

# Song of Songs

An Advent Devotional for Couples



*By Rev. Michael Lilienthal and Rev. Jeffrey Hendrix*

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*Hymns taken from Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary.*

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## INTRODUCTION

This Advent devotional booklet is intended to be a tool to draw you and your family further into God's Word during this special season. Song of Songs is especially fitting for married or engaged couples to read together. The readings for each week have been divided into "parts" and labeled for husband and wife to read to each other.

The Song of Songs is not only a poem that Solomon is singing to his bride, known as "the Shulammitte," but it is at the same time a letter Christ is speaking to His bride, the Church. Christ is calling her home to Him, a central theme of Advent, as we await the day Christ will return to take us home to heaven.

As you read these parts, think of these characters:

*Husband (Groom) – Solomon – Christ*

*Wife (Bride) – Solomon's beloved, the Shulammitte – Christ's beloved, the Church*

*Both – "Others": family members or women in Jerusalem – members of the Church (or, sometimes, those outside the church)*

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

There are three Sundays in Advent before Christmas. Each reading begins on Monday, and each entire section is meant to be read. There are four Mondays worth of readings in this booklet, which will cover Advent and Christmas (even if Christmas falls on the 4th Monday of Advent some years). During the rest of the week, there are discussion points based on Monday's reading.

**Note:** *In the business of life, especially during Advent, sometimes a devotion will get missed. That's ok. Couples should prioritize the reading and then pick up on whatever the current day's devotion is.*

As you witness the unconditional love of Christ in Song of Songs, may you grow in your love for each other and for Christ.

The different types of imagery are variously designated in the footnotes:

*V- Visual (Sight)*

*F- Feel*

*A- Auditory (Sound)*

*P- Posture*

*S- Smell*

*G- Geographical (social context; general)*

*T- Taste*

# First Reading

## ADVENT 1 MONDAY – SONG OF SONGS 1:1-16



*The first Advent candle (violet) is lit.*

*Hymn verses this week: "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us," vv. 1, 2*

*Smell:  
Fragrant Oil*



### 1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's

*Marital Bliss*

**Wife:** <sup>2</sup>Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine; <sup>3</sup>your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you. <sup>4</sup>Draw me after you; let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers.

**Both:** We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you.

*Courtship*

**Wife:** <sup>5</sup>I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. <sup>6</sup>Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept! <sup>7</sup>Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?

**Husband:** <sup>8</sup>If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents.

*Wedding*

**Husband:** <sup>9</sup>I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots. <sup>10</sup>Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

**Both:** <sup>11</sup>We will make for you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.

*Taste: Wine*



*Marital Bliss*

**Wife:** <sup>12</sup>While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance. <sup>13</sup>My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts. <sup>14</sup>My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms<sup>a</sup> in the vineyards of Engedi.<sup>b</sup>

**Husband:** <sup>15</sup>Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.

**Wife:** <sup>16</sup>Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful. Our couch is green; <sup>17</sup>the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine.

Visualize: Dove at  
Jesus' Baptism



Visualize: Eden,  
home of the perfect  
bride & groom



*a S - Nard smells musky, rich, sweet, and earthy. Myrrh smells clean, warm, and lightly spicy; perhaps a hint of black licorice. Henna blossoms smell floral (like roses), with intriguing mixes of earthy scents like chocolate and tobacco.*

*b G - Engedi: An oasis city on the west of the Salt Sea, where Solomon had rich vineyards and gardens, also known for its production of incense.*

## ADVENT 1 TUESDAY – SONG. 1:2-4

**Wine:** Wine is a provider of joy, and one can imagine the king's wine being the best around. But love - the love described here - is better.

Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding banquet (John 1:1-11). It was the best wine they had tasted.

**What does this say about how Jesus values marriage?  
Where do we commonly find wine in our Christian worship?**

The Lord's Supper is an anticipation of the eternal wedding feast. In the Sacrament, we have a little taste of heaven, because when Jesus gives us his body and blood, He gives us forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. He joins us to himself in marriage.

**Oil:** Kings and priests were anointed with sweet-smelling oil in the Old Testament, and brides were anointed as well. When the bride of a king is anointed, the oil she receives is a wedding gift of the highest order, because it symbolizes the lifelong union of this man and wife, and he also gives her his royal dignity and honor.

**Traditionally, a wife takes her husband's name upon marriage. The oil in the Song symbolizes the king's name poured onto the bride. When was God's name**

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**poured out onto each of us? Where do we get regular reminders of this?**

Jesus, our prophet, priest, and king, was anointed in his Baptism, and again by the sinful woman (Matthew 26:7). This also marked him as the sacrifice for our sins. He came in order to lay down his life. When he comes again, it will be to take us to the unity with God his sacrifice won.

## **ADVENT 1 WEDNESDAY – SONG. 1:5-8**

**Dark:** Solomon's bride was apparently engaged in difficult manual labor in the sun. She would therefore have been of lower economic and social status. Is such a peasant a worthy bride for a king? But her beauty is not determined by her appearance by the love of her husband.

**How is your relationship as pleasant as this Song describes? How has sin showed itself in your relationship? How does God's love overshadow all that sin has corrupted in your marriage relationship?**

We, the Church, are the bride of Christ, who, by being "baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). We are beautiful and holy because Jesus came to be the perfect human being, and he comes into our hearts through Word and Sacrament to make us holy in his image.

