

Hungry Hearts

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[0:00] Morning everyone. I hope you're well. It's great to see you today. Great to meet some people for the first time today as well.! My name is Graeme and I'm the pastor of the church here and it's just lovely to have you with us.

If you have a Bible then please turn to the Song of Songs. We're going to be taking in chapters 6 from 6-4 to 8-4 today. Is that right David? We've got that? We've got that.

And it's brilliant. So please come there. We're going to read this in about 10 minutes time. David's going to come and read that for us as we get into it. But I thought it'd be helpful, like we've done most weeks, just to have a little run-up so that we can kind of understand what we're going to read together from God's Word.

So, as we get into this theme today, talking of golden oldies, Bruce Springsteen, the boss, released a song at the beginning of the 80s, the title of which so wonderfully captures the essence of what we're thinking about today in the Song of Songs.

Springsteen's song is about the deep-seated restlessness and always searching nature that exists inside human beings.

[1:22] And do you know what he called the song? He called the song, Everybody's Got a Hungry Heart. Do I love that metaphor? Is that not so relatable? Everybody's got a hungry heart.

And we recognise the metaphor. We relate to the metaphor because we are, as human beings, we are creatures of desire. We yearn, we search, we think, we feel, we long, we smile, we cry.

And here's the thing. God didn't need to make us like that. You know, I often play a game in my head and it's called this.

It's called, Imagine the World God Could Have Made. I'd like you to play it with me this morning. Imagine the world God could have made. He could have made a world with one colour.

Right? We'd all be like John Wayne walking about in a black and white Western movie. One colour. God could have made a world with one type of food. And because of that, a world where there was only one flavour.

[2:34] Okay? Just imagine how boring potluck dinners would be with one food and one flavour. God could have made a world where there was just one smell. God could have created a world where there was just one species of birds.

God could have created a world where there was one type of flavour. God could have created a world where there was one type of weather. but what we discover about this God when you come to the pages of the Bible is that there is a reason that he didn't.

God made a world with such breathtaking variety and diversity in order to communicate to us something of the reality of who he is and his beauty as the triune God, Father, Son and Spirit.

And if you think about human beings, he could have made a world where all of us were just C-3PO's. Have you ever thought about that?

Could have made us all robots. He could have done this whole gig, this whole world with ChatGBT. Couldn't he? Computers do words well better than we do.

[3 : 49] Computers are reliable way more than we are. God could have created a world like that. We were all robots. But this God chose to create human beings with desires.

And what we're going to see is although those desires have been disordered and tainted by the fall, we have to understand that they are not the result of the fall.

Particularly those desires for love and romance, which is what this series has really been all about. Which begs the question, does it not? Considering the world God could have made.

It begs the question, why? Now all the way through this series we've talked about turning down the world's song and turning up God's song in the Song of Songs.

Because into our world right now, our hyper-individualized culture, if you remember way back at the first one of these, we thought about our culture today. The song that it's singing is saying, Feelings are king.

[4 : 52] The world song right now is, You decide. You decide who you want to be. And if it feels good, then who is anyone else to come along and tell you that it's wrong? Do it.

And the inbuilt assumption, isn't it, with all that stuff, is that our desires, particularly our romantic ones, the things that we want are always right. And maybe a question for you to think about today, wherever you're coming at this from, we love that you're here, is how do you know?

You know, here's non-Christian columnist, Christine Emba, she's writing for the Washington Post 2017, in an article that she called it, Is It Time to Rethink Sex? She wrote this, it's on the screen.

Is it time to pursue the theory that sex possibly has a deeper significance than just recreation? I love those moments when society kind of catches up with scripture, because that's precisely what our creator has been telling us since the beginning, that when it comes to our desires, there's something bigger going on.

And there's something bigger that's on offer that we need to see. God designed human sexuality as is expressed in the marriage between one man and one woman, designed it so that we'd understand what it is to self-give yourself to a spouse, so that we would see that those desires are but a faint echo of and a massive pointer to the love that Jesus has for the church.

[6 : 29] And that's the meaning of the cosmos. It's why we're here today. We're swept up into this story. It's all wrapped up in the purpose of the universe.

And see, when you understand it against that bigger backdrop, here's what I think this tells us loud and clear.

It means that we can know that we're so much more than our relationship status. We are so much more than our marital prospects.

We are so much more, if I can put it like this, than our sex lives. We were made to revere and know somebody infinitely more interesting than ourselves.

I turned 40 the other day when I told people that it was almost as if welcome to the boring club. And do you know what?

[7 : 27] I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that. Do you know why? Because I think the one thing God has taught me over the years is that, that I was made to know somebody infinitely way more interesting than me.

