

“THE POWER OF LOVE”
September 1, 2024 The Song of Solomon 2:8-13

"The Power of Love" is a 1985 single by the popular 80's band, Huey Lewis and the News. It was written for the soundtrack of the 1985 blockbuster film **Back to the Future**, starring **Michael J. Fox**. The song became the band's first number-one hit on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100.

Huey Lewis was approached to write a theme song for the film by representatives Bob Gale, Steven Spielberg, and Robert Zemeckis, who intended that Huey Lewis and the News be Fox's character, Marty McFly's favorite band. Though flattered, Lewis did not want to participate because he did not know how to write film songs and did not want to write one called "Back to the Future." Zemeckis assured Lewis he could write any song he wanted. Lewis agreed to submit the next song he wrote, which was "The Power of Love."

The irony is the lyrics do not make any mention of the film's storyline. We only see Marty's love interest at the beginning and the end of the movie. The early scene has them kiss and she hands him a note expressing her love. Ah, young love!

It may interest you to know that such romance was not an invention of Hollywood or teenagers. Long before Shakespeare wrote a sonnet and the Renaissance promoted humanism, people were thinking about romantic love. Take The Song of Solomon for example. The writer

uplifts the beauty of human sexuality in elegant poetic form that would make us blush if we properly understood the Hebrew language.

Language aside, The Song of Solomon never uses the name of God, which caused a lot of debate among the early Jewish councils to even consider including book in the Hebrew Bible. But being the early councils tended to allegorize the Song of Solomon as an expression of God's love for Israel, and later on Christ's love for the Church, they allowed it. While one could interpret the Song of Solomon allegorically, that method of interpretation doesn't really fit the literature of this beautiful love song. Instead, the Song does teach us something about the power of love.

I. THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

You heard about the wife who said to her husband, **“You weren't even listening were you?”** The husband thinks to himself, **“Well, that is a pretty weird way to start a conversation.”**

The late psychologist Carl Rogers was an expert at attentive listening. The non-directive school of psychotherapy he developed is all about waiting, reflecting, and opening a gracious space for clients to share what's on their hearts. Here's what he said about the experience:

“Hearing has consequences. When I truly hear a person and the meanings that are important to him at that moment, hearing not simply his words, but him ... many things happen. There is first of all a grateful look. He feels released. ... Almost always, when a person realizes he has

been deeply heard, his eyes moisten. I think in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, ‘Thank God, somebody heard me. Someone knows what it’s like to be me.’”

The Song of Solomon begins, “**The Voice of my beloved!** One of the marvelous aspects of being in love is precisely that feeling of being heard, of connecting with another. This is what Adam is saying in Genesis 2, upon casting eyes on Eve for the first time, he exclaims “**This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.**” Some one gets me.

Love has the power to connect people on a deeper level if they are willing to hear one another. True love moves beyond the chit chat to the depths of our soul, to the true self. But we must do the work of listening, asking creative questions, and waiting. As Fran Lebowitz has said, “**The opposite of talking isn't listening ... [but] waiting,**” all you need to do is open the space and the time, and the other person will fill it, eagerly. Love hears the soul of the other because it makes space for the other. That is the power of love.

II. THE POWER OF LOVE GIVES US ENERGY

The second power of love is it **gives us energy**. The Song of Solomon says, “**Look, he comes leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks to me, Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.**”

This passage is full of action, movement, and invitation to rise above what is. Love energizes us. What wouldn't we do for the one we love?

A poignant story is told by the surgeon and author, **Dr. Richard Selzer**. In his own words: "I stand by the bed where a young woman lies, her face postoperative, her mouth twisted in palsy, clownish. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed. She will be thus from now on. The surgeon had followed with religious fervor the curve of her flesh; I promise you that. Nevertheless, to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had cut the little nerve.

Her young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight, isolated from me, private. Who are they, I ask myself, he and this wry-mouth I have made, who gaze at and touch each other so generously, greedily?

The young woman speaks. 'Will my mouth always be like this?' she asks.

'Yes,' I say, 'it will. It is because the nerve was cut.'

She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles. 'I like it,' he says. 'It's kind of cute.'

All at once I *know* who he is. I understand, and I lower my gaze. One is not bold in an encounter with a god. Unmindful, he bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I am so close I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate to hers, to show her that their kiss still works."

That's the power of love. It enables and motivates us to overcome what seems impossible, to walk through the deep valleys of pain and suffering together, to forgive when there seems no good reason to forgive, to dare to dream and plan and work and hope for a life that is greater than the one we presently have. Love gives us strength to do things we might not normally do so we might bless those we love.

III. THE POWER OF LOVE GRANTS US NEW LIFE

If you have not seen the 1992 **Disney film of Aladdin**, the story follows the exploits of an Arabian street urchin named Aladdin. He discovers a magic lamp containing a genie who grants him three wishes. With the genie's help, Aladdin disguises as a wealthy prince and tries to impress the Sultan of Agrabah to win the heart of his free-spirited daughter, Princess Jasmine,

Being a princess and much to her consternation, the intelligent Jasmine doesn't have many life choices other than to be the wife of a prince. Her whole life is lived in a luxurious prison called the palace. Jasmine has most of her needs met, but she longs for more.

The fake prince Aladdin does not impress her any more than the other suitor princes, until he invites her on a magic carpet ride. Suddenly the walls of the palace fall away as the two young people go exploring the world while singing the song, "**A Whole New World**", which won the 1993 Grammy for Song of the Year. Jasmine's world expands with new possibilities she only dreamed of.

The third power of love is it grants us new life. The Song of Solomon was read during the Spring Jewish festival of Passover. That sounds strange until you read the verses. **“The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its gifts, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance.”** Solomon is celebrating the whole new world Spring brings us.

The power of love **grants us new birth**. God called the people out of slavery in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. Christ rises from the dead and calls us to a resurrected life. Two people coming together have a new beginning and many bring new lives into the world. All these happenings come through the power of love.

The power of love takes us to a new place in our lives. **Author Sarah Bessey** writes, “I have always liked the word “evolving,”. To me, an evolving faith ... has proven to be about the questions, the curiosity, and the ongoing reckoning of a robust, honest faith. An evolving faith brings the new ideas and ancient paths together. It’s about rebuilding and reimagining a faith that works not only for ourselves but for the whole messy, wide, beautiful world. For me, this has proven to be deeply centered in the Good News of Jesus.”

One of my favorite love stories in the bible is that of Jacob and Rebecca. Jacob arrives at his Uncle Laban’s home after running away from his brother. He is invited to stay especially when he meets Laban’s

daughter Rebecca. Jacob is smitten by Rachel's grace and beauty. So he tells Laban, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." Now here is the important verse. **"So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days."**

That is the power of love. It is the power to connect at a deeper level, it is the power that energizes us to do for the other, and it is the power which brings new life. That same power was and is at work in Jesus Christ. May the power of love be released in you this day. Amen.

First Presbyterian Church in Hawley

Sunday, September 1, 2024

Second Scripture Lesson

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

⁸The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.

⁹My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice.

¹⁰My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;

¹¹for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

¹²The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

¹³The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be To God.