**Tents:** The shepherds of Kedar lived in tents of darkened animal hide. Before they settled in the Promised Land, the people of Israel also dwelt in tents, and they were led by their Good Shepherd, who lived in the greatest tent: the Tabernacle. When God came among his people according to promise, the apostle John writes that "the Word became flesh and tented among us" (John 1:14, EHV). He wrapped himself in humble human flesh when he came to save us. Now we are still shepherded by pastors (Latin for shepherds), who give the Word of our Savior to us. This began when the first people to receive the news of the Savior's birth were shepherds in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. They joyfully shared the good news that we have received and may also share.

**Why do we take comfort in knowing that Jesus "tented with us"?**

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*c Footnote translation in EHV.*

## ADVENT 1 THURSDAY – SONG. 1:9-11

**Mare:** Pharaoh’s army was impressive, with a strong cavalry of horse-drawn chariots. The Bridegroom sees his bride with the same magnificence as one of those warrior creatures, with the same strength and power and victory. 1 John 5:4: “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”

**Why does our heavenly Bridegroom see us as having such a victory?**

When we think of Pharaoh’s chariots in biblical history, we usually think of the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea. Through a miracle, God brought his people to safety from their enemies, drawing them out of slavery to freedom. In Jesus’ resurrection, he broke the bonds of our slavery to death, to bring us to the freedom of his eternal life.

**Jewels:** Coupled with the power of the mare, the Bridegroom sees a glorious beauty in his bride. This country bumpkin is clothed with the king’s riches. Revelation 21:2: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Ephesians 5:25–27: “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor.” Galatians 3:27: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

**How does Jesus come to bring us to himself in our lives now? How should Christ’s view of us affect how we view our spouse?**

*Listen: The Advent hymn “Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending” (ELH 98)*

## ADVENT 1 FRIDAY – SONG. 1:12-14

**Spices:** In Scripture, spices are frequently symbolic of God’s presence with his people. The sense of smell is powerful for memory. The smell of a certain cookie can take you back to your grandmother’s house. The musk of old wood can transport you to your childhood Sunday School classroom. The spices here were used in the Temple sacrifices, to let the people know that their

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offerings were pleasing to God, taken in their place for their sins. Smelling these spices, people could remain at peace, knowing that God's wrath was turned aside from them.

**Are there pleasing smells that you associate with church or worship? What about with your spouse?**

**When Jesus came, he became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Why is it important to know that Jesus “gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2)?**

The bride in the song wears the scents of her Bridegroom. How are we, the Bride of Christ, “the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life” (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)?

## **ADVENT 1 SATURDAY – SONG. 1:15-17**

**Beauty:** The Bridegroom pronounces his love beautiful, and in response, she may describe his beauty as her delight. God “has blessed us in the Beloved...so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:6, 12). “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:10, 11).

**How has God pronounced you beautiful in his sight?  
How may you praise God in response in your marriage?  
in your life?**

**Trees:** Green is the color of life, and the color of grass, on which the wedded couple might be lying. The beams of Solomon's palace were made of cedar, as were those of the Temple. The bride and groom may enjoy all God's creation in the natural world. They also dwell together in the magnificent home which the groom has prepared for his bride. They are also permitted to enter the sanctuary of God, where he meets his people with forgiveness and life.

**When our heavenly Bridegroom comes in his final Advent, he will take us to heaven. How is our eternal life like a garden? like a palace? like the Temple?**

## Second Reading

### ADVENT 2 MONDAY – SONG OF SONGS 2:1-4:7



*The first and second Advent candles (both violet) are lit.*

*Hymn verses this week: "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us," vv. 3, 6*

*Wedding - Marital Bliss*

**Wife:** <sup>2</sup> I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

**Husband:** <sup>2</sup> As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women.

**Wife:** <sup>3</sup> As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. <sup>4</sup> He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. <sup>5</sup> Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. <sup>6</sup> His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me! <sup>7</sup> I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

*Courtship*

**Wife:** <sup>8</sup> The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. <sup>9</sup> My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. <sup>10</sup> My beloved speaks and says to me:

**Husband:** "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, <sup>11</sup> for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. <sup>12</sup> The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. <sup>13</sup> The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. <sup>14</sup> O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. <sup>15</sup> Catch the foxes for us,

*Visualize: A rose blooming*



*Visualize: An apple tree*



*Visualize: Turtledoves at Springtime*



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the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.”

*Wedding*

**Wife:** <sup>16</sup>My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.

*Marital Bliss*

**Wife:** <sup>17</sup>Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains.

*Courtship*

**Wife:** **3** On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. <sup>2</sup>I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. <sup>3</sup>The watchmen found me as they went about the city. “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?”<sup>a</sup> <sup>4</sup>Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.<sup>c</sup> <sup>5</sup>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

*Wedding*

**Wife:** <sup>6</sup>What is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant? <sup>7</sup>Behold, it is the litter<sup>d</sup> of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men, some of the mighty men of Israel, <sup>8</sup>all of them wearing swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh, against terror by night. <sup>9</sup>King Solomon made himself a carriage from the wood of Lebanon. <sup>10</sup>He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup>Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.

Smell: Myrrh  
and Frankincense



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*d* G - Watchmen: The night guards who seek to keep the city safe - the country bumpkin runs into them and in desperation asks them to point her to her beloved. The protectors of the city are reminiscent of pastors, who ensure the safety of the people of God and continually point them to Christ.

