

Rev.Iain Macritchie - Awake O North Wind

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 August 2018

Preacher: Guest Preacher

- [0 : 0 0] If we could turn back this evening for a short time to the chapter that we read together in Song of Solomon chapter 4.
- Song of Solomon chapter 4 and I'd like us to take for our text this evening the words that we have in verse 16. Song of Solomon chapter 4 verse 16.
- Awake O North Wind and come O South Wind. Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its choicest fruits.
- Awake O North Wind, come O South. The Song of Solomon is a book that very much uses the language of love in order to stir up the affections of the Lord's people.
- It's a book that points us as the bride of Christ to yearn for a taste of the love of the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, and for us to know him as we read as something that is better than wine.
- [1 : 2 4] You'll have noticed that as we read the chapter the wording here very much uses the language of physical beauty.
- Why is this? Why is it that we have such vivid imagery here in these words? Well friends here what we have is an expression of the most beautiful relationship there is – the relationship between Christ and his bride, the church.
- See it's virgin when remarking on the song of Solomon he said, if I must prefer one book above another I would prefer some books of the Bible for doctrine, some for experience, some for example, some for teaching.
- But let me prefer this book above all others for fellowship and communion. When the Christian is nearest to heaven this is the book he takes with him.
- Now sadly many modern commentators they've reduced this book to nothing more than a letter from King Solomon to an unnamed bride and that its sole purpose is to act as an example of what a loving relationship between a husband and a wife should look like.
- [2 : 5 5] That might be the case but yet it's so much more than that. And for us to accept such a limited view of the song of Solomon is for us to have such a wrong view of scripture.
- You remember in Luke 24 when Christ met with the two on the road to Emmaus and he began with Moses and the prophet he interpreted to them the whole of scripture and he said that in interpreting the whole of scripture he was interpreting the things concerning himself.
- And so friends all through scripture from Genesis to Revelation Christ is here on every single page.
- He might not be mentioned by name but he's here. The book of Esther is a prime example of this. Not once in the whole of the book of Esther will you find the name of Jesus.
- Yet we would never say that the book of Esther is merely a story about a young girl who rises up to become a queen. The fact is that in this book we see the hand of providence guiding and preserving the nation of Israel.

[4 : 16] Why? So that in due course from this nation and the fullness of time the Messiah would come. Christ himself would come.

And so it's always important friends that we read the Old Testament very much with an eye to look for Christ in it. Some Solomon at the beginning of the book in chapter one it calls itself the song of songs.

Meaning the greatest or the most supreme of songs. Now while of course the Bible undoubtedly has a really high view of marriage we must never forget that.

We must also not think that as high a view as it has of marriage that it has an even higher view of this type of marriage than of that redemptive love that Christ has for his people.

So friends I think we have a problem if we start concluding that this is a song about a romance or that we conclude that the greatest song would rank above a song on God's glory and redemptive love.

[5 : 34] The fact is that throughout scripture we often see marriage as a metaphor for the Lord's union with his people. There are many examples that could be given.

You see in Matthew 22 we read of Christ saying that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a wedding feast. While in Revelation 19 we read of the marriage supper of the Lamb where the marriage of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready.

So friends if we're to understand the song of Solomon in the context of scripture as a whole and in the light of the covenantal relationship of his people we're to see that this is a song from Christ to his bride, his people.

So with this in mind friends let us turn to our text this evening which we find in verse 16 of this song. Awake O North Wind and come O South Wind Blow upon my garden let its spices flow, let my beloved come to his garden and eat its choicest fruits.

The bride is here asking for the wind to blow upon her garden. And like so much of the song that is in this request such rich and vivid imagery the wind of course here is symbolizing the Holy Spirit and the garden is here the garden of her soul.

[7 : 14] Of course throughout scripture we read of the Holy Spirit often being referred to as the wind. Perhaps one of the most familiar references to this can be found in the Gospel of John 3 and verse 8.

Here we see Jesus telling Nicodemus that he must be born again. Then following that he goes on to say that the wind blows where it wishes that's the Spirit.

The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it but you cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

You cannot see the wind as it so frequently howls around us in this part of the world but yet we know the wind is there.

How do we know the wind is there because we see the effects of the wind. We see the destruction of the wind. We see the wind moving things.

[8 : 16] So friends it is with the Holy Spirit. We cannot see the Holy Spirit. We cannot hear the Holy Spirit. We cannot touch the Holy Spirit.

Yet we can so clearly see His power. We see His power and perhaps you've seen this yourself when someone you know has been converted.

