

Sermon of hope: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

I speak to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sometimes as a preacher, it is hard to turn and grapple with the gospel lesson for the Sunday. There are many reasons people choose to preach on the Old and New Testament lessons of the lectionary instead of the gospel. From my perspective the gospel is not calling me to preach as much as Song of Songs and Psalm 45 are.

This week I received two phone calls from Malcolm, Devitt and Binhammer's Funeral Home within an hour of each other. Two different people, Verla Handke, and Audrey Goldberg had died and their funerals needed to be arranged. Each were on Friday at 11:00am at Zion and Saturday at 10:30am at the Funeral Chapel respectfully. From the funeral on Sat morning I then took off to Katie Rutz and Mitch McGregor's wedding in Renfrew for 2:00pm. You know that game "Never have I ever..." Well, never have I ever raced around like that before. There have been several other events that have happened at Zion recently

also: two baptisms within the last month, and a wedding last Saturday. Oh, and who can forget the birth of a first grandchild to the Vandersleens.

These funerals, weddings, baptisms and births are glorious. List them how you will in whatever order, all these “rites of passage” have one thing in common: the people involved are loved and precious children of God.

The Old Testament lesson from Song of Solomon, is a text I often will give to couples to consider using as they prepare for marriage. It is a poetic love song. Looking at it as poetry and not just a love song I cannot help but think of Jesus. Remember Jesus’ baptism? When Jesus was washed in the water, the skies opened and God said, “This is my Son, the Beloved with whom I am well pleased.”

This month and this week we experienced the love of God in many ways. The baptism of children only weeks apart...such a joyful occasion. A time to play in the waters of new life. A time for all of us to ponder questions of faith. A time to bless those being

baptized with our love. A time to experience God's love come down. A time to experience resurrection and new hope!

At the funerals of Verla Handke and Audrey Goldberg on Friday and Saturday we celebrated their lives and their commitment to faith. Although they may not have been able to get to church much anymore, they never forgot whose they were: God's children.

When reading the Song of Solomon text, I imagine God calling them home and these words coming to life for them:

¹⁰ My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; ¹¹ for now 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 puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

In other words, your life on this earth is complete. No more burdens. A beautiful life complete as it surrounds us, complete in

God's perfect creation. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away to be with me in God's heavenly paradise.

Song of Songs or Solomon is a love letter from not only a female to a male but also too the world from God. Living in the completeness of the resurrection, God has chosen to come to us to experience new life and new hope.

God chooses you as he has created every life in his image, descends as the Holy Spirit at baptism, claim us as his children in the life passage of death, and resurrects us from death, and sin. Our God is good. May the blessings he grants to us be yours now and forever. Amen.