*e* Cf. Gen. 24:67: Isaac brings Rebekah into his mother’s tent to seal their marriage. The blessing of the mother is a necessary feature in biblical marriage. This marriage replaces the family of origin (Gen. 2:24), but honors the father and mother who brought the bride into the world.

*f* V - The couch on which servants carry a king [ESV note]

*Marital Bliss*

**Husband:** 4 Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.<sup>g</sup> 2Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young.<sup>h</sup> 3Your lips are like a scarlet thread,<sup>i</sup> and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate<sup>j</sup> behind your veil. 4Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.<sup>k</sup> 5Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies.<sup>l</sup> 6Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. 7You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.

Visualize: the  
fruitfulness of a  
pomegranate



*g* V - Goats, and N.B. the action and motion: A pastoral image; goats are animals that are cared for by a shepherd.

*h* V - Ewes with twins: Again, a pastoral image, depicting the clean white sheep. They are washed, leading to perfection, a figure of Baptism. The fertility of the ewes depict the fruits of faith that comes from Baptism, etc. That this is in the mouth might indicate the fruit of a witness to the truth, declaring God's Word boldly because it has justified a person (cf. 2 Cor. 4:13). (Also, 2 in the Bible frequently depicts the Word of God, i.e. Law & Gospel, 2 Tablets of testimony, etc.)

*i* V - Scarlet thread: Such a thread is often used as a signal in Scripture: marking the firstborn among twins (Gen. 38:27-30), marking Rahab as safe from the destruction of Jericho (Josh. 2:18), etc. It is used in the decor of the temple and tabernacle and priestly vestments as well. Scarlet is also the color of blood. In lips, this designates rich life, as the Word of life has been put into the mouth of the Church, and the blood of Christ touches our lips to give us his forgiveness and life.

*j* V - Pomegranate: A richly sweet fruit, usually designating, in Scripture, blessing, prosperity, fertility, and fruitfulness. The lovely appearance of the bride shows her blessedness.

*k* V - The tower of David: David's majestic tower is thought of, the tower of a warrior-king, strong and smooth.

*l* V - Fawns: Delicate, innocent animals full of life, that also dwell in the wilderness with gazelles and stags. The bride's fertility is related to the bridegroom. Notice that the bridegroom describes his bride from the top down: eyes, hair, teeth, lips, mouth, cheeks, neck, breasts. Later after the marriage, he will describe her from the bottom up, connotating a level of intimacy reserved for this estate.

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## ADVENT 2 TUESDAY – SONG. 2:1-2

**Rose:** The “Rose of Sharon” has traditionally been used as an image of the Virgin Mary, who bore and gave birth to God’s Son; it is also an image of the Church.

### **Why might a rose be a picture of the Church?**

When the angel Gabriel announced God’s Word to Mary that she would be the mother of God, she believed the angel’s words and so received Jesus in her womb as “conceived by the Holy Spirit.”

### **When we hear God’s Word, what (or whom) do we receive?**

**Through Christ, we who were “thorny” become lovely.**

*Listen: The medieval hymn “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” (“Behold, a Branch is Growing” ELH 121, CW 47) associates the Rose of Sharon with Christ Himself.*

## ADVENT 2 WEDNESDAY – SONG. 2:3-4

**Tree:** The Church is called a rose. The beloved (Christ) is called an Apple Tree. Jesus calls Himself the Tree of Life in the New Testament (cf. Luke 13:18–19 & Revelation 22:1–2). God attached His Word of promise to the original Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, granting eternal life through its fruit.

### **How does Jesus give us His ‘fruit’ today?**

**Banquet:** A theme of Advent is a longing for the banquet of heaven. Even now Christ brings a preview of this banquet to us.

### **To what banquet does Jesus invite us to each Sunday? Does the bride’s love for her groom in the Song inspire you to attend the banquet of your Groom, the Lord’s Supper more?**

Whenever we take the Lord’s Supper, we pray that it may “increase our love for one another” – consider how sharing this cup may bring you closer to Christ and closer to each other.

*Listen: “Jesus Christ the Apple Tree” is a Christmas carol that is based on Song 2:3.*

## ADVENT 2 THURSDAY – SONG. 2:10-15

**Spring:** Spring has come—that means the wedding is drawing near! Solomon personally invites his bride to begin a new life with him (This is unique—grooms would often send a representative

to go in their place). Advent reminds us that Christ Himself will again come soon to draw us to His home. Each day we get closer to the consummation of the marriage.

In this Song, springtime brings with it the responsibility of pruning branches so they will produce more fruit.

**In what ways does God “prune” you as a branch so that you bear more fruit (love & good works)? Are there ways you can bear more fruit in your marriage? (cf. John 15:4-10) How can you “stir up one another to love...all the more as you see the Day approaching”? (Heb. 10:24, 25)**

*Listen: “Rise Up My Love, My Fair One” by Healey Willan (1880-1968) is an Advent carol based on these verses.*

## ADVENT 2 FRIDAY – SONG. 2:16-3:11

**Search:** The bride pictures her groom on a bed of lilies – in joy and perfection. She tries to find him through her own thoughts and thoughts, but is unable to. Finally, after the watchmen find her, she sees her bridegroom. He is coming in a pageant through the town to come and get his bride, to bring her out of the wilderness. He is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense.

This all is a preview of how Christ comes to bring His Church out of the wilderness of this world. He has redeemed us not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood. He will return in all His glory to bring us home.