Someone you know has started following Christ. You've seen such a difference in their life. Yes they're the same person but yet there's something different.

There's something that wasn't there before. We knew that's motivating them and driving them through life. Friends we see the power of the Spirit when a sinner is taken from darkness to light, from death to life.

What is it that has left many of us here? We can wake out. What is it that's left many of us professing the name of Jesus as our saviour?

[9 : 21] Is it our own natural desire? Absolutely not. The Bible tells us that the carnal mind is enmity or the carnal mind hates the things of God and so it is.

By nature we're not drawn to the things of God. We want to run away from Him as I said this morning. But when the Spirit starts working just like a magnet we are drawn to the Lord Jesus.

We are unable to turn our backs. Shorter Catechism tells us that reminds us even that effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds on the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as freely offered to us in the Gospel.

It's a Holy Spirit that convinces us of our sin and misery, who enlightens our minds on the knowledge of Christ, who renews our wills and persuades and enables us to embrace Christ as he is freely offered.

Friends, I wonder if you have embraced Christ for yourself. Have you been convinced of your own sin and misery?

[10 : 46] Are you convinced even of your need of a Saviour or are you quite happy going through life without Christ? Well friends, if you have had this in your experience, the power of this great work, it will be evident not only to yourself but to all those around you as they see that you have been born again.

And Corinthians 5.17 tells us that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold the new has come.

All things become new when we are in Christ. Friends, often times nowadays people think that the Christian can have a foot in the world and a foot in the church, that the Christian can live as he or she did before and profess to be the Lord.

That's not what the Bible tells us. All things become new. We don't have that desire to be flirting with the sinful things of the world as we once did.

We don't have that desire to be in those dens of iniquity that we once loved to be in. All that's gone, all that's taken away.

[12 : 08] And what a wonderful freedom that is. When we know that freedom for ourselves, we know that we have a seed that is planted in the garden that is talked of here.

And here we see the, in our text, the bride, the church of Christ that has already had that seed planted in the garden of her soul. That work of the Spirit carried out within her, reconciling her to Christ.

So why is it that she's here asking for the wind of the Spirit to blow on the garden of her soul? Well, this is a garden that is so full of good things, a garden that is full of pleasant fruits and spices.

You know, when the Spirit works in us, savantly, when the Lord sows the seed of regeneration in our souls, there comes something in us that has never been there before.

What is that? It's the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5, 22, 23 reminds us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

[13 : 39] Friends, these are all the graces that make up the one fruit of the Spirit. This is the fruit that grows in the garden of the soul of the believer and that ought to make it such an attractive place.

But yet, just like any other garden, in order for this garden to grow and to flourish as it ought, in order for this garden to be as fruitful as it can be, it needs to be nurtured.

It needs to be cultivated. It needs to be worked at. I don't know if any of you here can think of any gardens in the past, perhaps when you were a child, that when you would go past and admire the beauty of that garden, a perfectly manicured lawn, flowers that were growing so beautifully, not a weed in sight, someone who took meticulous care in ensuring that that garden was looking its best.

And now, perhaps years later, you go past the same house, you look at the garden, it's almost unrecognizable, the weeds have grown in, the grass is nothing more than a wilderness and it's completely unrecognizable.

For whatever reason, it's been neglected and completely overgrown. You know, friends, Christian friend, it is the same with the garden of our soul.

[15 : 09] Although the Spirit has taken us from death to life, as I said, this doesn't mean that our souls are to be neglected. When we come and when we profess Christ as our Lord, when we sit at His table, that's not the end of the story, friends.

That is just the beginning. It's not enough to say I am a member of this church. It's not enough to say I am on the communion wall. It's not enough to say I come, weaken, weak out.

Friends, we need to feed the garden of our soul. We need to feed these graces because if we don't, what will happen? They'll soon become submerged.

They'll soon be stifled and suffocated under the world, the flesh and the devil, unable to grow, unable to make any real progress.

How then do we feed this garden? How do we cultivate this garden? Well, Paul in 1 Corinthians 3, 6 tells us that Paul plants a pollus water, but it is God and God alone that gives the increase.

[16 : 26] Once again, we're back to the Holy Spirit. It's a Holy Spirit and only the Holy Spirit that can make this fruit grow.

That's why we see here this prayer from the bride to the bridegroom. This is an acknowledgement that she needs the Spirit of the Lord to blow up on the garden of her soul so that this fruit will be ripe and of good use.

Some friends, it's not in any way presumptuous to pray for the Holy Spirit to work. Perhaps that's something in our day we've neglected.

