

Three Loves  
A sermon on August 26, 2018

A reading from the Song of Songs 2:8-13  
Love - with all the senses

A reading from the Wisdom of Solomon 7: 1-14  
Love of wisdom

The gospel reading: Mark 12:28-34  
Love for God and neighbour

Humans are made for Love. Today I invite you to hear the scriptures uplift and praise three kinds of love, Three kinds of love we are made for. Happiness we are made for.

And here comes the first Love:

Love me tender,  
Love me sweet  
you have made my love complete and I love you so...  
Love me tender  
love me sweet  
All my dreams fulfilled.  
For my darlin I love you,  
And I always will. “

sang the king of rock'n roll in 1956 and the lives of thousands of American teens never were the same again...Much criticism Elvis received for his moves and groans in performance, but he presented himself also as a Christian person. So here was someone who could sing “How great thou art” and “Amazing grace” and rock his hips very suggestively at the same time. Young women especially did find that very liberating! Perhaps being Christian did not mean necessarily that you had to suppress your body and its desires? Perhaps

you could be Christian and enjoy sex?  
Song of Songs is a book in the bible that wants to have the Elvis Effect on us. It is sensuous love poetry of a directness which most people would never expect in the bible.

My lover spoke and said to me,  
“Arise, my darling,  
my beautiful one, come with me...  
My beloved is mine and I am his;

he browses among the lilies.

**17** Until the day breaks  
and the shadows flee...

Kiss me and kiss me again for your love is sweeter than wine..  
An unnamed young man and young women pursue each other through the city and over hills and vales, make love nests in bedrooms and outdoors in the country side and thoroughly are infatuated with each others beautiful bodies. It has been said that if you never read the song of songs in bed with your love, you've missed a great deal.

Why on earth might you ask, is such a book in the bible? Some would say by mistake- but I would say with many others: by a quirk of the Holy Spirit.

As Jewish Sages debated which books were to be included in the canon of Holy Scriptures, it is said that Rabbi Akiva – certainly the greatest rabbi of his era weighed in that “while all of the sacred writings are holy, the Song of Songs is the holy of holies!” He wanted the Song of Songs included in the Holy Scriptures because he said there could be no more powerful expression of God's deep desire for his people. The book would also teach readers that loving God in return then should be so all consuming as our infatuation with our first love.

And almost all Christian interpreters later said it this book must be about the love between Christ and the church, or something as racy as Song of Songs could possibly not be in the bible.

Only in the 1800's, with the rise of modern research into the scriptures was the obvious stated again: That this was love poetry between young people! So, the Holy Spirit played a trick on those old Sages! What a relief, that **human sexuality and emotional love** is celebrated in the Holy Scriptures!

How much suffering have men and women endured because their religious communities treated sexuality as something dirty to be ashamed about! This is what I call the Elvis effect of the Song of Songs- the song of song is liberating - recommended bedtime reading- and once every three years it even gets read on Sunday morning!

There's another kind of love the Bible ranks very highly. And that second love is **Love of wisdom**. A good love to have together with the first one....but unfortunately wisdom is usually gained over many many years.

What is wisdom? **Not information gathering.**

today we have no lack of "experts" we can fall back on. A quick google will put us in touch with people who publish their findings on a subject matter they have studied thoroughly.

While a lot of knowledge is usually a good thing – does knowledge help us cope/ Do the right thing?T.S. Elliott

asked ""Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? "**Knowledge is part of wisdom, but it is not wisdom.**

**To make the right choices in a given difficult situation takes wisdom.** Shall I spend or shall I save? Shall I fight or let it go? Shall I say something or keep it quiet?

You can google "What shall i do?" but I doubt that the answer will be the one you need.

Wisdom would be the saving grace in our messy lives. But how often do we ask our elders? How often do we seek the company of wisdom through sitting with a good book by a wise author? If things are messy, how often do we seek wisdom from good counsel?

Wisdom grows from experience, our personal one and that of others. But no one's life is long enough to learn all necessary life lessons from one's own mistakes!

Yet humans seem to be foolishly determined to do just that. If you seek wisdom, you become humble enough to listen to the experience of others. You ask questions, you consider the whole of a situation, all its aspects.

Someone who is convinced they know it all will never attain wisdom. Being grounded and self assured is fine,

but being full of one self is utter foolishness.

The love of wisdom is not a given. Its something the bible invites us to seek, to cultivate, to focus on.

“Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me;  
I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.  
I preferred her to scepters and thrones,  
and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her  
The words of king Salomon in our reading show us the  
attitude of a wisdom seeker: very up to date still so many  
years later:  
No matter how much privilege, the fictitious king says,  
I am also just a human among humans.  
I wore diapers and I breathe the same air as all the rest of  
us. I was a helpless baby when born, and I will die like  
everyone else.  
Wisdom speaks from this attitude of realistic humility,  
doesn't it?

King Solomon, the tradition says, prayed for wisdom.  
And God sent the spirit of wisdom. And She (for in biblical  
Hebrew wisdom has a gender attached to her and is female)  
was what made life worth living for the biblical king- not all  
that other stuff that comes with privilege: wealth and  
sceptres and thrones....  
Just one more passage of the many which Trump and his  
evangelical church friends must have cut out of their bibles-  
but then what does it matter - this president doesn't read  
-anyway.  
The times we live in cry out for more wisdom. Love me,  
seek me, cries wisdom, so you will live! And in that cry I  
hear the pleading of God.

We humans are made for love, I said at the beginning – and

we looked at how we are made for the loving with our  
bodies and emotions .

We looked at how we, as humans, are made to culture love  
of wisdom or our societies become inhuman,

and now let us look at the third love: **Love of God and love  
of neighbour.** You can't count, you may say: 2 and 2 makes  
four, not three!

But: Can you separate love of God and love of neighbour  
into two? Sure they are distinct, but can you have one  
without the other ?

Biblical testimony is clear – they are distinct but not  
separate. From Moses to John, from Isaiah to James Old and  
New Testament stress the intimate connection. They go  
together! But what does this mean?

Spirituality, to be true, will create civility. Civility in its best  
sense is enacted spirituality. Civility, a modern word for  
love of neighbour, is respect for the other. Treating another  
as you would want to be treated.

Dominic Grassi, a Jesuit priest in Chicago writes : I met a  
community organizer at a number of meetings in the  
neighborhood. I liked her style, so one day I asked her how  
she had gotten into her profession. She spoke of her  
idealism in college, but that it was mostly talk and little  
action. A trip to India radicalized her as she experienced the  
sheer enormity of the poverty that she found all around her.  
So she decided when she came home that she would try to  
make a difference with her life by working for justice for  
the homeless, the elderly, and the poor. What made her  
different from the others with whom she worked was her

ability to listen to people and to help them feel they were all that was important to her at that moment. She never spoke to me of her religious beliefs, but she clearly exhibited a genuine faith, a gospel faith put into action. “

Thats exactly what I mean.

Or take the nice employee in a store who does not push the product on you but gives you advice. This summer this happened to me in a store in Halifax and I asked the person :so you are actually advising me not to buy any of these? Won't you get a penalty for that? And the person said: No, I'm an employee, I'm not on commission, and I like that because I want to treat each customer exactly as I would want to be treated if I came shopping here.

I thought to myself exactly what Jesus said to the young man in our gospel story: “You are not far from the kingdom of God!”

If our hearts are in the right place, loving God and loving neighbour will come almost naturally.

We are made for love. Our hearts are made for love.  
Of all three kinds!