

Song of Solomon 8:8-14

Song of Solomon 8:11,12 King Solomon may have vast vineyards in lush fertile country, where he hires others to work the ground. People pay anything to get in on that bounty. But my vineyard is all mine, and I'm keeping it to myself. You can have your vast vineyards, Solomon, you and your greedy guests! (The Message)

Well, what could you possibly add after the tribute to love in verses 6 and 7? Verses 8-14 are inevitably an answer to that question. They do not match the eloquence of the thought that they follow but they may serve to restate and emphasize the fundamental values of the Song.

Our subjective theory of the book has been that it was written by Solomon as an old man and that its composition was for him a wistful experience as he identified the values of intimacy in a committed relationship, something that was foreign to his own experience. The Song then wishes for others what Solomon never had for himself. If we could entertain a very speculative thought, as Proverbs was written for young men (with Solomon's own son's in view), the Song could have been written for young women (with Solomon's own daughters in view). Though few would

go so far, it is true that the principal character in the book is the Shullamite woman and the self-assertion that seems natural for her was very unusual in the culture but consistent with the humanity and personal responsibility of all persons, male or female, who are equally the creation of God. The independence and confidence of the Shullamite would make any father proud if that father believed that his daughter was smart, responsible and as deserving of respect as any man.

So, these final verses present 3 contrasts. The first is between how the young woman is seen by her older brothers and how she sees herself. The brothers may have good motives (or maybe not) but they see little sister as vulnerable and needing their protection (from men and possibly from herself) They do not consider that they have become a wall themselves between their sister and her own happiness or personal fulfillment. She does see this and she is not willing to continue to exist as a pawn in a game played by her brothers. She knows that she is a complete and whole person and she has the capacity and right to make her own choices.

The second contrast is drawn between King Solomon and the young man who has

chosen to pursue commitment and intimacy with his one young woman. The king's wealth is infamous and the people have come in droves to try to insert themselves into the enterprise that King Solomon has become. The young man sees this as a picture of humanity striving and competing and struggling in a vain effort to accumulate treasure. In contrast, there is nothing in all of that which is attractive to him. He only wants what he has, "My vineyard is all mine and I'm keeping it to myself." His "vineyard" is a metaphor for his wife and of the mutual and exclusive love they share. In his own life he understands there is a wealth and satisfaction that, too often, is missed by those who look for it in all the wrong places.

The final contrast is seen in the apparent disconnection between the couple as he calls to her and she replies in an ambiguous and possibly distant and yet also possibly promising manner. The merging of two lives into one takes work. If you marry an independent and confident young woman who makes up her own mind, she will likely continue to do the same. Intimacy is not the domination of one party by another. It is the voluntary and mutual coming together of two, who remain two, while they are one.