It's not presumptuous to actively ask the Holy Spirit to work in our midst. In fact, the Lord Jesus tells us in Luke 11, 13, Jesus himself says, if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

How much more will He give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? To be really ask for the Holy Spirit, I mean really and truly and expectantly, please ask me, that the Holy Spirit would come into our midst and turn our communities upside down.

[17 : 57] That the Holy Spirit would come and convert all those around us, all those whom we know and love that would show them the wonderful news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for themselves.

Do we have that expectation? Or do we and me with you, do we as a church, do we carry on with it in our midst? In our own strength? Yes, doing our own outreach but not really expecting the Spirit to bless that?

Notice it appears here that the bride is asking for two winds, two spirits. Awake, O North Wind, come, O South Wind.

Now we know that there is only one Holy Spirit and so rather than asking for two spirits, she is asking here for the one Spirit to do two different things.

Firstly she says, awake, O North Wind. Notice that word, awake. Is she asking the Spirit to awake because the Spirit is asleep?

[19 : 08] Of course not. No person of the God had ever slumbered or sleeps like we do. But for the believer, for you and me, if we are in Christ, can't it sometimes feel like that?

Can't it sometimes feel like the Holy Spirit isn't there, that the Holy Spirit is asleep? Yes, we remember times in our experience when the Holy Spirit threw light to us and made the Word of God alive to us but not now.

That was then, not now. Now he's so far from us. Perhaps you even feel like that tonight as you sit here with us. But of course the reverse is through.

It's the bride, it's us, it's a church that is asleep and it's us that needs to be awakened by the Spirit. It's a church that isn't a spiritual slumber and sadly at times we as the church, we can almost be anaesthetized to the things of the Lord.

He can be unaware of his promptings even of his blessings. So in real practical terms what the believer is actually asking is that they will be awakened by the Spirit of the Lord.

[20 : 28] But what does this North Wind do? Well, we read in the Bible elsewhere that this North Wind was a powerful wind. This was a wind that could be cold and biting.

We read in Proverbs 25-3 that the North Wind brings forth rain, that it caused the clouds to be emptied in order to make way for better weather.

And in Job 37-22 we read that fair weather comes out of the North. And so here the bride is calling for all the clouds to be swept away so that once again the sky will be clear.

Isn't it true friends that many times we have the darkest of clouds hovering over the gardens of our soul?

The clouds of our sinful humanity? Clouds that are overshadowing the graces of our souls so that we and those around us, we can hardly see them.

[21 : 30] We forget that they are even there. Clouds that are blocking the sunlight so that these graces, they simply cannot grow. Clouds that at times seem so dark that you can hardly even remember a time without them.

Friends, if you're under such a cloud this evening, be assured that it needn't be that way. Be assured that these clouds can be removed if you truly, truly want them to be.

And dark clouds overshadow the garden, it's not because the sun has disappeared, the sun is always there, you just can't see it.

So it is with the Lord Jesus Christ. He can seem so far from us. Our providence can seem so bleak.

Our lives can seem so difficult. We're dealt a hard blow here and there and that. My friends is the reality of life and it can be hard, but yet he is always there.

[22 : 38] Christ is always there behind even the darkest of clouds. But of course the darkest cloud of all is the cloud of unrepentant sin.

The cloud of unbelief, the cloud that has these words echoing around it. I will not have this man to rule over me.

This is a cloud, friends, that will never ever lift. This is a cloud that will get darker and darker and heavier and heavier and yet a cloud that is absolutely nothing compared to the darkness that awaits the unbeliever for all eternity.

Are you sitting under that cloud this evening? Are you content sitting under that cloud this evening going into yet another week on life's journey, sitting under a cloud of unrepentant sin?

Friends is it true that you've not even caught a glimpse of the life-giving light that comes from the sun of righteousness?

[23 : 55] This reminds me of the story of the Highland Kitchen maid. The story tells of a minister Hector McPhail many, many years ago.

He was making his way south from Rosolis in the north of the Highlands down to Edinburgh for the General Assembly, the Church's General Assembly.

And as he made his way, he stopped off in Invernessshire in lodgings. And at the end of the night, before everyone went to bed, as was custom in those days, he invited everyone into the main room of the house to have worship.

That was the norm. And so he asked the innkeeper, is everyone here that should be here? To which the innkeeper said, yes, everyone's here except for the kitchen maid.

She's far too dirty to come in. Hector McPhail said, please, invite her in. This is for her. And he said, no, no, no, she's far too dirty to come in.

