

Christ's care and watering of His garden (Quality: Good, Quiet)

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Preacher: Collier, Gilbert (1900-1984)

[0 : 00] We are considering today in our gospel message and meditation is found in the Song of Solomon.

The fourth chapter and the fiftieth verse. Fourth chapter of the Song of Solomon verse fifteen.

The fountain of God a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon.

This is a very sacred and also a very wonderful part of the word of God this Song of Solomon.

There are deep mysteries in it and the language is exquisite in its beauty and I believe it full of wonderful teaching which we do well to seek for help that we may learn.

[1 : 47] And in the words that are before us here today we have the description given by the glorious bridegroom of his bride.

And of course these figures indicate that it is Christ speaking of his church.

And it's a very instructive and very precious subject indeed to find out what the mind of the Lord is concerning his church.

Not looking at it simply as a whole but trying to bring ourselves personally into this matter and hoping that we may discover something of the Lord's mind and the Lord's thought concerning us.

There can be no greater discovery no more wonderful thing to look into than to discover what the Lord thinks about us.

[3 : 22] The Lord Jesus when he was here on earth he asked a question of his disciples and it was this what think ye of Christ?

And he waited and listened to their replies. And ultimately one came and seemed to voice the real thoughts of them all when he said we believe that thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God and he said blessed are thou.

Now we have here in our text we have just the opposite as it were we have the Lord's thoughts about his people how he views them what he thinks of them what they are in his sight his church and we observe this morning how full of meaning this first part of our text was when he says it is a fountain of God seeming to suggest to our mind a virile place that he himself has made full of life full of energy clothed with a wonderful beauty and I think and I think we see how choice the figure is that the Lord uses in this part of his word for surely there can be very few places that are more wonderful more beautiful more of a kind of restful retreat than a garden and this is how the Lord views his church we might ask before we go on to the second and the third points in our text we might ask this question why is it that the Lord thinks so much much of his church for as man looks at his church it sometimes presents a very pitiful appearance it seems to be like a backwater in the world there seems to be very little of a kind of impact by the church upon the affairs of the world it seems to be almost an unheard of institution you wonder therefore how it is that the

Lord can think upon his church well the one great all important reason that he does think so highly of his church is this it was purchased by his own precious blood it cost him his life his heart blood which he shed so freely and so willingly to save and redeem and purchase this church that is why Jesus thinks so much and values so much his church and when I said and I said this morning that when we speak of the church we do not want to be carried away by the thought of a body as a whole we want to think of it in this sense that there are units there are individual members that make up the church of Christ differing in a great measure one from another but they all in the sight of

God they make up the church and the reason that we want to take that view of it is this we want to come to a real solid satisfactory conclusion that we are one of those units one of those people who form part of the church of God and thus we are purchased by the precious blood of Jesus Christ and then another thing we might say before we go on and that is this that Christ loves his church and regards it as he does because it is a pillar and ground of the truth he has formed it just like the owner forms a garden plants it encloses it plants it with all the desirable plants trees and shrubs and Christ has planted his church in the world that it should be the pillar and the ground of his truth that it should be ever manifesting showing forth the reality the unchanging quality of God's truth in the world well now that is the first part of our text as we dealt with it this morning

[10 : 33] I'm not proposing to go much further into this part of the subject tonight because we have two further things to consider of great importance and they are these we have the first of all the invisible support or source of supply which is spoken of here as the well of living waters then secondly we have the visible supply which is spoken of as these streams that come down from the mountainous area of Lebanon Lebanon was as you know a mountainous area adjacent to the land of

Palestine where the children of Israel were established and one of the causes of the fertility of that land was the constant fresh supply of water that came from the snowy tops of those mountains in Lebanon this was a visible means of support and if that could have been taken away which of course it could not physically be removed then the land would have been turned into a wilderness there would have been very little to sustain life in the land it largely depended for its fertility and continuity on those rich and wonderful streams that came down from the mountains of Lebanon but first before we come to that point there was this all important thing there was the invisible supply the well of living water now there is a word in the prophecy of

Jeremiah which has some bearing I think on this subject tonight it was an indictment which God made upon people to whom he was writing or sending his message through his servant and this was the indictment that the people had forsaken the Lord God who was the fountain of living waters and had hewn out for themselves systems broken systems that could hold no water that was God's indictment and you can well see how apposite and telling that indictment is not only to those people in the time of Jeremiah but to us today to people generally today men will hew for themselves all kinds of things and yet totally ignore and fail to understand the value of the living things of God of that

God from whom comes only comes the living waters the living power of his grace and the mighty works of salvation is the most solemn indictment from the word of God and yet how wonderfully true it is and always has been true men will turn to almost anything and everything but God and Jesus Christ they think sometimes the last thing that they need in this world is prayer to God I remember reading of a woman in fact we were told of this in our recent holiday in Scotland a woman who was on board a vessel that was in great danger through storms and tempest the captain of the vessel was a

God fearing man a man who had put a great deal of his faith in God and trusted in him this woman because of the storm was greatly troubled and terribly afraid and feared that there might be for them nothing but destruction but she went to the captain to try and obtain some little measure of relief if she could believing that he would know more or less the position that those who were on board were in the captain said to her my good woman the only thing for us is prayer and the woman said has it come to that desperate place you see people put the thing that should be first last in their life prayer should be our very first thought the most prominent of our proceedings in life and yet how often we have to acknowledge this it's the last we have to get into trouble before we pray and there's another indictment also in the same prophecy where the

