

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Song of Songs 7: 11-13

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Song of Songs chapter 7. We will read verses 11-13 today.

Song of Songs chapter 7 likely speaks of someone whose life has matured and who has begun to fulfill his ministry. Yet the Lord does not mention the work itself at all; instead, He praises ten parts of this saint's body, perfected through the experience gained from serving. He begins from the feet and moves upward to the head and hair. This clearly shows that God values who we are far more than the work we do for Him. In the Lord's praise, three of His desires are revealed—these also serve as three models of service that are according to God's heart. For younger saints, there should be a rich and balanced supply of spiritual milk; for those actively serving, there should be a fragrance that comes from the knowledge of Christ; and for the mature saints, we should be able to pour ourselves out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice of their faith.

This saint not only aligns with God's heart but even surpasses the Lord's own desires for him. He interrupts the Lord's words and adds a phrase: "which goes down smoothly for my beloved." He himself has already been crafted by the Lord into a fine wine, ready at any moment to be poured out for the Lord—not for the sake of work, but entirely for the Lord. His wine is poured out solely for the Lord, that the Lord may be fully satisfied; after the Lord enjoys it first, it then unknowingly flows into the mouth of the one who sleeps—that is, those mature saints who are able to rest in the Lord.

Then he declares, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." He belongs entirely to the Lord, and whether or not the Lord belongs to him is no longer the focus. He is fully assured that the Lord will desire him and will surely give him the best. As for what the Lord chooses to give, that no longer matters—he is completely at rest. Whatever comes from the Lord is the best; he has no choice of his own.

What follows in verses 11 to 13 is the only mention of work in this chapter, and it is this saint who invites the Lord to go with him.

Verse 11: “Come, my beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages.”

“My beloved, come.” It is this saint who takes the initiative and invites the Lord to go with him. Throughout the process of his spiritual growth, it was always the Lord who called him to arise and go with Him. In the first stage, it was a call of love; in the second stage, a call in resurrection; the third stage, a call in ascension; and the fourth stage, a call in humility—each time, it was the Lord asking him to arise and go with Him. But now his life has matured, and he is fully one with the Lord. In the matter of work, he takes the initiative, yet it is entirely for the Lord.

He says to the Lord, “My beloved, come! Let us go forth to the field.” The field is the place of work, and what is particularly notable here is that the word “field” is singular. At this stage, he understands the Lord—there is only one field, and it is the field of Boaz. The Lord, like Boaz, is a rich and mighty man; His field is vast, able to supply all who are in need and to welcome all who are willing to serve. It is man’s narrowness that makes the Lord’s field seem small; it is human limitation that makes the Lord’s ministry appear exclusive. Now he is able to be one with the Lord and see the work from the Lord’s perspective. In truth, there is only one ministry in the whole world—the New Testament ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. This one ministry encompasses all the various ministries within Christianity.

Dear brothers and sisters, we should learn from Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, where he gives a complete definition of Christian service: “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” If we desire to serve, we need to develop our gifts.

Each person has a different temperament and learning background, so naturally there will be different gifts; but the gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit according

to His will. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit,” because all gifts come from the same Holy Spirit. Every saint serves according to the gift he has received, and if he is faithful in fulfilling his duty, his gift can develop into a ministry. Different gifts can grow into different ministries. “There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.” This means that all ministries belong to the Lord and are included in the New Testament ministry of Christ. This is also the meaning of the singular “field” in that verse—the field is the field of the New Testament ministry.

Paul goes even further—he shows that the effectiveness, or the result, of every ministry is entirely in God’s hands. So, if a certain saint’s ministry is large and fruitful, it is something given by God, and therefore he has no reason to be proud. Likewise, if the portion God has entrusted to you is simply a few saints around you whom you are caring for, you should not feel that it is insignificant, because the effectiveness comes from God.

Sister Margaret E. Barber dedicated her entire life to China. In Fuzhou, she trained only a few young people. When she passed away, only Brother Watchman Nee was by her side. Watchman Nee testified many times that Sister M.E. Barber was one of the most spiritual persons he had ever met in the West. From a human perspective, spending a lifetime to train just one person might seem like a waste; yet God wants to say that without Sister M. E. Barber’s nurturing, there would have been no Watchman Nee. Brother Nee’s ministry has blessed tens of thousands of saints, and all of these credits must be recorded under Sister Margaret E. Barber’s name. Though there are differences in effectiveness, God is one, and He works all things in all people.