[24 : 59] She's been working. She can't possibly join us. But the minister insisted that she come in. And so she came in and she sat under the worship. And at the end of the worship, he managed to speak to this young kitchen maid.

And he said to her, do you pray? And she didn't know what he meant. She'd never heard of prayer. Do you have a concern for your soul?

He asked her, no. She didn't know anything about her soul. Completely ignorant. And so he said to her, I want you to do one thing for me.

I'm going down to Edinburgh. I know my way back. I'll come back and I'll see you. But I want you to do one thing for me in the meantime. I want you to pray this prayer.

Show me myself. Show me myself. So the young girl said, OK, I'll do that. She agreed to pray this prayer. And off he went to Edinburgh.

[26 : 01] He went to the assembly. And he came back and stayed in these lodgings once again on his way home. And again they gathered for worship at the end of the day.

And again the Highland kitchen maid was missing. And so he asked the innkeeper, where is this young girl? To which he got the response, well, since you left her the last time, that young girl has taken to her bed and she has not been able to get up.

And so he asked to see her. And there she was devastated. He asked her, what's wrong? She said, after I prayed that prayer, Lord, show me myself.

What I saw was so terrible I simply couldn't bear it. But he didn't leave her like that.

He said, ah, well, you pray these words now as I leave you. Show me thyself. And he left the girl and off he went. And many years later he had a knock on his door.

[27 : 07] And here was a grown woman. And she said, do you remember me? I'm that young kitchen maid who you told to pray all those years ago. You asked the Lord to show me myself.

He did that. But then he showed me himself. You see, here, this kitchen maid, she experienced that cold north wind of conviction.

It was uncomfortable. It was chilling. It was difficult as it rebuked her, as it even made her take to her bed. But yet this was a wind that was so necessary to awaken her, a wind that was necessary to bring her to that place where she would shed these bitter, sweet tears of repentance.

And friends, isn't that so often what happens when we come to Christ? We're shown ourself. I mean, why do we need a savior if we don't see ourselves as sinners in the first place?

But as I said, she wasn't left in that state. She prayed that second prayer. And in praying that second prayer, this Highland kitchen maid, she experienced the second wind that we read off here, the south wind, that wind that brought her out of her misery, that wind that the Lord's people long after, week after week, that warm, soothing wind of comfort that gladdens our heart when the Spirit does what the Spirit does best reveals to us, our savior.

[28 : 54] Thomas Manton said that God's mind is revealed in scripture, but we cannot see anything without the spectacles of the Holy Spirit.

Isn't that so? You might be here tonight, and you might look at the Bible. It's just a book. It's just words on a page. Why is that?

Because the Holy Spirit is not working in your heart. We pray that that would not last long. But that is the case. Friends, don't you desire for more of the south wind?

Don't you desire that instead of me with you going through the daily motions of religion, that you would once again enjoy that joy that is to be found when the Spirit gives you a lively appreciation for your savior, when you feel alive in the Lord, and when you want everyone around you to have what you have, when he makes his word fresh to you every day, when he makes fellowship with his people, something that you long for, something that you desire.

And surely it's time that once again we as a church, we began giving the Holy Spirit his rightful place, that we would depend on him as the only one who will reveal to us the things of Christ.

[30 : 23] You know, when the Church is in a spiritual slumber the temptation is always there to try and take the work of the Spirit into our own hands, to try and even recreate what only the Spirit can do.

Of course we know that this in the long term, it never ever really works. It's true to say, and please don't get me wrong on this, it's true to say that faith without works is dead.

We have to reach out to our communities. But surely the greatest work that we can do as the Lord's people is to be found pleading at a throne of grace each and every day, pleading that the Spirit would come and work in our midst.

Friends, that's where the labour is. That's where the hard graft is behind closed doors, where no one's able to see us, where we're not able to receive the applaud of men for doing this, that, and the next thing.

Friends, it's true that our pleading with the Spirit should undergird all that we do and all that we are as a Church.

[31 : 40] And then and only then are we fully equipped to go out and to take this good news to the community around us with that boldness that the Spirit alone can give.

Notice how the bride here asks for both. She doesn't care which wind blows, whether it's north or south, whether warm or cold.

You might think that's a strange thing, but surely it's a good sign when the believer has the same desire. Isn't it true that sometimes we can feel that the Spirit isn't speaking, that the Lord isn't speaking to us at all, that the Lord isn't speaking to us even through the cold winds of rebuke or the warm winds of comfort.

We just feel paralysed. We can't hear his voice anywhere. But yet the Scripture tells us that whom the Lord loves, he chastens.

