

## **The Reverend David Peterson's Sermon for July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026 – 10 AM**

### **Song of Solomon Narrative**

So there is a cartoon I like of a pastor standing at the altar about to give his sermon. He has a paper bag over his head with the mouth and eyes cut out on the bag.

Two people in the front row of the church are whispering to each other – one says “I knew it! He’s going to preach on the Song of Solomon again!”

Well, how often has the sermon been on the Song of Solomon? I recall only hearing one sermon and giving only one sermon. And yet it’s one of the most read books in our Bible and written by King Solomon – and the chaplain in M\*A\*S\*H says, “Solomon had a lot to sing about.”

So today, rather than avoiding this scripture and preaching about something else, I am giving it some attention it deserves. First of all, I make the bold statement that it is a love poem that celebrates human sexuality and the erotic love that is all part of being a human being.

I’ll let you catch your breath here. Anyone need to dial 911? Are you allowed to say that in church?

That was an important question to the rabbis who met and debated and who were weaving the Bible together and there was much debate over this scripture, and it was decided – wisely I believe – that it celebrated part of God’s creation and thus to include it in the canon of scripture.

Over the years, however, it has been watered down and has been spiritualized to mean the Song of Solomon or “Song” is about the great love of God for *his people* – *later Christians* would say it’s all about *Christ’s love for his church*.

And I say “No. It’s about raw old human love and it’s beautiful, and passionate and sensuous. It’s a passage brimming with life and joy fruit that is ripening, flowers in a riot of colour their fragrance fills the air, the cold winter rains are passing away the sounds of birds – life overflows in this passage. It has sensuous descriptions of the two lovers although I caution anyone who wants to call their beloved a gazelle...

So why do we have trouble here?

Perhaps because we are at our most vulnerable in our sexuality – which is why we cover ourselves with layers of clothing and layers of pompous sounding titles and symbols of power and status. We want to protect ourselves.

We need to first acknowledge that many of us – men and women alike have not experienced sexuality as always beautiful in fact for many it's been used as a weapon against us and for others its *far too often* a source of pain and shame... I speak from personal experience here.

*We recognize its power* – we know of the terrible power of unrestrained and hurtful sexuality – and it's part of being honest that we address the reality of it.

It's part of our mission as Christians to help heal the hurts around us by living well and be treating others well and with respect and this includes our sexuality.

Part of our mission as Christians is to provide a safe place where others may share their stories and in doing so experience healing – as Ann Voskamp says, “Shame dies when stories are told in safe places.”

Our mission as a church is to create a place of healing – I always thought churches should be called *hospitals* where we can have our wounds in life healed and our souls repaired.

A church should be a place of hospitality where all feel welcome and safe and to find and experience Christ and his healing.

If that sounds too much, I invite you to remember that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the gospels are stories of Jesus healing those who were sick in mind or body or spirit.

The God who made us – does not want us to live in shame or to treat our bodies and emotions shamefully but instead to do the opposite – which is what?

It is to honour them. Honor is the opposite of shame – it fits in there with other words such as celebrate and recognize. Our Lord Jesus did not think himself too proud to become a human being Philippians 2:

*Jesus Who, existing in the form of God,  
did not consider equality with God*

*something to be grasped,  
but emptied Himself,  
taking the form of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
He humbled Himself  
and became obedient to death—  
even death on a cross.*

Our lord Jesus experienced being a human being – grief, love, joy fear, anger – and yes, He also knew about human sexuality because it was part of who he is. For year and years and years the Church has talked about Jesus as a good imitation of a human being – *almost* human being – a virtual human in our technological society. Some sort of illusion or avatar, and we do not really accept the humanness of Jesus.

Curiously enough, in Germany right now there is an experiment by some churches to have a computer program of Jesus that a person could go into a private room and could talk with Jesus – ask questions, get advice, confess sins, and a sophisticated AI programme would provide responses to your questions and you could have a conversation.

*What do you think of that?*

For my part, I want a human saviour I affirm the incarnation, the Christmas message that God became a man that Jesus was in *every sense* a human being. Some will be scandalized – some have trouble with what this means. For me it is central to my faith because I think that what this means is that our friend Jesus can be trusted to understand any thing we need to tell him because he is our God who knows what it means to be a human and our God who was humble enough and loved us enough to become human to understand us his creation.