

Rev. Curran Reichert

“Summer Lovin”

*Summer lovin had me a blast
Summer loving happened so fast...*

"My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.... My beloved speaks and says to me, 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away'" (Song of Solomon 2:9, 10).

The musical “Grease,” the Song of Solomon, both are about the lustiness of summer, sweat, and heat, and yes sex.

Sex in the bible... what?

Modern readers are not the only ones startled by the content of the Song of Solomon. Its inclusion in the canon of Scripture was a matter of strong debate among rabbis in the first century CE. Some considered it little more than a drinking song.

(But) The matter was settled by the great teacher and mystic, Rabbi Akiba, who said, "The whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies" (Mishnah Yadayim 3:5).¹

Holy because the union of two lovers can indeed be holy. Holy because love between two people is certainly and without any doubt holy. But especially precious are these words because anyone with wrinkles can tell you that this kind of passion spoken between young lovers is not entirely sustainable-making it all the more precious, precisely because it is fleeting.

Somewhere between the children crying, bills needing to be paid, body parts beginning to fail or sag, and the garbage needing to be taken out, passion is fleeting. And precious, and fleeting, and precious.

¹ Kathryn M. Schifferdecker Associate Professor of Old Testament Luther Seminary Saint Paul, Minn.

But the Song of Songs isn't just about sex, it is about the passion of faithfulness, faithfulness in love. Which is why some interpret the passage to be exchange between God and Israel, or Jesus and the church because what makes the connection so rich is beyond the flesh and rooted in the heart.

When I was in college my grandmother was dying of lung and colon cancer, an alcoholic and a chain smoker to boot, she had been given a year to live. Now, this is my father's mother and she was actually not a very nice person. She was in fact a cruel and spiteful, a woman who went to great lengths to inflict misery on those she "loved."

But as can happen at the end of life, with her terminal diagnosis came a change of heart. Emma Louise decided to make amends, as best she could, in the time she had left and as a young woman I found myself with a choice;

- I could leave things the way they were in an obligatory but joyless relationship with my grandmother
- or I could allow her the satisfaction of loving in a new way until she drew her last breath- knowing full well that the later choice in some ways would be the more painful for us both. And, of course, it was painful because love being the two-way street that it is- as she learned to love me, I learned to love her and just as it started to get really good- she was gone.

The poets say, 'tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. A sentiment was echoed soundly last week as Kay Hand sat heartsick in her Livingroom on the fourth of July. Still reeling from the news that her 64year old son died suddenly of a massive heart attack the day befoer, she said to me- "This hurts like hell, but I'm so glad I got to know him (Craig). I wouldn't trade that for anything in the world. I guess," she said tearfully, "that is the price of love, and it's worth it."

At its best, the love we feel for one another is a reflection of God. It is how we experience the presence of God in and with each other. Faithful, precious and yes sometimes fleeting.

It turned colder that's where it ends
So I told her we'd still be friends
Then we made our true love vow
Wonder what she's doing now
Summer dreams ripped at the seams, but oh those summer nights (Grease)