The myrrh and frankincense remind us of the wise men who came to offer their gifts to the Christ child. Recall that while the wise men followed the star, they couldn’t locate the Child merely with the star. They had to go to the priests at the temple to search the Scriptures to see where the Christ would be born (cf. Matthew 2:1-5). Christ has promised He would be found in His Word, not through thoughts, feelings, or even supernatural events.

**Are you ever tempted to look for Christ where He hasn’t promised to be? Are you ever tempted to view your spouse as something they are not?**

*Listen: J.S. Bach’s BWV 140 (Wachet auf), especially both Recitatives and Arias (Duets). The most famous of Lutheran composers, Bach weaves together imagery from Song of Songs in with the parable of the wedding banquet (or Ten Virgins) from Matthew 25, as well as the wedding bliss of the heavenly Jerusalem from Revelation. The chorale (hymn) is often used Advent in the Lutheran Church (“Wake, Awake” ELH 544 / CW 206).*

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## ADVENT 2 SATURDAY – SONG. 4:1-7

**Beauty:** The Bridegroom describes his bride's eyes, hair, teeth, lips, cheeks, neck, and breasts, and together the picture of doves, goats, freshly washed ewes with twins, a scarlet thread, halves of a pomegranate, the tower of David, and twin fawns among the lilies presents peace, perfection, power, and beauty.

**What makes our heavenly Bridegroom see us with such a description? (Think of where you see doves elsewhere in the Bible. And where else do you see goats and lambs?) How can you continue to see your spouse in such a way?**

**Mountain:** The Bridegroom has gone away to a mountain, specifically, the mountain that smells of the spices that ascend to the throne of God.

**To what mountain has our Bridegroom ascended? Where do we continue to go to be reminded of his love and to await his return? What do you do as a couple to continue to remind one another of your love and devotion?**

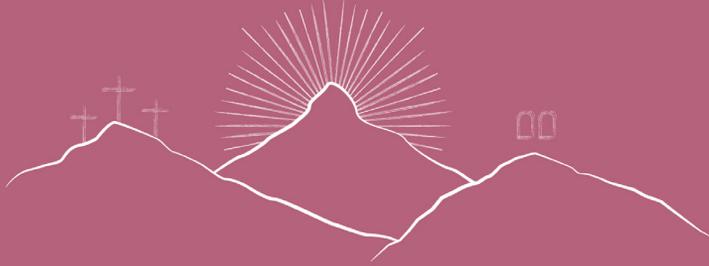
**Until:** The Bridegroom is absent, but describes the time when he will return. He announces it as a specific day: a Day that "breathes." On that day, too, "the shadows flee." Genesis 2:7 - "The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Psalm 23:4 - "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

**What will occur on the Day the Groom returns for us? (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-26)**

*Listen: Prayers from the Office of Compline (See the final prayer on pg. 139 in CW). The phrase from Song of Songs, "until the day lengthens and the shadows flee" has been used in a form for nightly evening prayer in this ancient service from the 6th century.*

# Third Reading

## ADVENT 3 MONDAY – SONG OF SONGS 4:8-6:10



*The third Advent candle (rose), along with two violet candles, are lit.*

*Hymn verse this week: "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us," v. 4*

### *Marital Bliss*

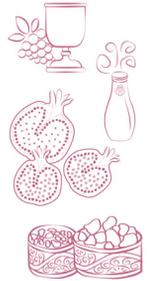
**Husband:** <sup>8</sup>Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. <sup>9</sup>You have captivated my heart, my [beloved] sister [in Christ, as though we are one blood], my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. <sup>10</sup>How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better your love is than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! <sup>11</sup>Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. <sup>12</sup>A garden<sup>m</sup> locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed. <sup>13</sup>Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, <sup>14</sup>nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all choice spices - <sup>15</sup>a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon. <sup>16</sup>Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow.

**Wife:** Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

**Husband:** <sup>5</sup> I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.

*m V/G - Garden: The garden metaphor goes on for a while. "Locked garden" Vivid description of her premarital virginity and chastity. Luther says this description is indicative of the Church's being sealed and set apart from all others by God's gifts of "Word, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar" (AE 15:234). Picture also the Garden of Eden, a paradise without compare. The Church, by Jesus' cleansing, becomes just such a perfect place.*

*Visualize, smell,  
& taste: the  
richness of all  
these together*



*Visualize /  
Geography:  
A living fountain  
(Think Baptism,  
Eden, & Heaven)*



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**Both:** Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!

*Nightmare: Searching*

**Wife:** <sup>2</sup>I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking.

**Husband:** “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.”

**Wife:** <sup>3</sup>I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them? <sup>4</sup>My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. <sup>5</sup>I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. <sup>6</sup>I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer. <sup>7</sup>The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls. <sup>8</sup>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.

*Praise*

**Both:** <sup>9</sup>What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?

**Wife:** <sup>10</sup>My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. <sup>11</sup>His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. <sup>12</sup>His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.<sup>a</sup> <sup>13</sup>His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs.<sup>b</sup> His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. <sup>14</sup>His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. <sup>15</sup>His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. <sup>16</sup>His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

*Garden Conversation*

**Both:** **6** Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?

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*n* <sup>a</sup> V - Gold: possibly referring to a crown. Raven: A smooth, rich black in color, and one might think of the first bird that Noah sent out (Gen. 8:7), and of the animals that cared for the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:6). This is especially potent when combined with the image of his eyes: Doves: The Bride's eyes were described as doves earlier, but now they apply to the King. But in his case, it is more vivid: they are milky white, and they are beside streams and a full pool - doves connected to water (Baptism?). The peace and purity this animal represents clearly comes from the Bridegroom.

