

"A TERRIBLE BEAUTY"

[MS-0399.007.005.082]

May 3, '87

TEXT: "HE BROUGHT ME TO THE BANQUETING HOUSE, AND HIS BANNER OVER ME WAS LOVE." Solomon 2:4

HERE IT IS--WEDGED IN OUR BIBLE BETWEEN THE MATURE AND SOPHISTICATED WISDOM OF ECCLESIASTES AND THE THUNDER OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH--AN EXQUISITE AND SENSUOUS POEM OF YOUNG LOVE. THE PRESENCE OF THE "SONG OF SOLOMON" IN THE CANON OF HOLY SCRIPTURE HAS ALWAYS TROUBLED THOSE WHO THINK THAT THE BIBLE MUST HAVE TO DO WITH WHAT THEY CALL "RELIGION," TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD AND THE SOUL WHICH HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH SUCH WORLDLY PLEASURES AS BANQUETS AND "THE WAY OF A MAN WITH A MAID." AND HERE, IN THE BOOK WE CALL THE HOLY BIBLE, IS THIS POEM THAT CELEBRATES HUMAN LOVE, AND THE WORDS "GOD" OR "SOUL" NEVER EVEN APPEAR.

FOR CENTURIES THERE SEEMED ONLY ONE WAY OUT. THIS BOOK IS AN ALLEGORY IN WHICH THE LANGUAGE OF HUMAN LOVE IS USED TO PICTURE THE LOVE-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND THE SOUL. WHEN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH BAPTIZED THIS POEM, ACCEPTING IT INTO OUR CANON OF SCRIPTURE IT WAS HELD TO DEPICT THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR HIS CHURCH. IF YOU OWN A VINTAGE KING JAMES BIBLE, YOU WILL FIND PRINTED IN ITALICS ABOVE EACH PAGE SUCH HEADINGS AS "THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR HIS CHURCH" AND "THE CHURCH'S LOVE TO CHRIST," NONE OF WHICH, OF COURSE, APPEARED IN THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT.

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH ALLEGORIZING WHEN WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING. WHEN BEAUTIFUL VERSES FROM THIS POEM ARE READ OR SUNG, THEY IRRESISTIBLY LEAD OUR THOUGHTS BEYOND THE PHYSICAL TO THE DIVINE LOVE THAT FOR US IS INCARNATED IN CHRIST. "MY BELOVED IS MINE, AND I AM HIS." "MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE, NEITHER CAN THE FLOODS DROWN IT." I AM ALLEGORIZING THE TEXT I BRING YOU THIS MORNING. "HE BROUGHT ME TO THE BANQUETING HOUSE, AND HIS BANNER OVER ME WAS LOVE." I AM EVEN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE KING JAMES TRANSLATION, WHICH, IN SPITE OF INACCURACIES, IS THE ONLY ONE TO CREATE A MASTERPIECE OF LOVE POETRY IN ITS OWN RIGHT. IF YOU WANT AN ACCURATE TRANSLATION YOU WILL FIND IT IN THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE: "HE TOOK ME INTO THE WINE GARDEN AND GAVE ME LOVING GLANCES." THAT HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF REMINDING US WHAT KIND OF POEM THIS ORIGINALLY WAS, BUT IS THERE ANY REASON WHY THE HOLY SPIRIT SHOULD NOT SPEAK TO US THIS MORNING THROUGH THE BEAUTY OF AN INSPIRED MIS-TRANSLATION?