Because I'm not all that interesting. But come to the God of the Bible and you find a God who is infinitely interesting, fascinating, beautiful, wonderful. And it's Him that we are designed to know.

You and I were made, friends, to know the God who delights in us. And in turn, this is what we're going to see today. We were made to delight in and desire Him.

And that's what we're going to hear today in this song. In the voices of this man and the woman who are singing to us in the Song of Songs. If you're joining us for the first time, we are in the wisdom section of our Bibles.

which is all about how to live in God's way, in God's world, for His glory and for our good. It's wisdom.

[8 : 35] And we've journeyed with this couple as it were from their first date, through their wedding day, through a cold spell in the relationship.

And now today we're going to see their love for each other continue to blossom. And here, as we just hear it read, here's two things I want you to look for here in His voice.

Listen for how He describes how in His eyes this woman is utterly unique. And in turn, listen for how in her voice she responds in love to His all-out pursuit of her.

So David is going to come now and we're going to read this together beginning at 6, chapter 4 and then we're going to get into it together. So David, over to you. My name is David and I have the privilege of being a member here.

Just before we read this, I would just like to pray. Father, we just thank you again for your word. It's so precious and we just ask that as we read it, your spirit might be with us and that we might just hear your voice.

[9 : 51] It's being read, it's being talked about just so that there's a message for each one of us. A personal message. None left out.

And we just ask for each one of our hearts that we might just hear your voice and hear this message for us. and just be with Graham too as he seeks to open up this passage.

Sometimes some of the words and the imagery is difficult to understand but we just ask that your spirit might be with him to give him the words and to give him the message and to open it up in clarity for each one of us so that we understand more the wonderful love that you have for us and that the experience we can have of a relationship with yourself.

We just ask this in your name. Amen. We're in the Song of Songs chapter 6 and verse 4 and that's page 684 in the Pew Bibles.

Starts in verse 4. This is the bridegroom speaking. You are as beautiful as Terzah my darling as lovely as Jerusalem as majestic as troops with banners.

[11:06] Turn your eyes from me they overwhelm me your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Gilead your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing each has its twin not one of them is missing your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate sixty queens there may be and eighty concubines and virgins beyond number but my dove my perfect one is unique the only daughter of her mother the favourite of the one who bore her the young woman saw her and called her blessed the queens and the concubines praised her who is this that appears like the dawn fair as the moon bright as the sun majestic as the stars and processing I went down to the grove of nut trees to look at the new growth in the valley to see if the vines had budded or the pomegranates were in bloom before I realised it my desire set me upon the royal chariots of my people come back come back oh Shulamite come back come back that we may gaze on you why would you gaze on the Shulamite as in the dance of Mahanaim how beautiful your shrankled feet told Prince's daughter your graceful legs are like jewels the work of an artist's hands your navel is a rounded goblet that never lacks blended wine your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by lilies your breasts are like two fawns like twin fawns of a gazelle your neck is like an ivory tower your eyes are the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bathraben your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking towards Damascus your head crowns you like Mount Carmel your hair is like royal tapestry the king is held captive by its tresses how beautiful you are and how pleasing my love with your delights your stature is like that of the palm and your breasts like clusters of fruit

I said I will climb the palm tree I will take hold of its fruit may your breasts be like clusters of grapes and the vine the fragrance of your breath like apples and your mouth like the best wine may the wine go straight to my beloved flowing gently over lips and teeth I belong to my beloved and his desire is for me come my beloved let us go to the countryside let us spend the night in the villages let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded if their blossoms have opened and if the pomegranates are in bloom there I will give you my love the mandrakes sent out their fragrance and at our door is every delicacy both new and old and I have stored up for you my beloved if only you were to me like a brother who was nursed at my mother's breasts then if I find you outside I would kiss you and no one would despise me I would lead you and bring you to my mother's house she who has taught me

I would give you spiced wine to drink the nectar of my pomegranates his left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me daughters of Jews whom I charge you do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires it's the word of the Lord okay thanks so much David so folks here's what we're going to do I just want to pick out one big theme that captures the essence of his song over her and then in turn I want us to think about one big theme that captures the essence of her song over him so beginning with his song here's the theme really simply is I want all of you and this is the inverse isn't it of remember that Chesney Hawk song that we still sing all the time he's saying you are the one and only that's what he's saying isn't it you are the one and only picking it up at verse 4 of chapter 6 and hear him celebrate the renewed togetherness that he and his wife have just experienced and he's going with the compliments isn't he so you are as beautiful as

