

Sermon: - In the name of the F of the S and the HS. Amen. At Last Mid-Week Service, we celebrated Robert Burns birthday, with Haggis and mulled wine, when George Hamilton was sharing about Robert Burns' life, I had an Epiphany, realising similarities between King Solomon's and Robert Burns' romantic poetry. For the final ten years of his life Burns was asked, to preserve traditional Scottish songs for the future, so he had preserved over 300 songs, it is debatable which one is the most famous "Auld Lang Syne" or My love is like, a Red Red Rose. The lyrics of the both songs are simple but very effective and meaning full. Both, King Solomon and Robert Burns expressed their deep desire, to have an intimate relationship with their beloveds. I wonder how many of us have been in love relationship and willing to express our experiences openly? Please don't raise your hands. That might be too much information in the church. Just think about it. For those of us who have been in love, try to remember those first, heady days when time either flew by, or stood still, when our heart, mind and body together yearned, just to be with our beloved. The butterflies in our stomach as we approached the place where our beloved was, or waited for our beloved's visit. If being in love isn't a good memory for some of us, then remember the longing for a beloved friend or relative, the comfort of his or her presence. Think of how that felt in our body, soul, and spirit the sense of longing, in absence, and of delight in reuniting, the ways that it has changed over time. This is what the Songs of Solomon tries to describe. I invite you to go home and read the whole thing. It's only about 120 verses long, romantic poetry. For some of us it might be confusing, since it doesn't conform to, what we have been led to believe is "proper" biblical courtship ought to be. It's pretty racy, and even the marital status of the couple is terribly unclear. It can be Shocking when we first time discover such Epiphany in the songs of Solomon. Where a woman describes hearing the voice of her beloved, knowing that he is coming, towards her. He stands outside the walls of the house, trying to get in, to catch a glimpse of her. In addition to the plain meaning of the text as simple love poetry, there is a long tradition, of reading this book as an allegory, for the relationship of God, with the people of Israel, and later, for the relationship of Christ with the Church. When this sort of imagery is used, that of longing, desire, & need for God, that explains we cannot rest, until we rest in the presence of God through worship, prayer & meditation. What if it's God, who is also longing for us too & racing to find us, as a father of the prodigal son did, and a beloved running over hills and peeking through the windows of our heart, calling to each one of us, Arise, my love, my sons and daughters and come back to me"? You have lost your loving relationship with me, as we read, Jesus complains to the church, that you have lost your first love, in the book of revelation. Take those memories I invited you to recall, those of loving and being loved, that sense of urgency and longing, and imagine yourself as God's beloved. Imagine it in thought, and emotion, and body, the presence and loving touch of God and his anointing in our lives. This might be a wonderful experience, a reminder of the love, that we proclaim each Sunday when we worship Him together as a Church, we do it as the bride of Christ. Some of us might doubt, that this could not be true, or feel impossible to have such relationship of intimacy and longing with our creator. It might make us feel hopeful or uncomfortable, that how God could long for us in such a passionate way. We all have different experiences, and expressions of love, but this is the power of the metaphor. Even our own mixed responses to love, reflect that we are dealing with something beyond our ability to control, ability to reckon or grasp, something that we can approach only in metaphors from thoughts, feelings, sensations, coloured by our history and cultures, and limited by our language. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, gave a presentation several years ago, called "The Body's Grace." The body theology. It is a wonderful and wise exploration of where spirituality and sexuality meet, and well worth reading. Let me tell you Superior love in Hinduism, is considered, for a divine purpose. The end of life is relief from rebirth, or transfer from the ordinary to the holy life.

This liberation or transition combines Atma (the self-soul) with Brahman, the final supernatural being. Devotional love plays a determinative role, in the whole religious practice; family love, married love and all secular forms of love, are sub-ordinate to the divine love or emotional love of God. In the 13th century there was a Muslim poet, a Sufi mystic, called Rumi. He got this idea of mystical connection between romantic, erotic love and the encounter with God. In Sufism, Hinduism and Pentecostal churches there is a place for romantic spiritual worship dance for God. Rumi wrote thousands of romantic poems, pushing boundaries, blurring the lines we tend to draw between the sacred and profane, to the status of mystical epiphany. In this poem, he echoes the Song of Songs: There is some kiss, we want with our whole lives, longing for the touch of spirit on the body. In his poetry, Seawater begs the pearl to break its shell. And how passionately, the lily longs for a wild darling's kiss! In another poem, he wrote, At night, I open the window and ask the moon, to come and press its face against mine. Breathe into me. Close the door of speech, and open the window of love. The moon won't use the door, only the window. This same idea of peeking in through the window, the sense of longing to be in touch, in such an intimate contraction, which fills us with our own breath. I hope you remember the story when God created Adam He breathed the breath of life. We do proclaim a God, who, like the lover in the Song of Songs, like Burns' red red rose or Rumi's moon, presses up against the window of our hearts and minds, longs for an encounter with us. So how do we respond to the longing of God? just to ignore or Experience God's presence as intimate as our breath entering our body. Listen for the ways, in which God is not only in our mind and heart, but also in our body. Remember those places and people that have the spark of life for us, that give us energy, joy, and delight, in the same way God is always around us as a source of abundant joy and eternal life. Let's Listen with our ears, eyes, our hearts our guts and our minds. Remember God in our sacramental Eucharist, or we can call it the Sacrament of the Holy Communion, where we are invited, to bring our whole bodies to see, hear, taste, smell and touch the body of Christ. We too can Look, through the windows of our heart, because Jesus has taught us that it is there we will find Him. The Bible is like God's Face Book we can add God on our face book as a friend if we wish and we can have a wee chat with God through worship, prayer and meditation. Let's open our hearts to the Lord and express our love as we have a few moments of silent reflection.