lovely action that was, full of

mercy and kindness as well as of power. He had thousands of people following Him and they were hungry and away from their homes. O how entirely kind He was then, feeding them all of a few loaves and fishes. He was lovely in Gethsemane, that gloomy garden; He was lovely in His submission to His Father - "Not as I will but as Thou wilt". Not My human will but the divine will, the will that has sent Me to be here; the will that now shows to Me the cup which I must drink, and I have got a near view of it. "Thy will be done". Can anything be added to the entire loveliness of Christ on the cross when the sins of His people were laid on Him by divine and most just imputation because He was there as a surety, and when, having obeyed His Father and glorified Him in all His life, now on the cross, knowing in Himself - and His disciples about the cross knew not what was then being done - knowing in Himself that all things were now accomplished, He said "It is finished". No more suffering; no more curse. Finished all the transgressions of His people. He was lovely in His burial; buried in a rich man's grave. No human corpse had been there; He did not go where corruption was. When He had finished all His work He rose from the dead, and He ascended on high. If you, by faith, follow this little word about Him, you will say in all He was lovely, entirely lovely.

There are three points or subjects I would just bring before your notice, continuing this subject. First, He is altogether lovely as the prophet of His church. Moses prophesied of Him, promised Him. Moses was a type of the prophet, Jesus. He said, as it is recorded in Deuteronomy, "A prophet like unto me will the Lord your God raise up unto you." Him ye shall hear in all things. A prophet was not only a foreteller of future events, but a revealer of things. Christ is the revealer of all that God intends men to know, either here or hereafter. Every word that God will have men to hear from Himself, He sent Jesus to speak. Every word of life, and comfort that God will give to poor mourners, He sent Jesus to speak. Every work of grace, every work of providence, every work of love, every work of justice that God will have men know, He sent Jesus to do and reveal. The holiness of the divine Being, Jesus reveals; the justice of the divine Being, Jesus reveals; The goodness and the wisdom and the mercy

and the love and the salvation and the power of God, Jesus reveals. This Book is the revelation of Jesus Christ and when the last days began, and they began on the pentecostal day, and are continuing still, that is the intention. Where the last days and the last times are spoken of in the New Testament, when He would have the churches in Asia, the seven churches and others, and the wicked world, know, God gave a revelation of those things to Jesus Christ. A remarkable opening, as I think, is the opening of the Book of Revelation. It opens, as you know, thus - The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him. The Man Christ Jesus, the incarnate God, the servant of the Father, sent by Him. The Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the prophet, the great prophet, Jesus is. You may say, what has this to do with us? If you are the Lord's people, it has everything to do with you. You want to know the love of God to you; He, Jesus Christ is sent to speak of it and reveal it. You want to know that God has made choice of you; Jesus Christ is sent to reveal that. Yea, and uncertain as you are, and must be of tomorrow, the prophet may come to you and speak to you about your future. How? Why, in this little world, "in the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." If the prophet Jesus Christ should say that to you, it would map out your future, it would tell you you are not to expect an easy course, a smooth road. But He will tell you this, sometimes "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass". You have affliction, and looking at it as a poor afflicted one, you may little know for a time why it is sent to you. This prophet will come and teach you. He may say this to you "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons." Yea, He may say, you have forgotten the exhortation which I have written for you "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Can you add anything to this Prophet of wisdom, of fulness? The fulness of God is in Him; the fulness of wisdom is in Him; the fulness of the future is in Him and the goodness and the mercy and the salvation of the church, He has in hand, and from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, He is the revealer of God. If ever you have had a faith's view of Jehovah impressing deeply your heart and mind with the reality of God, the greatness, majesty, the holiness of God, you have understood then the solemn feeling of

the Israelites who, terrified by what they saw and heard on Sinai's top, said to Moses "Speak thou with us and we will hear. Let not God speak lest we die." And the Lord said they had said well and He would send an angel before them. This is our prophet, the great prophet of the church, and you will some day join in that song we have in Revelation for all the redeemed sing Alleluia. What for? For God hath avenged Himself on the great whore and her smoke rises up and shall rise up for ever and ever.

"He is altogether lovely" If you want to know anything of God, the Holy Ghost will take you to Christ who received all the commandments concerning His life and concerning His death and concerning what He should be and what He really is to His church. The glory of God is in the church by Christ Jesus world without end. He will do nothing for you, He will say nothing to you, but by His incarnate Son. He is to be lifted up on high; the type of Him tells you that. O wounded soul, wounded, smitten, bitten, inevitable death is in you unless you are told and directed to look to the brazen serpent. A look brings healing. O may we have a heart to thank God for the Prophet, that great Prophet of the church, that holy teacher, that revealer of God and His love and purposes. "Herein is love not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him." This is my own mind of a great matter, for I want to know God and Christ said if you have seen Me you have seen the Father. I and My Father are one. And yet, though one in essence, and related as Father and Son eternally, yet the Son willingly, and lovingly became the Father's servant, and this is part of His service that He should receive from His Father a revelation of what He should say and what He should do in this world.