BEAUTY. THERE'S THE WORD THAT MAKES SOME PURITANICAL HACKLES RISE. WHAT HAS RELIGION TO DO WITH BEAUTY? WE MAY HAVE

drifted away from the suspicion of the arts which led some OF OUR PROTESTANT ANCESTORS TO WARN AGAINST THE ENTICEMENTS OF PAINTING, DANCING, MUSIC, AND THE THEATER, AND TO BAN THEM FROM THE SACTUARY, BUT THE MODERN WORLD STILL THINKS OF BEAUTY AND RELIGION AS BEING TOTALLY SEPARATE INTERESTS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT. BEAUTY IS TO BE ENJOYED IN THE WORLD OF NATURE, IN A CONCERT HALL, A MUSEUM, OR AN ACT OF PHYSICAL LOVE. RELIGION HAS TO DO WITH PRAYER AND WORSHIP AND MATTERS OF MORALITY. IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT DRAWS A CROWD INTO THIS PLACE OF WORSHIP IS SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT DRAWS ANOTHER CROWD INTO THE MUSEUM OF MAN. HAPPILY THERE ARE AN INCREASING NUMBER WHO BELONG TO BOTH CROWDS, BUT ISN'T THERE A TENDENCY TO ISOLATE OUR LOVE OF BEAUTY FROM OUR LOVE OF GOD, TO KEEP RELIGION AND THE ARTS IN SOMETIMES UNCOMFORTABLE TENSION?

THE BIBLE DOES INDEED WARN AGAINST THE ENTICEMENTS OF BEAUTY WHEN IT BECOMES A RIVAL TO THE GOD OF HOLINESS AND LOVE. THE O.T. CELEBRATES THE BEAUTY OF HOINESS, AND JOYS OF HUMAN LOVE AND COMPANIONSHIP. "OUT OF ZION, THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY, GOD HATH SHINED." "HE HATH MADE EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL IN ITS TIME." WE ARE ASKED TO REJOICE IN THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S CREATION AND CELEBRATE THE BANQUETS OF HIS LOVE. JESUS CAME AMONG US WITH A SIMPLE JOY IN THE BEAUTY OF THE FLOWERS OF THE FIELD, THE LAUGHTER OF CHILDREN, AND THE CONVIVIALITY OF THOSE WHOM THE RELIGIOUS CALLED "SINNERS." THIS WAS WHAT MADE HIS SERVANT PAUL, SO OFTEN MALIGNED AS A KILL-JOY, KEEP TELLING HIS CONGREGATIONS TO "REJOICE IN THE LORD" AND TO DELCARE THAT "ALL THINGS ARE YOURS...THE WORLD, LIFE, DEATH, THINGS PRESENT OR THINGS TO COME: ALL ARE YOURS: AND YE ARE CHRIST'S: AND CHRIST IS GOD'S".

THE RELIGION OF THE BOOK--JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM, WHEN TRUE TO THEIR ROOTS, HAVE CELEBRATED THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S CREATION BY WORKS OF ART, MUSIC, AND LITERATURE UNSURPASSED IN HISTORY. NO OTHER CREDO HAS YET APPEARED TO INSPIRE SUCH MASTERPIECES. WHERE ARE THE GREAT WORKS OF ARCHITECTURE, PAINTING, POETRY, OR MUSIC INSPIRED BY THE MODERN IDEOLOGIES OF MILITANT ATHEISM, OR BENIGN AGNOSTICISM? AND WHERE IS THE PHILOSOPHY THAT CAN SEE THE WHOLE WORLD AS A BANQUETING HOUSE OVERSPREAD BY THE BANNER OF LOVE.?

it seems evident that THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF BEAUTY DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE PAGAN WORLD. THE BANQUETING HOUSE IS SUFFUSED BY THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN LOVE. THEREFORE BEAUTY IS NOT AN ALTERNATIVE RELIGION WHICH OFFERS AN ESCAPE FROM THE TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS OF THIS LIFE. IT IS NOT DETACHED FROM THE ROUGH-AND TUMBLE, EVEN THE SQUALOR AND AGONY. THE GOD