Tisra and Jerusalem my love so these are the these are the two prominent Israelite cities cities and what's going on here what he's saying is you wow me right I remember cities they they often have that effect on us as human beings don't they I remember taking off from a couple of years ago from New York airport and just being struck by the sheer size and the vastness of New York as it hits you right there and that Alicia Keys song comes to mind these streets will make you feel brand new big lights will inspire you we get this stuff we get the wow factor that comes with cities that's kind of what's going on here and he's saying it's your beauty is almost overwhelming I have to turn away and I love it it was Keita who pointed out to me just how specific he is with his compliments did you notice that your hair your teeth your cheeks and see him sum up at verse 9 he says 60 queens 80 concubines so I think what he's doing is he's saying the world is not short of woman but to me you are not simply a woman you are the woman and you are utterly unique did you pick that up in his voice and then if you jump over to chapter 7 his kind of song breaks for a bit and then he goes back we get more of his song he goes your belly your breasts your neck your eyes and you'd be right in thinking that we've kind of heard this stuff before but before we label him uncreative and write him off as a picks up flowers from the petrol station just before he gets home on his anniversary kind of guy understand that what he's saying to her is all these beauties I still see them in you but more than that verse 4 he says do you notice your nose your head crowns you like caramel and the the reference to purple there conveys this idea of royalty how beautiful and pleasant you are verse 9 your scent your mouth your scent your mouth do you see it this is brand new material and what he's conveying is that he sees as well as the beauties that have always captured his eyes and his heart is that he sees now new beauties in her because he knows her so much better and there's a side application there isn't there firstly for those of us who are married and it's to make our spouses our lifelong phd project what new beauties do you notice in them they don't need to necessarily be physical I take it they could be character compliments I see you growing in patience I see how you're being a good friend to so many people I see how you're sacrificing yourself for the kids I see how you're responding to work in a different way than you did previously when you look at them how do you see the spirit at work in their lives but the same as we brought the same principle we brought out applies to our church family as well because our culture has made an idol of romantic love but the truth we need to hear is that we don't have to be romantically involved with or in love with someone to experience what true love is because the love that

God creates and he calls us together to exhibit this love within the people of God is a species of love that is found nowhere else in the world and why is that it is because it's a love that comes from above you know a church we're loving appreciation of each other that we notice the little things when that is the norm that is going to be wildly attractive to a world out there who really knows nothing of this so who could you be thanking specifically this morning what could you be appreciating in someone else this morning a brother and sister who served you in this church you know his view of her is that she is utterly unique and that means that his love for her is totally exclusive and that's marriage love according to God's good design as we see it here in his wisdom portion of his word and as we look upon the way of wisdom here I realize friends that for so many of us this hasn't been our experience personally maybe it's something that you've viewed in your family or whatever and you have been much in my prayers constantly this week that the Holy

[20:51] Spirit would be particularly near to you bringing you a very sense very real sense of Jesus's love for you and his hold on you and his knowledge of your life in all its ups and downs maybe for some of us this might be a really timely reminder about how seriously we should take exclusivity that you don't look at other people the way that you do your spouse whether in real life or maybe particularly in the culture and in the day in which we live online friends let me say in love as your pastor do not let porn torpedo your marriage and steal from you the love that's at the center of your relationships and your friendships if the snake of porn has slithered its way subtly into your life you've got to do all that you can to get out of it and if that means telling someone this morning can I encourage you to do the brave and the right thing because the devil will do anything to help to convince you that the darkness is the safer place to live your life and Jesus would call you out of that into his marvelous light and freedom you know we all long for faithfulness it's the thing that we seek in all our important relationships in our communities it's the thing that we even want in our governments you know my brother is in finance and that's why he often tells me that a good day in the markets is a stable day in the markets that's why mr trump is still causing headaches all over the world isn't he you can work with stability you know where you are with stability and that's exactly what he's saying about his love for her it is exclusive it is fiercely loyal and it will fight to have love right at the center and if that's the theme of his song all I want is you the reciprocating theme of her song is you have all of me and if you look at verse 13 see that hole and maybe you notice it there it's quite striking isn't it the whole come back come back shulamite language and presumably shulamite is most likely a reference to just where she's from that could just be another indicator that's showing us that she's still feeling a little bit insecure unsure doesn't really want know what to do with this love and attention but notice the directional language that you get at verse 10 and if you remember one verse from this section remember this notice the directional language what is it that changes the game for her it is the knowledge of how secure and how firm and how exclusive and how loyal his desire is for her and what that does is stir a response within her of love and desire for him and the Hebrew word there for desire it's only used two other places in the