*o* <sup>b</sup> S - That his cheeks smell of these spices imply that her face is close enough to his to smell. Posture plays a role here.

*Visualize:  
The vivid beauty  
of the Bridegroom*



**Wife:** <sup>2</sup>My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies. <sup>3</sup>I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

**Husband:** <sup>4</sup>You are beautiful as Tirzah,<sup>r</sup> my love, lovely as Jerusalem,<sup>q</sup> awesome as an army with banners. <sup>5</sup>Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me - Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. <sup>6</sup>Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young. <sup>7</sup>Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. <sup>8</sup>There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. <sup>9</sup>My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her. <sup>10</sup>“Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?”

*p G - Tirzah: A city in northern Israel, considered second in beauty to Israel.*

*q G - Jerusalem: The capital city of God's people - the city with the palace of God's anointed King and the Temple, where sacrifice and atonement comes from God's grace, where Jesus Christ was appointed to die for the sins of the world, the only city where that could happen (Luke 13:33).*

*r G - She is the "queen among queens." While Solomon serves as a picture of Christ and Christ's love for His bride the Church, Solomon is an imperfect type, as he suffered in his sin of adultery; of lusting after many women and many wives.*

## ADVENT 3 TUESDAY - SONG. 4:8-11

**Lebanon:** Lebanon's beautiful cedar trees made it easy for people in Israel to compare it to an Eden-like paradise. Lumber from these trees was used in the construction of the Temple. The Song describes three mountain peaks in the region: Amana, Senir, and Hermon. It also pictures fierce predatory cats living there.

**What hope for our future is presented by the Bride living safely among dangerous predators? (Compare Isaiah 11:6-9.) Mountains were frequently used by God to communicate to his people. What is the significance of three mountain peaks?**

**Honey:** The Groom is intoxicated with the smell of his Bride, which is an overture to her taste. This section depicts the wedding ceremony, in which the Groom sees his Bride and is overjoyed to call her his own. Isaiah 25:6-9: “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast

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over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces.”

**What joy are we anticipating? What reminds us and prepares us for that heavenly wedding feast now?**

As you consider the joy of Christ’s second Advent on the Last Day, consider too the joy he gives you in your married life. The Sixth Commandment enjoins “husband and wife each [to] love and honor the other.”

**How may you demonstrate for your spouse the self-losing love and honor that Jesus has shown you?**

*Listen: The Advent hymn “Jesus, Your Church with Longing Eyes” (CW 9)*

### **ADVENT 3 WEDNESDAY - SONG. 4:12-5:1**

**Garden:** The Bride is a “locked garden,” depicting her premarital virginity and chastity. But even were she not sexually pure before her marriage, her Groom has declared her so, demonstrating forgiveness and love. She is depicted as a paradise, like the Garden of Eden.

**What has Jesus used to make us his own, set apart and kept pure?**

**Fruits:** This Eden-like Garden is described in vivid detail. Spices swirl around in the air, fruits burst out in every place. Living water supplies nourishment to the plants and people. The Groom is never so happy or so content as he is with his Bride.

**What does this tell us about how Jesus has chosen to see his Bride, the Church?**

The picture of the waters in this section gives way to the picture of wine, and the friends of the couple encourage them to “be drunk with love.” Literal drunkenness is condemned in Scripture, but recall how Jesus turned water into wine for the enjoyment of the wedded couple and their guests: the joy of “drunkenness” in love is praised and approved by Jesus. This “drunkenness” is the happy longing for the Bridegroom’s arrival, with the certain knowledge that he will come with blessing.

*Listen: “Christ Hath a Garden Walled Around.” The writer of “Joy to the World,” Isaac Watts, also wrote hymns on each chapter of Song of Songs. This is perhaps among the most clear and beautiful in imagery.*

## ADVENT 3 THURSDAY - SONG. 5:2-8

**Knocking:** In her sleep, she hears her Bridegroom's knock. Luke 12:36-37: "Be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes." The Bride seems to fear not living up to this command, and this scene plays out like a nightmare.

**Does the thought of the Last Day ever frighten you? Why do you need not fear? Luke 21:28: "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."**

**Watchmen:** Earlier in the Song, the watchmen had been helpful to the Bride in pointing the way to her Groom, as pastors point the people of God to their Savior. In her nightmare, it seems, she worries that she will be unworthy to find her husband. Those who should bring her to him, who should protect her, have rejected her. She is spurned from the city, rather than being protected in its walls.

And then she calls upon the "daughters of Jerusalem" to tell her beloved that she is "sick with love." She desperately needs his rescue and comfort.

**Is love something we earn or define according to our own will and whim? Where does true love come from? (Cf. 1 John 4:9, 10.) How can you emulate this kind of love in your relationship with your spouse?**

*Listen: The Advent hymn "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates" (ELH 91/92, CW 3/4) gives voice to our expectation of the Advent of Jesus.*

## ADVENT 3 FRIDAY - SONG. 5:9-16

**Radiant:** The daughters of Jerusalem ask a loaded question: what makes the Shulammitte's Groom better than any other? There's plenty of fish in the sea, after all... But that would be wrong, when it comes to such a Bridegroom as this.