whose sheer transcendent beauty is reflected in the works of CHRISTIAN ART IS A GOD WHOSE LOVE COMES TO US, NOT AS SOME SHIMMERING IDEAL ISOLATED FROM A WORLD WHERE WE "SIT AND HEAR EACH OTHER GROAN," BUT THROUGH A DEARLY-BELOVED SON WHO KNOWS WHAT IT IS TO SUFFER AND TO DIE. THE MOST GLORIOUS MEDIEVAL CATHEDRAL IS BUILT IN THE FORM OF A CROSS. THE WORDS OF SHEER BEAUTY THAT ARISE FROM A TRAGEDY OF SHAKESPEARE RISE FROM TORTURED SPIRITS. "NOW CRACKS A NOBLE HEART. GOODNIGHT, SWEET PRINCE, / AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS SING THEE TO THY REST!?" SUCH A TERRIBLE BEAUTY LIES IN THE WORDS OF THE DYING CLEOPATRA EMBRACING THE POISONOUS ASP. "DOST THOU NOT SEE MY BABY AT MY BREAST, THAT SUCKS THE NURSE ASLEEP?" THROUGH PAGAN EYES WHAT BEAUTY CAN BE SEEN IN THE HORRIBLE IMAGE OF A MAN NAILED TO A CROSS? THE BANNER OF LOVE THAT COVERS THE RICH BANQUET OF BEAUTY SPEAKS OF THE AGONIES AS WELL AS THE ECSTASIES OF OUR HUMAN LOT. IT WAS FROM SUCH AN EXPERIENCE OF AGONY THAT GEORGE MATHESON WROTE HIS MOST BEAUTIFUL HYMN:

"O JOY THAT SEEKEST ME THROUGH PAIN,
I CANNOT CLOSE MY HEART TO THEE:
I TRACE THE RAINBOW THROUGH THE RAIN,
AND FEEL THE PROMISE IS NOT VAIN
THAT MORN SHALL TEARLESS BE."

WHEN WE REMEMBER THAT THE BANNER OVER US IS LOVE, WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHY IT IS THAT SO MANY OF THE VERY GREATEST ARTISTS WHO HAVE LEFT FOR OUR BANQUETING HOUSE SUCH IMMORTAL TREASURES OF BEAUTY HAVE THEMSELVES BEEN VICTIM OF THE UGLIEST EXPERIENCES. A BEETHOVEN GOES DEAF: A MILTON GOES BLIND: MANY DIED AT A TRAGICALLY EARLY AGE. ONLY UNDER THE BANNER OF THE LOVE DISCLOSED IN THE LIFE AND PASSION OF CHRIST CAN WE EVEN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THIS TERRIBLE BEAUTY AND BE CONFIDENT THAT THE END OF THE STORY IS THE REALM OF GLORY, THE UNALLOYED BEAUTY OF GOD'S PRESENCE WHEN "GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES."

PAUL FROM THE DEPTH OF HIS SUFFERINGS AND THE GLOOM OF HIS PRISON CELL, WAS OVERWHELMED BY THE TERRIBLE BEAUTY OF THE CROSS, AND WROTE TO HIS FRIENDS "REJOICE, AND AGAIN I SAY REJOICE!...AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING, SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS". IT IS THIS CHRISTIAN LENS THAT ENABLED US TO SEE BEAUTY WHERE THE WORLD SEES NOTHING BUT DECAY AND DEATH. FOR THE BEAUTY THAT THE CHRISTIAN SEES IS NOT THE OUTWARD BEAUTY OF SHAPE AND FORM, HEALTH AND STRENGTH, BUT THE INWARD BEAUTY OF A LIFE LIVED UNDER THE BANNER OF LOVE.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE OF WORSHIP WE CAN EVER KNOW

ON EARTH IS WHAT WE CALL THE "LORD'S SUPPER." AND IT HAS INSPIRED SOME OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MUSIC, PRAYERS, AND SETTINGS THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN. IN THE MYSTERY OF HIS LOVE OUR LORD HAS OFFERED US THE BEAUTY OF HIS BANQUET, THE LAST OF THE MANY HE SHARED WITH HIS DISCIPLES--

~~HE SHARED WITH HIS DISCIPLES~~--AND WITH MANY REPUTABLE AND DISREPUTABLE PEOPLE. AT THE TABLE THAT NIGHT HE SPOKE OF JOY, AND THE BANNER OVER THEM WAS LOVE. "AS THE FATHER HATH LOVED ME, SO HAVE I LOVED YOU: CONTINUE YOU YE IN MY LOVE... THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT MY JOY MIGHT BE FULL." YET IT WAS FROM THE TABLE THAT HE WENT TO BE CRUCIFIED, AND A TERRIBLE BEAUTY WAS BORN.