Old Testament one of which is Genesis 3 so you get in that scene as Eve eats the the fruit from the forbidden tree and God lays out to Adam and Eve the consequences for their sin and rebellion one of those things is going to be that their desires are going to be inverted so Eve will now seek to desire and possess Adam and in turn Adam will attempt to rule over her so rather than love being self-giving a result of the fall is that love is now going to be self-serving and there's going to be friction and there's going to be tension and this as we read Genesis 3 is desire gone wrong and by the time you get to Genesis 4 and we meet Cain the same word is used there when God says to Cain sin is crouching at your door its desire is to master you have you so desire in Genesis 3 and 4 is about turning away from God and turning inward towards sin and self-worship but notice see if you look at chapter 7 verses 10 to 13 just have a look at it there scan your eyes over it notice the echoes of Eden notice the Garden of Eden imagery do you see it?

vineyards vines blossoms mandrakes delicacies life in Eden pre-sin so what I think this is telling us is that what we have here with this couple unlike Adam and Eve is desire made right and so at verse 3 we take them in being eye to eye we need to see how the power of his embrace stirs something deep within her to the point where she implores her friends not to awaken love until the time is right she's saying don't settle for anything less than this and the fact that that is the third time that this refrain has cropped up in this song should awaken us to the fact that God in his perfect wisdom is trying to communicate something to us that he knows we so desperately need to hear because friends we are poor captains of our own ships we are poor stewards of our own identities we are poor objects of our worship maybe you're feeling the pain of misdirected and unmet desires today even as I speak and as we read this together there is wonderful hope for all of us but maybe particularly for you this morning as we take in this because as we take in his desire for her we need to know that there was another man in the Bible who came desiring a bride and his name is Jesus he came to earth for his bride he lived a perfect life to win his bride he died on the cross to redeem and cleanse his bride from all our mistakes all our sin and all our shame

Christ came seeking a bride and so as we gaze at this woman and hear her tell us that it was the safe knowledge of how secure his desire was for her that brought out this reciprocal love for him here's what we need to know today that if you're a Christian here today we can look on Christ and we can savour the fact that his desire is for us God's plan since the found before the foundation of the world has been to call out and create a people for himself call them out of the world God's plan has always been to call out a people and to have them know and savour the fact that they are a bride and to have that bride as she takes in the love of the bridegroom for her to have that bride absolutely gush in affection for the groom and that's exactly where this points us to the gospel and to how wonderful our king is and his desire for us and his love for us and his exclusive affection for us no matter how you're feeling here today if you're feeling weak in your faith if you're feeling discouraged if you're feeling disheartened if you're feeling really, really sad then take in your groom's love for you you know just as we close and maybe to try and set this up for where we're going to finish next week as we finish this little series please come back for it but here's a thought for you do you know that there's only two types of people in this world that read a will can you think who they are

I remember this from my time studying law at university there's only two types of people that read a will here's the first type of person it's the lawyer and to them reading a will is really just doing a job simply being paid to interpret and execute words on a page right I've got a lot of friends who work in succession in the states and that's what they tell you they just keep on coming I'm not really getting excited about a will I'm just executing delivering passing on the information I'm just doing my job but there's a second type of person who reads a will it's an heir and to them reading a will it's not just a job it's not just words on a page it's a promise and it's a promise about what's coming to them at some point in the future and how about how what's coming to them at some point in the future totally changes how they live today in anticipation of the thing that's coming to them and Fred's God would want us to read this not as a lawyer would but as an heir would about all his promises in scripture have you ever thought about that's how we should read them we should read them as an heir looking at a will thinking about this is what the future holds you see now we know the one who desires us by faith through the power of the spirit but this is particularly what we're going to think about next week see when he returns we will no longer know him by faith we will no longer know our groom by faith as we read his words as we meet him through the power of his spirit we will know him then by sight

[32 : 31] I belong to my beloved and his desire is for me let me pray and so father we thank you for the gospel this morning thank you for the message about the all pursuing loving Jesus thank you that we can read this and know that the church those who put their faith in Jesus truly are the apple of his eye and so father I pray that as this word of yours this morning as it touches lord our hearts in different ways

I pray father that by your spirit that you may be bringing healing and that you would be bringing certainty lord that you would be bringing conviction and challenge but father most of all you would bring us that knowledge of our saviour and his love for us father we thank you for each other today that we do not journey this Christian life alone but we journey together and so father as we move to a time of communion in just a few moments lord may the sweetness of what Jesus has done for us come home maybe in a fresh reality today father we thank you for your love for us and we pray now that you would continue to be with us by your spirit in Jesus's name we ask amen