The Bridegroom is described with many precious materials. This is also a near-perfect picture of the Temple, which depicts the reality of heaven and the New Jerusalem on the Last Day. Revelation 21:24: "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

**Why is it comforting to know that Jesus is our true Temple?**

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Jewels set into gold may also remind you of the breastplate worn by the high priest, which was partially made of gold, with twelve gemstones in it, one stone for each tribe of Israel.

**Why is it comforting to know that Jesus is our true high priest, with our names on his chest before God?**

This radiant picture of the Bridegroom is rich in detail that encompasses the whole of Scripture. Gold and other precious materials are found in Eden (Genesis 2:11-12) as well as in the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:18-24), the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:15-24) and the Tabernacle and Temple. Jesus' body is the true Temple, which was "rebuilt" on Easter morning (Mark 14:58), making it possible for the Church, his body, as the new Temple in which the Holy Spirit now dwells to be constructed until the New Jerusalem comes, in which all believers in Christ will dwell in Christ's radiance for eternity.

**ADVENT 3 SATURDAY - SONG. 6:1-10**

**Army:** The Bride is depicted as a powerful military force – if not victorious in battle already at the very least certainly guaranteed victory. Romans 13:12-14: "The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

**What guarantees the victory to the Bride?**

**Light:** The Bride is depicted with the glorious light that only God possesses (Psalm 19:1). This shows that she, the Church, has been given the glory of God as he walks with her and cares for her.

The woman who has the light of the sun, moon, and stars is pictured in Revelation 12:1: a woman who gives birth to a child, who is hunted by the Dragon, Satan. That woman represents the whole Old Testament Church, ultimately funneled into Mary, from whom the Christ-child was born (Romans 9:5). Mary is also the first of the New Testament Church, praising God for the delivering of the Messiah after she has received him by faith: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant" (Luke 1:46-48).

**How has Christ been delivered to you? How have you received him? What glory does this mean you now possess?**

# Fourth Reading

## ADVENT 4 MONDAY – SONG OF SONGS 6:11-8:14



*All four candles are lit.*

*Hymn verses this week: "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us," vv. 5, 7*

### Search

**Wife:** <sup>11</sup>I went down to the nut orchard to look at the blossoms of the valley, to see whether the vines had budded, whether the pomegranates were in bloom.<sup>r</sup> <sup>12</sup>Before I was aware, my desire set me among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince.

**Both:** <sup>13</sup>Return, return, O Shulammitte, return, return, that we may look upon you.

**Husband:** Why should you look upon the Shulammitte, as upon a dance before two armies?

### Praise

**Husband: 7** How beautiful are your feet<sup>r</sup> in sandals, O noble daughter!<sup>u</sup> Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand.<sup>r</sup> <sup>2</sup>Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies.<sup>w</sup>

*s* V/S/T - Nuts, blossoms, vines, pomegranates: Spring is depicted again, and the search of the bride for her Groom leads, again and again, to a garden, where she may be nourished with rich and sweet foods.

*t* Cf. Isaiah 52:7. Significant here: earlier before the marriage, he described her from the top down. Here describes her from feet up. Likely this indicates the level of intimacy they enjoy as a married couple.

*u* Or, daughter of nobility. Notice, however, that the Shulammitte is supposedly a manual laborer and not a noblewoman. Her nobility is a gift from her new husband, so that it is just as though she were born in such a high class.

*v* V - Jewels: In Zechariah 9:16 the people of God are described as jewels in his crown. Believers bring God honor, but their beauty is "the work of a master hand." God crafts his people into the glory he gives them, so that New Jerusalem itself is described as "having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel" (Revelation 21:11).

*w* V/T/S - Bowl, wine, wheat, lilies: Wine and wheat might make us think of the Sacrament of the Altar, and not inappropriately. The Church, who is the Bride of Christ, is at its core defined by the proper administration of the Sacraments. In this love imagery, the rich taste and smell of wine, as well as the fragrant arrangement of wheat and lilies, is a powerful evocation not only of life, but of the joy of life.

*Visualize: The  
Bridegroom  
declares even feet  
beautiful*



Visualize &  
Taste: Wheat,  
Wine & fruit



<sup>3</sup>Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.<sup>x</sup> <sup>4</sup>Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus.<sup>y</sup> <sup>5</sup>Your head crowns you like Carmel,<sup>z</sup> and your flowing locks are like purple;<sup>aa</sup> a king is held captive in the tresses.<sup>ab</sup> <sup>6</sup>How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights! <sup>7</sup>Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. <sup>8</sup>I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples,<sup>ac</sup> and your mouth like the best wine.

**Wife:** It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth.<sup>ae</sup>

*Invitation*

**Wife:** <sup>10</sup>I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me. <sup>11</sup>Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; <sup>12</sup>let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. <sup>13</sup>The mandrakes<sup>ad</sup> give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.

*Longing*

**Wife:** **8** Oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother's breasts!<sup>ae</sup> If I found you outside, I would kiss

*x* See 4:5.

*y* G - Heshbon: Israel's victory over Heshbon (Numbers 21:25-34) was a turning-point victory, and the city signifies the way God conquers Israel's enemies as he fights alongside her. That there are pools here may remind us how God conquered our enemies for us in Baptism. Bath-rabbim: The city gate of Heshbon - it was common for business to be conducted, and for the city to be defensively fortified, at city gates. Therefore water supplies were normally found there. Damascus: East of Lebanon, and a city that was difficult for Israel to control except under her greatest kings: conquered by David and kept by Solomon into much of his early reign.