HE BRINGS US TODAY TO HIS BANQUETING HOUSE, REMINDING US OF THE FEAST OF BEAUTY AND SATISFACTION HE HAS GIVEN US TO ENJOY. AND HERE WE ARE UNITED WITH HIM IN THE SHADOW OF HIS TERRIBLE DEATH, AND THE GLORIOUS LIGHT OF HIS RESURRECTION. WE ARE NOURISHED AND REFRESHED FOR OUR DAILY PILGRIMAGE AND THE BANNER OVER US IS LOVE.

BEAR FRUIT WORTHY OF REPENTANCE

Markham 88



MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE

FEBRUARY 4, 1996

10:30 AM

PREPARATION OF OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP

"Let the people be in silent meditation and prayer upon entering the sanctuary."

WE PRAISE GOD

PRELUDE

CHORAL INTROIT *"We Have Come Into His House"* Organist Chancel Choir

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

♦♦♦♦

§HYMN OF PRAISE *"We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder"* # 488

‡CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: *God so loved the world that God gave the only Son!*

People: *That whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Leader: *Let us worship God.*

WE CONFESS OUR SINS

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In Unison)

Eternal God, who in your love sent your only Son that all the world might be saved, we confess that we have ignored your love and lived self-centered, self-interested lives. We have sought our own happiness and security and built walls to protect ourselves from the pain and threat of the world around us. Forgive us. We have been reluctant to speak of our faith in your Son and hindered your saving work in our interactions with family and neighbors, friends, and colleagues at work, and strangers we meet along life's way. Forgive us. Call us to claim anew the depth of your love for us and for all people. Embolden us to be instruments of your saving power. Amen.

DECLARATION OF PARDON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"
Hymns for the Family of God

Inside Cover

WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

ANTHEM

"Unbounded Grace"—Don Wyrzten

Chancel Choir

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Leader: *Lift up your hearts.*

People: *We lift them up to the Lord. ^{Anna Faye Johnson - Nadine} ^{Nadine} ^{lost his daughter - 40}*

Leader: *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

People: *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

Leader: *Let us pray.*

PASTORAL PRAYER

CHORAL RESPONSE *"Standing In The Need of Prayer"* Chancel Choir

♦♦♦♦

RITUAL OF FRIENDSHIP *"Only Believe"* (#585)

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Chancel Choir

"Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel"—arr. Ralph Hunter

DOXOLOGY *"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

THREEFOLD AMEN

GOD SPEAKS TO US

SCRIPTURE

Nadine Reid

Solomon 2:1-4

John 15:5-11

MUSICAL SELECTION

"When We All Get To Heaven"—arr. Don Marsh

Chancel Choir

COMMUNION MEDITATION

Rev. George W. Smith

"A Terrible Beauty"

WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

HYMN OF APPROACH

"Lead Me To Calvary"

407

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

SERVING THE BREAD AND THE CUP

Say to your neighbor: "This bread is the body of Christ, broken for you."

"This wine is the blood of Christ shed for you"

THANKSGIVING AFTER THE SUPPER

INVITATIONAL HYMN

"Amazing Grace"

107

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

"Lord, Make Me More Holy"

Chancel Choir

ORGAN POSTLUDE

§ Congregation standing

‡ Congregation sitting

♦♦♦♦ Worshippers will be seated

TO OUR GUESTS. You are welcome to our worship service and all activities of the church. Please help us to know you by signing the record of attendance sheet as you enter the foyer. You are invited to meet with others in the Fellowship Hall for refreshments. Please come again and invite your friends and neighbors to come with you.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR, we invite you to come to the front of the sanctuary during the Invitational Hymn. Two Elders will be at the front of the sanctuary to greet you.