And so for us to experience that north wind, it's a blessing to us. It's a reminder to us that we are indeed the children of God.

[32 : 51] So when you fall into sin, when you find yourself transgressing the law of God as a child of God, you take heart. Take heart when you feel the Spirit of the Lord rebuking you, when you feel that shame before your Savior.

The most fearful thing is not to have any desire for the Spirit to blow upon the garden of our soul, whether it to be comfort or rebuke, for our conscience to be as it were, seared with a hot iron, to be numbed, to be unaware of any promptings of the Spirit, because we've numbed our conscience with worldliness, with sin, with disobedience.

So take heart if you share this prayer tonight, if you crave the wind of the Spirit, because this is surely a sign that you are alive in Him, a sign that you desire to have communion, even renewed communion with your Lord.

You know, when this happens, when we're found as a church relying on the Spirit, it'll be evident. It'll be clear, not just to us, but to all those around us, because when the wind of the Spirit comes in great power, as He has in days gone by, we read here that the spices will flow out.

We read that in verse 16. What are these spices? Well, they are, of course, the graces in our heart, the fruit of the Spirit that I spoke of earlier, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

[34 : 45] And you know, in the same way that spices, they need to be beaten and worked at before their fragrance will come forth. So too do these graces in our hearts.

They need to be worked. They need to be exercised. They need to be worked before the fragrance of Christ will come forth. By nature, we cannot make these fragrances to carry ourselves, and so we need the Spirit.

Live, well, at least I did live until very recently in a house where there's a honeysuckle plant outside. And sometimes, if there's a gentle breeze, and I go past this honeysuckle plant, I can smell a smell that brings me back to my childhood.

Because when I was a young boy going to this house when my grandparents were there, I remember this honeysuckle plant. And it's funny how smells can take you to a place, how smells, how your senses can bring pictures to your mind.

And friends, as the Lord's people, if we have the wind of the Spirit blowing on our soul, we should have that sweet aroma of Christ all around us.

[36 : 04] Something that's different, something that those who are in our midst can't quite pinpoint, something that is even otherworldly.

Do you know we read, and this is disclosing with this, the greatest benefit of all of this, and in the last line of this verse, here we read, let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

Friends, when we plead for the Spirit to come, when we know the Spirit in our experience, we'll know the closeness of our beloved.

We'll enjoy that wonderful fellowship with our Savior. Charles Spurgeon quite rightly said that the nearer we are to God, the more graciously he will reveal himself to us.

What a revelation that is. Perhaps you don't know that revelation just yet in your own experience. Perhaps you're not a Christian.

[37 : 19] Perhaps what I'm saying here tonight to you means absolutely nothing, makes absolutely no sense. You don't know of this grace. Friends, I wonder if you are aware of what is growing in your soul, if you don't know Christ.

Are you aware of the overgrown wilderness that lies within, the thorns, the thistles, the weeds? All these things are keeping Christ out day after day, choking anything that might bring you to the Lord.

Even as you leave here this night, these things that will try and drown out what you've heard in this service, or even as you sit here in this service this night, these things that you're planning and plotting in your mind that are seeking to eliminate any thought of Christ, I think you know what I'm talking about.

I think you perhaps can even say yes. That is me. Friends, you needn't stay another day in that solemn state, because let me tell you it is solemn.

You needn't stay like that anymore, not one more day, because tonight there is a divine gardener here on offer to you in the Gospel.

[38 : 40] And you know, he is more than willing, more than willing to plant that precious seed of grace in your heart.

If only you will let him, will you let him? And if you do, his grace, his mercy, they will cover the weeds that are growing in the garden of your soul, so that your soul will begin to flourish, so that you will know what it is for the blood of Christ to cleanse you from all sin.

You will find that long last, that you have real meaning and purpose to life. You will find that you have a real reason to get out of your bed in the morning, not just going through the mundane routines of life.

Why? Because you know life like you will know life for all eternity. Life in Christ Jesus, awake, oh North Wind, come thou South, blow upon my garden that the spices thereof might flow out, let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

Dear friends, let it be so that you have this prayer for your good, but ultimately for God's glory. Amen. Let us join together in prayer.

[40 : 15] Let us pray. Lord God, our heavenly Father, we praise thy name, that it is indeed Paul plants, who plants in a pollus who waters, but it is God and God alone who gives the increase.

It is not by might, it is not by power, but by my spirit, alone saith the Lord of hosts. And we pray that thy spirit would be known not only in this congregation, but in our island, in our nation, where we would truly be brought to our knees, pleading to thee for mercy upon our never.