*z* G - Carmel: A lofty mountain range with a luxuriant growth of trees. The mountains are almost synonymous with glorious beauty, and demonstrates that the Shulammitte has been granted the wonderful gift of glory by her royal husband.

*aa* V - Purple: The color of royalty and wealth, also connoting holiness, as purple was used a great deal in the construction of the Temple.

*ab* V/F - Tresses: The hair is a prison for the husband (think of the pun that could be used in calling one's hair "locks" in English). He gets lost in her hair, bound up in it, showing how close he is to her hair, trapped in her love. Significant here: he describes her from feet up. Likely this indicates the level of intimacy they enjoy as a married couple.

*ac* She finishes his sentence: the couple is so intimate and familiar that they can read each others' minds, with a view to the joy of the other.

*ad* S - Mandrakes: An aromatic fruit that is edible, but slightly poisonous. The greatest delight to be had is in the smell of them.

*ae* She wishes she had known him her whole life, and that public affection for him could be expressed without shame (see the rest of the verse).

you, and none would despise me. <sup>2</sup>I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother – she who used to teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate.<sup>af</sup> <sup>3</sup>His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!<sup>aw</sup> <sup>4</sup>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

*Love's Meaning and Application*

**Wife:** <sup>5</sup>Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor. <sup>6</sup>Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. <sup>7</sup>Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.

**Both:** <sup>8</sup>We have a little sister, and she has no breasts.<sup>ah</sup> What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? <sup>9</sup>If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

**Wife:** <sup>10</sup>I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;<sup>ai</sup> then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace. <sup>11</sup>Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. <sup>12</sup>My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.

*Final Desire*

**Husband:** <sup>13</sup>O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it.

**Wife:** <sup>14</sup>Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.



*af* T - Spiced wine, juice of pomegranate: A rich and sweet wine could be made from the juice of pomegranates. Here apparently it is so. Wine is frequently connected with weddings, and is also connected to reunion, recommitment, and reconsummation within a marriage, which is what is described here. Spiced wine and the juice of a pomegranate are metaphors and signs of God's blessing in years to come. Here, too, it is a metaphor for sexual union.

*ag* P - see 2:6.

*ah* In other words, very young. Her brothers were to guard the chastity of their little sister. Before a bride is united to her husband, the responsibility falls to the family: If she is a wall (chaste), the family extols what is good. However, if she is a door (promiscuous), they are to call her to repentance and stop her wicked ways. Ultimately, forgiveness comes in marriage – the marriage of Christ to His Church.

*ai* G - Wall, towers: She declares that she has been faithful to God's command and has not been sexually immoral. The "towers" builds upon the metaphor of the city wall, that her purity has been impregnable and well defended.

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## ADVENT 4 TUESDAY - SONG. 6:11-13

**Orchard:** The Shulammitte looks for her Groom in a garden bursting with new springtime life. This reflects our hope for the eternal life we will have at the Last Day, finding that we once again have access to the tree of life (Revelation 22:2).

On Easter morning, the Gospels describe a group of women searching in a garden for Jesus, but they are unable to find him – but for a happy reason. He is not to be found in the tomb in the garden, but having risen from the dead, springing up with new life that he gives to us all through faith. As Jesus surprised Mary in the garden, calling her name, Solomon surprised the Shulammitte here, as she suddenly found herself “among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince.”

**Dance:** The chariots catch her on their way home from victory. A dance between armies would imply such a victory, as women would frequently dance in a religious setting when loved ones returned from war with the soldier. The two armies are two camps of the same army, and her dance between them is a religious act that unites them all together in the joy of the victory they share.

We Christians on earth are known as the “Church Militant,” while those who are already in heaven are known as the “Church Triumphant.” In the Divine Service, both groups are united in the same religious activity – one “communion of saints.”

**Why is it a comfort to know that we share the same blessings as those in heaven, even if we don't have them in fullness?**

## ADVENT 4 WEDNESDAY - SONG. 7:1-9

**Beautiful:** This glowing description of the Bride by her Groom has never been surpassed. May all husbands strive to see their wives as beautifully as Solomon sees his!

In the intimacy of this husband and wife, the specific metaphors of this section are rich, and one might benefit by taking the time to look at each in turn. Consider primarily the images of wheat, fruit, and wine:

**How does the Sacrament of wheat and wine present the greatest blessing of intimacy we share with our Lord and one another?**

**Captive:** How can it be that the King, our God, is captive to us in love? Who has caused him to be captive in this way? 2 Timothy 2:13: “If we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself.”

## ADVENT 4 THURSDAY - SONG. 7:10-13

**Vineyards:** The husband and wife, gathered in a beautiful garden, have been restored to the kind of relationship that God intended for man and woman in Eden. By a fruit this relationship was broken, but by the fruit of Jesus on the Tree of Life of the cross, this relationship is restored.

**New & Old:** The wisdom that God has given to his people is treasured up and returned to them. The people of the Old Testament had wisdom in Scripture that looked forward to the coming Christ. The people of the New Testament have wisdom that looks back at the Christ who has come, and forward to when he will come again. The Spirit who dwelt in believers then and who dwells in them now produces fruit.

**How does the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) show your preparedness for Christ’s second Advent? How does it uplift your marriage?**

## ADVENT 4 FRIDAY - SONG. 8:1-4

**Kiss:** The unbelieving world does not honor marriage as God’s sacred gift. Nor does it honor Christ’s marriage to his Church. The world despises these things. But “God chose the low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are” (1 Corinthians 1:28).