The second point I would bring before you in which He is most lovely, is His High Priestly office and work. We have such an High Priest over the House of God. A priest; the very name, the very work of a priest has this in it - sin - something between a Holy God and men, sin; sin that cannot be expiated by rivers of oil and all the cattle on the earth, nor yet by the fruit of the body. Sin in our nature, our thoughts; in the

horrible forms of deceit, hypocrisy, wickedness of every sort and kind. Sin; rebellion against a holy God and this must remain on the creature everlasting if it be not expiated, and only one could expiate it, Jesus Christ. The type of His Priesthood, as you know, was in the Levitical tribe; Aaron and his sons and successors for ever. During that dispensation, there was the morning and evening sacrifice, and the annual atonement, when the High Priest went into the Holiest of all, not without blood. What a Person He is, not a priest after the order of Aaron; the Priesthood under the Levitical dispensation was confined to that family, that tribe. Jesus came not of that tribe, but of Judah. His Priesthood therefore is of another kind, and this is written of it, that God called Him to be a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. He did not take on Himself that honour; the honour of standing between God and man; the honour of being an altar, the altar, the sacrifice, and the priest. God called Him to that. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Three things were necessary to the Priesthood. The person of the priest first, the altar second, the sacrifice, the third, and these Jesus is, all of whom are in Himself. Himself the Priest; Himself the altar - "We have an altar"; Himself, the offering. He offered Himself without spot unto God only once. Once in the end of the world He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and the entire loveliness of this to a poor sinner is here, that when faith gets a sight of Christ in His priestly office, he sees there everything that his guilty soul, his guilty conscience, his burdened heart, can possibly need for reconciliation, for justification, for sanctification, for heaven. O sinner, you need look nowhere else, nor will the Lord let you as He teaches you. It will be Christ, the High Priest; Christ, the altar; Christ the sacrifice; and then when this comes your soul will realise salvation, justification, sanctification, and the hope of heaven. Can you add aught to this? Would you add aught to this? O yes, many a seeker, without knowing it, will often strike a bargain with God. How? If I were only a broken-hearted person, but I am not, I am hard as a stone; if only I could repent, but I cannot, and how then can I go to God; and a variety of feelings which are to you very important and unwittingly unbelief says you must not think of

going to God until you get rid of such and such a feeling. O the vanity, O the impudence of this. It is weakness itself, and yet it does not appear wrong to those who have such and such an experience. Ah but a sight of Christ given to you by the Holy Spirit, an application of His atoning work, will cleanse all that away. Then you will sing, gladly, thankfully, you will sing "Nothing in my hand I bring." It is not an easy lesson, not easy to sing that. I could sing it; more than seventy years ago I could sing, I did. I do not know how much I had in my hand then. It is not so easy to sing it today, and yet it is just the song. Nothing to add to this Priest and His work on the cross; nothing to bring to Him. What an amazing truth it is and how good it is. Now that is the second point.

The third point to bring to your notice is that He is now a King. He always was a King, but in His humiliation it was not proper that He should declare Himself to be a King. He was a servant then. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor." Women ministered of their substance to Him. Oh how poor He was: foxes had holes then, birds of the air had nests then, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. As a servant He served His Father. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many". Why, my friends, He served for you who know Him; He served for you when you were unborn generations ago. Yes, and as a servant He was on the cross, not in His kingly character. Did He declare Himself or was He declared to be a King there? When He rose from the dead, when He appeared to His disciples and said "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". And in the Revelation, the first chapter, it is written, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father". How could He make you a king if He were not a King Himself? So that in that chapter it is said He is the prince of the kings of the earth and later in that Book He is said to be King of kings and Lord of lords. His exaltation was anticipated in the Proverbs "By Him kings reign and princes decree justice". His exaltation followed His humiliation; His Kingship followed His service, His service as a servant of God,

and now He reigns, He reigns. Where? Everywhere. The prince of darkness is under His control; wicked men accomplish His designs. Where is He a king? In the church. Where in the church? In the heart and faith says to Him "Reign o'er us as King". You have said it, have not you? Some of you have bowed your knees to this great King and have submitted to His heavenly and almighty rule, and said in sincerity - reign over me, reign in me, reign for me. You have submitted your will and asked Him to take hold of it and bend it and supple it and bring it to lie straight with His purposes. It is a great thing that, especially when your purposes are thwarted and when some dealing of God in providence with you has gone athwart your own will and crossed your affections, then to say He is the King, the King of Glory; let Him come into my soul; let Him come into my circumstances; let Him come into my feelings; let Him reign there. Would you add anything to this loveliness? There is nothing wrong in this King; there is nothing wrong in His kingdom. Daniel saw this; one like unto the Son of Man was brought unto the Ancient of Days and to Him was given a kingdom, a kingdom and dominion; a kingdom that shall not pass away. Well it is a wonderful thing, a lovely thing, for King Jesus to come to a sinner. Sometimes He comes to a soul and says - My sister, open to me, and she lazily says I am in bed, I cannot and wont. What does He do? Puts His hand in by the hole of the door and leaves grace there, grace that moves her after Him so that she rises from her bed. He is a King in all that. A kingly power; Ah He has a kingly power, authority. The sinner hardly knows what is being done sometimes perhaps when suddenly his stubborn will gives way, his rebellion dissolves and he lies down flat before God, trembling as he thinks of and remembers his sins and rebellion. He submits wholly to this King. "I have set My King" said the Father "on My holy hill". All other hills and mountains shall be brought low before Him and all valleys of humiliation and sorrow and trouble shall be exalted by Him. O He is lovely. If I could but commend Him to you. The Holy Ghost can; may He do so. "Behold My servant" said God. Now He says "I have set My King" My servant is My King; I delegate all authority; I give all power to Him that He, My only begotten Son, should rule. Well brethren, would you add anything to Him? Would you add anything to Him, even in

this feeble word of my own? Is He not the best, "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely?" He gives a little of this great power to His own servants and He says now lift Him up. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." And they go, O yes, they go willingly, submissively, yea they fly as doves to their windows when they get a little knowledge of this blessed Lord Jesus. "His mouth is most sweet". His words are most wonderful, like apples of gold in pictures of silver. "Yea He is altogether lovely". There can be no addition to Him. Gather up everything in creation, it will fall short. Though it be lovely, it will fall short. He stands alone in this, His exaltation. "This is my beloved, this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

AMEN.