You and I can lodge in the villages. The field is singular, but the villages are plural. The Lord’s field is truly vast, truly rich, and truly inclusive. There is only one field, yet many villages; the villages are the resting places for those who labor in the field. The Hebrew word for village is kaphar. In Song of Songs 1:14, it says, “My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En Gedi.” The Hebrew word for henna blossom is kopher. Since Hebrew only records consonants, henna blossom and village share the same root family of words. In the vineyards of En Gedi, the hardworking saints fix their eyes on the henna blossom, which is a type

of the Lord. When these laboring saints are gained and constituted by the Lord, villages are produced. In the Lord's vast field, there are many laboring saints; as they are all constituted, many villages arise.

He invites the Lord to go to the field, and at night they can lodge in the villages. Not only is the Lord vast and inclusive, but this saint is also broad-minded; he is able to work together with saints who have ministry roles and also to live with them. To put it in today's terms, this saint can visit various churches, serve in different churches, and be welcomed by all of them. He has completely broken through the limitations of denominational boundaries; he does not develop a great ministry for himself but becomes a blessing to many churches.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope we can all be equally broad-minded—not dividing or categorizing others by how they interpret the Scriptures, not by how they practice their faith, nor by how their churches are governed. On the one hand, we must be faithful to the trust God has given us, but on the other hand, we must also be broad and inclusive, embracing and accepting all the saints who have been graciously saved.

Verse 12: “Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open, and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.”

He invites the Lord to go together to the field, to lodge in the various villages at night, and in the morning to go to the vineyards. Here, the word “vineyards” is plural; within the Lord's vast field, there are still many vineyards. It is like when he first began to love the Lord, he complained to Him that his brothers of the same mother wanted him to watch over their vineyards, but his own vineyard was left unattended. He had experienced this, so he knew that in the process of life's growth, such things will surely happen—that everyone highly values their own vineyard.

He does not condemn, and he does not even teach; he simply goes to each vineyard to see whether the grapes have sprouted or blossomed. He has a keen spiritual discernment, understanding the needs of the saints at different stages. He is willing to observe and to supply their needs. Some have sprouted—their spiritual life has been released and begins to sprout; some have blossomed—their spiritual life has already been manifested. He carefully observes their different needs and comes to help them exactly where they need it most.

He is willing to rise early in the morning to go with the Lord to the vineyards, diligently caring for the needs of each individual saint. He understands that the process of the grapevine bearing fruit is a long one; sprouting is a critical stage, and blossoming is another key stage—both requiring special care and supply. He does not focus on unhealthy conditions; he does not teach or correct but simply sees the needs of the people and provides the necessary help.

Has the pomegranate put forth its buds? When the pomegranate flower is in full bloom, it is very bright and large, extremely attractive. But blooming is only a process; the goal is to bear abundant fruit. For many saints, the blossoming of the pomegranate is a difficult trap to overcome. When the pomegranate blooms, it attracts so much attention and brings so much praise and applause that people often linger and forget to move forward. It is like Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, seeing Jesus' transformed appearance—so holy, so glorious. Peter wanted to stay on the mountain, yet he forgot that below the mountain there were people possessed by demons and even demons he could not cast out; there was work to be done, and he still had much room to grow.

Similarly, the blossoming of the pomegranate is only a process; the true value of the pomegranate has two aspects. First, inside the pomegranate are many seeds, symbolizing a rich and full life; to bloom without bearing fruit means losing the very value of the pomegranate's existence—that is, having a rich and abundant life. Second, in front of the temple there are two bronze pillars, and at the tops of these pillars are two rows of pomegranates; bronze signifies judgment, and the pillars serve as support. To express a rich life, one must also go through judgment or testing in order to become a pillar, to become a support of the church. This saint

has already passed through the four stages of life growth; he knows how to help the saints, and he is willing to see whether the pomegranate has put forth its buds. He deeply cares whether the saints can grow to become pillars of the church.

