

Trinity Church
July 12, 2008

Marriage of Kendall Lears and David Bacon
Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7; Colossians 3:12-17

A Sermon Preached by The Rev. James C. Ransom

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

There are many love stories in the Bible, more than you would think there were on the face of it. Some have said, quite rightly, that the whole Bible is a love story, the saga of God's courtship with us, God's stubborn and reluctant object of God's affection. We neglect God, ignore God, and even give God a hard time, or a piece of our anger, but each time God looks upon us with deeper affection, sees in us even greater beauty, and whispers to us: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Come away into my love.

Now what I have just said may well be a good theological interpretation of that text, but it would be incomplete if we didn't recognize that this beautiful poem is a real love song between two real people who are deeply in love. Two people like David and Kendall. Today, in fact, these words are what all of us see when we look at the two of you. We see that these words have taken on flesh and blood, genuine affection, fiery, passionate love. You gaze at each other with the love that God has for us. You speak words of love to one another that God speaks to us. You sing a divine song: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." These Scriptural words mean nothing if we cannot see them come to life in your faces. Kendall and David, awake in divine love.

When you look at stories about love and marriage in the Bible, they reveal a great deal to us. Remember Isaac and Rebekah. When Abraham and his son, Isaac, decided that Isaac should marry, they sent a servant to Abraham's clan, his kinsfolk, to find him a wife. It was the computer dating service of the day. Abraham's servant arrived in Haran and was perplexed. How was he going to be able to match up Isaac with the right girl? How would he know? He knew it was impossible without God, so he rose early, came near the well where Abraham's clan drew water, and prayed. God heard his prayer and said, wait for the woman who is kind, who when you ask her, will draw water from the well and give you and your company a drink. And just as he was praying, Rebekah came to the well. Her radiant and generous hospitality moved Abraham's servant, and he knew that she was the one. When Isaac saw her, even far off, he loved her, and, as they say, they lived happily ever after. Radiant generosity is the face of God's affection, mirrored in human love. Isaac's for Rebekah; Kendall's for David. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Rebekah's son, Jacob, has his story to tell, and it involves a well of water. Lots of people fall in love in the summer at the pool. When Jacob saw Rachel, herding her father's sheep to the pool to drink, he fell instantly in love with her, love at first sight. He made a deal with Laban, her father, that he would work seven years, a week of years, for her hand. Laban was a scoundrel and schemer. Parents do have a way of interfering in their children's search for love. When it came time for Jacob to marry his beloved Rachel, Laban put Leah, Rachel's older sister, under the marriage veil. He married the wrong girl. This would have been enough to drive any normal man away from so dysfunctional a family. But Jacob loved Rachel; his heart was hers, and she loved him. He would be faithful to her for ever. He worked another seven years for Laban, and they were wed. Faithfulness and perseverance are the face of God's love for us. We see that love in Jacob's radiant and persistent love for his beloved Rachel. We see it today in David's

love for his beloved Kendall. This marriage has been coming for a long time. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

When Ruth and Naomi come to Bethlehem as poor homeless widows, their only source of food was to glean the fields after the reapers, gathering up fragments of the crop left behind after the harvest. When Boaz saw Ruth gleaning for Naomi and for herself, he was moved. Ruth was a foreigner. She could have gone home to her family. Instead, she stood by her mother-in-law to care for her. "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people will be my people; your God, my god." Boaz respected this sacrifice and compassion. It was beautiful. So, he told his reapers to do a sloppy job in the field and leave whole sheaves of grain for her, and in the winnowing, to make sure she had enough barley. Soon, though, Ruth's compassion and devotion to Naomi, that Boaz respected deeply, turned to affection for her, and Ruth and Boaz were married, even though she was a foreigner. The face of God's love is sacrifice, compassion, and devotion, mirrored in the face of Ruth and the affection of Boaz. We see this devotion when we look at David and Kendall today. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

It is this kind of love that Paul describes in the Letter to the Colossians. Compassion, kindness, humility, patience, acceptance, forbearance. This, he says, together with forgiveness, is how those who love God put on their love for one another. This love binds us together in perfect harmony, so that the peace of Christ may rule in their hearts.

Today is a day of great joy. The love of Rebekah for Isaac is here. The love of Boaz for Ruth is here. The love of God for us is here. The love of David for Kendall and Kendall for David is before our eyes. In their love we can hear God's whisper to us. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.