

Sermon about Song of Songs on 3rd Advent 2022 in Brussels (text for 2nd/V)

Greeting: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.

Bible: 8 The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. 9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. 10 My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, 11 for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. 12 The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. 13 The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Sermon: 1. *The other Advent:* What do you expect from Advent and Christmas? What images do you have in mind? What "has to be" for it to be Christmas for you? Cosy hours in dimmed light with tea, punch and biscuits? Christmas market? That's what you would probably hear from many people, even if the reality is usually different. As Christians, we also have Bible passages in our ears that we expect to hear during Advent. And songs, of course. - Although, - if you pay close attention to the texts of our traditional Advent chorales, our images of Advent and Christmas should be cracking.

And then this: " The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. [...] Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land." - We listen! We pause. Is this Advent? Can it be?

2. *Departure into freedom:* A love poem full of longing and eroticism for the High Advent. Wake up! Open wide the gates! Let in the fresh air and go out! Your lover is coming and wants to lead you into the fresh spring air! Come! It is called for life. Lightness. In Hebrew, the same words are used here as God says to Abraham: "lechi-lach" - come, come out! Get up and go! The invitation and the departure cannot be understood in a big enough way. Come out and go into the open, into the unknown but promising new land, into the freshness of spring, into the dawn of life, into freedom! - Yes, you too are meant! Your beloved loves and means and calls you. Come and set out into freedom! You are called, you are meant!

3. *Longing for you:* Look out of the window! Your beloved is leaping and running fast and is already there. Leaping light-footed like a gazelle over the hills - not like tons weighing, destructive tanks that only bring violence and destruction and know nothing of love. Not like people who bring frosty, icy standstill into your life and your relationships full of dependencies with their manner, their behaviour, their words or even their silence. No, cheerfully, gently, lovingly, considerately. Look out of the window, between the crevices of your blocked, small life, from the other side someone full of love and desire is looking at you, peering into your life and searching for you. He, she wants to be very close to you. " Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away!"

4. *Passionate love:* Advent means the intrusion of the radically different into your life - like a fresh love that makes everything else fade away. All the other things are no longer so important. There is only the longing and the fulfilment in the proximity of the beloved. That is how God comes into the world. That is how God comes to you. God does not make your world just a little bit cosier, homelier, more Christmas-scented. God changes your life dramatically -

loneliness becomes togetherness, despair becomes hope, strife becomes reconciliation, lostness becomes being found, meaning and purpose, darkness becomes light. God brings great, passionate love into life. Here clearly not a gentle, looking-down, helping love that knows a giver and a receiver of alms, but physical passion. Not seductive, not captivating. It is an encounter at eye level. The "beloved" here is called "dodi" in Hebrew. That is clear. It is translated exactly as the lover. The word vibrates and crackles enormously. The lover entices and courts you. That's what God is like - he loves and entices and woos passionately for you. It is also a physical love. We know where it has led God. Love and pain are so close together when it is not answered by one side.

5. *Shalom for all:* In the Jewish-Christian tradition, the Song of Songs is attributed to King Solomon and his beloved Shulammit. The original Hebrew names of the two are Schlomo and Schulamit - both names contain the root "shalom". So this great, passionate love, if it is lived in this way, is a guarantee that all people have enough to live for, have life enough, that they have satisfaction and can therefore be happy in a pacified world.¹ That is what the peace of "shalom" means. That is what God wants for all people. In a time when dreams do not seem to be fulfilled, it is said: "Look, the war is over, the bloodshed is over..."²

Aim – In paradise: "He comes, he comes with will, / Is full of love and desire," Paul Gerhardt sings about Advent. And that means the spring wind of change. A breath of springtime paradise air blows in at the door. Very soon, at Christmas, we will sing with Nikolaus Hermann "He is the key and He the door / To blessed paradise." Advent no longer means the arrival of a little child in nappies, but

¹ Vgl. Magdalene L. Frettlöh. Predigtmeditation über Hld 2, 8-13 in GPM #77/1. Seite 20. Göttingen 2022.

² A.a.O. Seite 22.

the arrival of the full-grown, passionate lover in the doorway to paradise. He wants you! You with him in the wideness that is heaven!

Blessing: And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.