“I will give my love to you there.” It is he who invites the Lord to come together to the field, to enter the vineyards together, to observe whether the grapes have sprouted and bloomed, whether the pomegranates have put forth buds. From the outside, it seems as though he is working alongside the Lord, but right there, he desires to give his love to the Lord. He is completely not work-oriented; in the work, he enjoys the Lord’s love and also gives his love to the Lord. The word for love here is the Hebrew word *dod*, which is masculine and means “much love.” This word has traditionally been used to describe the Lord’s love. Here, by using the masculine love, he expresses that he has experienced the Lord’s love, been filled with the Lord’s love, and now loves the Lord with the Lord’s own love. By saying “much,” it indicates that every part of him has been touched by the Lord’s love, enabling him to overflow with abundant love.

Verse 13: “The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved.”

When it comes to love toward the Lord, this saint cannot stop expressing how deeply subjective and profound his love for the Lord is, a love that words cannot fully convey. Therefore, he continues to describe the spikenard, the fruit of love, whose root contains an aphrodisiac and emits a special fragrance that stirs passion. In Genesis 30:14-18, Reuben found the spikenard in the grain fields and brought it to his mother Leah. Rachel wanted the spikenard so much that she allowed Jacob to sleep with Leah. After they slept together, Leah bore Issachar, whose name means “there is a reward.” When this saint is with the Lord, the spikenard gives off its fragrance, declaring the valuable and passionate love between him and the Lord.

Within our gates, there are all kinds of fresh and well-preserved beautiful fruits. He lodges with the Lord in various villages, and not only does the spikenard give off its

fragrance, but at each gate, he also places all kinds of fresh and well-preserved beautiful fruits. "Fresh" refers to something new in time—new experiences, new understanding, new gains, new touchings. The love between him and the Lord is always so fresh and lively that he can offer new fruit. "Well-preserved" does not mean the fruit is old or moldy—such spoiled fruit cannot be presented. Rather, it means fruit that can be kept for a long time, perhaps made into preserved fruit, which has a different flavor. Without fresh fruit, there would be no well-preserved fruit, because the fresh fruit is so abundant and enjoyable that what remains is refined into well-preserved fruit. When love has been tested through time, it reveals even greater sweetness and preciousness. "Beautiful" means the finest fruit. He has placed fresh, well-preserved, and beautiful fruit at the gates.

My beloved, all these I have kept for you. The time he spends with the Lord is truly so beautiful and wonderful; he carefully preserves all kinds of fresh, well-preserved, and beautiful fruit so that the Lord can fully enjoy them. If here we were to add the phrase "until you come," this would actually be the most perfect conclusion to the Song of Songs. Going together with the Lord into the field; going together to see the vineyards; lodging together in the villages; enjoying their mutual love together—this is already the best and highest, beyond which nothing can be better or higher. But the Song of Songs does not stop here; there is still chapter 8.

It turns out that he spoke excitedly with many words, but the Lord was silent, saying nothing, just like the Selah in the Psalms; here the Lord adds a pause. The first few verses of Song of Songs chapter 8 are indeed not easy to understand. The layers in Song of Songs are far richer than we imagine; we think it's the end, but instead, it is like coming to a new scene beyond the dark willows and bright flowers—another village appears.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have been reading Song of Songs together for nine weeks. We have gone through the four stages of a saint's spiritual growth and also read about the kind of service that should be present when life matures. Although some experiences are very high and we may not yet reach them, thank the Lord, at least we should be aware that such progress exists. When our life's growth passes through certain stages, we can compare ourselves with what is described in Song

of Songs, which reminds us to actively keep moving forward. Especially in service, Song of Songs does not tell us what specific work to do, but it tells us what kind of people we should become in our service. Just like this saint, from beginning to end, everything about him is for the Lord, so that the Lord can enjoy and be satisfied.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for raising our vision. Let us see that true service is not about us working for You, but allowing You to work in and through us. Through every service we engage in, You work within us so that we become people pleasing to Your heart. Our service is the natural outflow of life, the natural result of the love between You and us. May this revelation adjust our service so that we no longer serve for the sake of work, but so that You may be fully satisfied and delighted. Bless my service in the church. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.