[17 : 52] Lord says there he says all who forsake me shall be written in the earth because they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters that even is a more terrible indictment really it means this that all who forsake God shall have nothing more for themselves but this earth what this earth can afford they shall be written in the earth confined to this world and this world is a perishing thing there's nothing lasting about it and the reason for them the reason for that is this that they have forsaken the fountain of living waters how verily true these things are and how it brings us tonight to consider very seriously our own personal need of addressing ourselves to the

Lord seeking from him all that we need for life for salvation for cleansing for healing for strength for he is the fountain living waters suggest the figure suggests that which supplies everything a garden you see would be a very poor place without water we spoke this morning about the beauty of the garden as coming from the light of the sun but even so with all the light in the world that the garden could have from the sun it would be in no place at all without water and the figure in our text speaks volumes really when we think of

Jesus Christ and we think of the Holy Spirit who is the secret invisible source of life for the church of God it's that secret conveyor of living water now why do we think of it as secret because it is secret Christ said I go away from you and if I do go away from you I will not leave you alone I will send a comforter to you and he shall come and he shall testify of me he shall be in you he said in you and then look how he spoke to the woman by the well of

Sychar the words we read tonight together he speaks of her he said if thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that speaks to thee give me to drink thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water and in another place he says also this he says he that believeth on me out of his belly shall flow streams of living water this he spake of the spirit now there is a danger today I believe of resting these things from their setting in the gospel I think we need to be very clear about certain things today you know people have a tendency of making the holy spirit to be more visible than the lord has made him to his church and there are those who claim to have sensational appearances of the holy spirit something very unusual and striking and moving well only once in the history of the church was there ever any visible appearance of the holy spirit there were mighty effects wrought on the early church through the spirit but only once did the holy spirit come invisible form and that was on the day of

Pentecost otherwise he is the deep well the well of ever springing life that source of grace that is from beneath so to speak is in you which keeps alive the soul just as a garden with a well deep down in the center of it is invisibly supplied we may wonder where the beauty comes from where the virility is to be found here it lies in the well of water water now this makes us realize I think my friends how important it is that the work and graces of the

[24 : 40] Holy Spirit should be considered and sought after you and I need if we are true Christians one thing we do need and that is all the graces of the Holy Spirit for we cannot really pray without the Holy Spirit you will not be conscious of the Holy Spirit dictating prayer to you but if you have any real prayer to God it will be that Holy Spirit deep down beneath in your heart is prompting you directing you and causing you to pray and oh how you do need the grace of the Holy Spirit in prayer and you'll need it in all kinds of ways and in all degrees and measures of your life and oh how wonderful it is what a provision it is this well of living water well that is the invisible part so important and so precious by which

God keeps alive his church and makes it a very force in the world this is what I want to so greatly emphasize today that if we are members of God's church we are here placed in the world for a purpose by God that we might serve him not simply lie buried unrecognizable without any degree whatever of purpose or fulfillment of purpose in our lives if we are called by God's grace we are called to serve and to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light and I want to lay great emphasis on that aspect of our subject well then we come to the last matter and that is this the streams from

Lebanon these are visible things as I said the snow high up on those mountains of Lebanon being melted by the sun and being caused to flow down through the multitude of channels waters the whole land so freely and makes it a veritable living place with no barrenness and that is just the figure that is used here by God in his holy word to show us what it is that makes the church of God and the lives of God's people so fruitful and fertile it is the flowing form of these precious streams what are they they are first of all the streams that flow from

Christ precious through ten thousand channels flowing streams of mercy find their way and they will find their way you sometimes may get into a place where you think everything is barred and there are so much barriers so many barriers around your soul and in your life that there can be no possibility of one of these streams ever finding their way to you but be sure of this the mercy that God sends will find its own way to the subject and object for which he sent you it will cut away through rocks of trouble and difficulty and reach the soul of God's people with a blessed certainty then there are the streams of the gospel visible things these are and we rejoice in the visibility we want more and more of the visibility of the gospel in other words we want to see the effects of the gospel we want to feel the power of it in our own hearts because if we've ever once felt the power of the gospel in our souls we know one thing that it's that that will keep us and refresh us and enlighten us and we know if we can only get under these in the way of these streams we shall be kept free from stagnation and barrenness and emptiness and ruination it's those streams that will make us live and keep us alive the streams of the gospel they're like the precious streams from

Lebanon and going again to the book of Jeremiah there's another word in that wonderful prophecy which speaks like this shall he says the word of the Lord says shall people leave those cool streams that flow from another place for the vile filthy waters of this world is it not one of the most astounding factors in life that people will run after vanity as if vanity was to be their greatest cure and their greatest comfort they will run after it and lose totally the one great thing that will bring them life and peace and salvation they forsake the streams of the gospel and when we speak of these streams we speak of all the fullness the wonderful provision of the gospel all the doctrines all the dispensations of the gospel which meets every need of every soul that comes under the sand it will bind up and heal those wounds and sores that are found from time to time in a believer's life they will cleanse away all the filth defilement that may be incurred through contacts in the world it will drive out every dark error that may seek to insert its influence and it will bring the sweet waters of peace into the soul streams from heaven so there we have this great subject today and I hope we may fasten our thoughts upon it consider the teaching that is undoubtedly found here that Christ looks at his church he sees her as his own garden he has planted this garden he has designed it it's for his own satisfaction as I pointed out this morning he says immediately after this work he says

[33 : 49] I have come into my garden my dear friends what a wonderful thing it will be for you and me if our lives and are such and our souls are after such things that while we may feel to be so little and so unworthy Jesus will come in and make his abode with us walk as it were in the garden of our souls and taste of the precious fruits that are there by his grace for his satisfaction and his glory a fountain of gardens a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon may God bless these for his name's sake Amen a an well of you