**Why is it comforting always to remember how Jesus bore the shame of the cross for you?**

**Love:** If we are united in marriage to Christ as his Bride, the Church, we will be united to his suffering and also to his life. Through the cross we come to resurrection.

When the Bride adjures the daughters of Jerusalem “not [to] stir up or awaken love until it pleases,” how does this remind us of where we are to put our trust?

**Listen:** Listen for the text “O Zion’s daughter rise” in the hymn “The Advent of Our King” (ELH 99)

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## CHRISTMAS EVE - SONG 8:5-12

*Note: If Christmas Eve is also Advent 4 Sunday, read the "Fourth Reading" on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, and then use the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day devotions if time allows.*

**Seals:** A seal, worn both on a cord around the neck (resting on the heart) and around the arm was used to mark personal property. These seals would include, among other things, the owner's name.

When the Bride asks to be her Groom's "seal," she wishes to bear his name, and to be worn closely to him as his dearest possession. This is more than a gift given to her. She wishes to be the gift to him.

**How has Christ made you into an appropriate gift to himself?**

**Cedar:** If their sister has been chaste, her brothers will help to maintain her chastity. If she has been promiscuous, they will "enclose her with boards of cedar," the wood of the Temple. This means they will bring forgiveness and absolution to her, so that it will be as though she had never sinned.

**What makes Christian families different from other families? What is the greatest gift we can give to one another?**

## CHRISTMAS DAY - SONG 8:13-14

**Garden:** Gathered around your Christmas tree, recall how the first husband and wife gathered around the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, initially to worship God by obeying his command not to eat of its fruit. On another tree in Jerusalem, the child of another couple was killed to pay for their sin and yours, so that you may continue to gather in worship as you wait for his return. Our churches and homes, where the Word of God is shared, are the gardens where we dwell, so that our heavenly Bridegroom may hear our voice of praise and petition in response to his gifts of love and forgiveness and salvation.

**God loves to hear our voices. Why is this a comfort?**

**Make haste:** 1 Corinthians 16:22: "Our Lord, come! [Maranatha!]" Revelation 22:20: "Come, Lord Jesus!" This is the constant prayer of the Church since the time of the Apostles and still now. The Bridegroom has ascended to a mountain filled with spices, the mountain where God smells the pleasing aroma of his

peoples' prayers. The wait is therefore accompanied by the same smell, so that the Bride will not forget her Groom until he comes.

**Knowing we are not the first to beg Jesus to “make haste,” as we age and our marriages go on, and even come to an end with death, how is this phrase comforting to us?**

**How are we constantly reminded and made certain of the fact that our heavenly Bridegroom will come? What makes the wait happy?**

*Listen: Although not a Christmas hymn, the modern Lutheran hymnwriter Paul Manz wrote this hymn imploring Christ to come quickly: “E'en so, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come.”*



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# Daily Liturgy

## OPENING PRAYER

*The husband may say, or the couple may say together:*

In the name of the Father and of † the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father, who has created man and woman and provided them with the estate of marriage, provide us in our relationship the kind of love that reflects your love for us. For you gave your Son to purchase us by his blood, and you will send him again to bring us to the heavenly wedding feast on the Last Day. Strengthen us by your Word as we expect his Advent. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

*Together you may confess the Apostles' Creed and pray the Lord's Prayer.*

## HYMN

"The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us," J. Walther, 1496–1570, tr. M. Loy, 1828–1915

*Sing or pray the hymn verse(s) for the week.*

Hymn Verses:

Advent 1: vv. 1, 2

Advent 2: vv. 3, 6

Advent 3: v. 4

Advent 4: vv. 5, 7

**1. The Bridegroom soon will call us;  
Come, all ye wedding guests!  
May not His voice appall us  
While slumber binds our breasts!  
May all our lamps be burning  
And oil be found in store  
That we, with Him returning,  
May open find the door!**

**2. There shall we see delighted  
Our dear Redeemer's face,  
Who leads our souls benighted  
To glory by His grace.  
The patriarchs shall meet us,  
The prophets' holy band,  
Apostles, martyrs, greet us  
In that celestial land.**

**3. They will not blush to own us  
As brothers, sisters dear;  
Love ever will be shown us  
When we with them appear.  
We all shall come before Him  
Who for us Man became,  
As Lord and God adore Him,  
And ever bless His name.**

**4. Our Father, rich in blessing,  
Will give us crowns of gold  
And, to His bosom pressing,  
Impart a bliss untold,  
Will welcome with embraces  
Of never-ending love,  
And deck us with His graces  
In blissful realms above.**

**5. In yonder home shall never  
Be silent music's voice;  
With hearts and lips forever  
We shall in God rejoice.  
The angels shall adore Him,  
All saints shall sing His praise  
And bring with joy before Him  
Their sweetest heav'nly lays.**

**6. In mansions fair and spacious  
Will God the feast prepare  
And, ever kind and gracious,  
Bid us its riches share.  
There bliss that knows no measure  
From springs of love shall flow,  
And never-changing pleasure  
His bounty will bestow.**

**7. Thus God shall from all evil  
Forever make us free,  
From sin and from the devil,  
From all adversity,  
From sickness, pain, and sadness,  
From troubles, cares, and fears,  
And grant us heav'nly gladness  
And wipe away our tears.**

## BENEDICTION

The almighty and most merciful Lord, the Father, the † Son, and the Holy Spirit bless and preserve us. **Amen.**