THE USHERS FOR TODAY are Malvin Bruce, Joe Littlejohn, William Ponder, and Rufus Purdie. The Ushers today are also responsible for loading the food for the homeless.

HOSTING THE COFFEE HOUR TODAY will be The Youth.

PREPARING FOOD FOR THE HOMELESS TODAY will be THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN. If you are asked to help prepare or purchase food, please do it with a smile! We love your time and talent. Thank you.

CHRIST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO

3025 Fir Street at 30th
San Diego, CA 92102

Phone: 239-2346/2347
Office Hours: 9 AM to 1 PM

MINISTER:	Rev. George W. Smith
CHANCEL CHOIR DIRECTOR:	Mrs. Dolores E. Stevens
ORGANIST:	Ms. Juanita Dentham
YOUTH CHOIR DIRECTOR/PIANIST:	Ms. Geraldine C. Pipkins
CHURCH SCHOOL PIANIST:	Ms. Delores Fisher
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COORDINATOR:	Ms. Cathy Ramsey
CHURCH SCHOOL CO-SUPERINTENDENT:	Ms. Freddie Jackson Mr. Robert Matthews
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BOOKKEEPER:	Mrs. Helen Deisher
SECRETARY:	Ms. Cathy Ramsey

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DEACONS' FUND

On Communion Sunday the members are asked to make a voluntary contribution to aid the distressed and afflicted of our Church community. Your gift will be set aside for this purpose. If unavoidably absent from Communion this envelope may be deposited in the offering plate on any convenient Sunday.

Please do not use this envelope for regular contributions.

Amount \$ _____ Name _____

Announcements

February 4, 1996

TODAY, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1996

9:00 AM Church School.
10:30 AM Morning Worship.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

6:30 PM Boy Scout Meeting.
7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

6:00 PM NEW TIME Mid-Week Uplift. Please join us.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9

6:00 PM Youth Choir Rehearsal.
6:00 PM Parent Council Meeting.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

9:00 AM Youth Tutorial Program

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Presbyterian Women will receive their Love Offering.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

10:00 AM Ruth Rewarded Circle gathering. Room 3. Everyone is invited.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

6:00 PM Stewardship Committee Meeting.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

8:00 AM Men's Fellowship work party.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

8:00 AM Men's Fellowship meeting.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

3:00 PM Humility Circle Gathering.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

6:00 PM Christian Education Meeting.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure."

— Nelson Mandela

1996 Per Capita Tax is
\$17.93

NOTICE

It is very important for each member of the congregation to submit an envelope with church contributions. More than just a convenience, these envelopes are used for record-keeping purposes.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Youth Tutorial Program each Saturday at the church from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. **TUTORS NEEDED!** Call Cathy Ramsey at 239-2346 and inform her of your availability.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Jo Hohlfeld, Carolyn Davis, Biltus Young, Mary Owens, Bulletto Fowler, Jessica Flores, Martha Bullock, Vida Van Brunt, Patricia Harrison, Ida Mull, Leslie Lewis, Bennie Mae Brown, Jerry Toombs, Norman Pickett, Bill Ellis, Edna Ellis, Mattie Drake, Calvin Martin, Walter Fuller, Vivian Brown(Lovelady), Julia Burt, The Bradley Family, Thaddeous Logan, Julia Brayboy, Cindy Driver, Shirley Williams, Loma Johnson, and others dear to thee.

DAFFODIL Sunday, MARCH 17, 1996. MARCH 3 is THE LAST DAY TO ORDER DAFFODILS.

Order your daffodils today!! _____ bunch(s) of Ten Daffodils cost \$7.00 each and _____ vase(s) at \$3.00 each.

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

Donor: _____

Please give your order to **IRENE SMITH** or **PRESTON CYRUS**. Make check payable to the American Cancer Society.

**THE DAFFODIL IS THE FIRST FLOWER OF SPRING AND WITH THE SPRING COMES THE
ETERNAL HOPE OF A WORLD FREE OF CANCER**