

Beloved

Song of Solomon 4:1-6:

How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves.
Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead.

² Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone.

³ Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate.

⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.

⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies.

⁶ Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. (NIV)

One of the reasons I am still drawn to the Bible is that all of human emotion and experiences can be found there. Anger, lust, jealousy, joy, pain, exuberance, doubt, and love all have cameo appearances in the Word of God. Song of Solomon is a book of poetry about lovers. Solomon writes to and about his beloved and the book is largely a dialogue. It is sensual, romantic, and probably rated PG-13.

Many have used the human experience as a proof for the existence of God. The great Christian writer Thomas Aquinas saw the natural world as a proof for the existence of God. Others have appealed to our ability to reason or feel. I see so clearly that the experience of love is a window to the divine. As Solomon's beloved writes, "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine." She puts language to the incredible experience of human love and affection. She is vulnerable before her beloved.

The capacity to love is a gift given by our creator. Romantic love and sexuality is profound and powerful but is not love's only form. If, as the New Testament suggests, God is love, then we have a lot to learn by listening to our experiences of love. Among other things, love calls us outside of ourselves. In a culture that places such a high value on the "I", love cuts through our selfish ambitions and places the other as a higher priority than ourselves.

The next time you experience affection, the next time you are shown love, the next time you are overcome with emotion for another, remember that the capacity to feel deeply for another human being mirrors back to Another who gave you that capacity and loves you as well.

JDB

Point for Prayer:

Where can you see the divine in your encounters of love?