



1 I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. 2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. (Song of Solomon 2:1-2)

I am afraid many of my devotions overlap at many points over time; I consider that to be acceptable since the Holy Scriptures, too, overlap in many points over time. God is the Master Educator and He practices a very fundamental principle of education: "Repetition enhances recall." The more we hear a truth repeated, the better and longer we will remember it. Unfortunately, the same holds true for lies, and the world is quite adept at the constant reinforcement of lies to our learning.

I have written before of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys, but each time I read the text in Song of Solomon, 2:1, I see even more of the beauty that escaped my notice in the prior reading. So let us join minds and hearts together to glean all that our frail intellects can gather from the beauty and truth of these two simple metaphors for our Lord Jesus Christ.

We will approach the devotion in three parts: 1) The Rose of Sharon in its beauty and sweetness as a likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2) the Lily of the Valleys as representative of the purity and ever-presence of Christ in our Journey; and 3) the Lily as a likeness of the character of the church compared with her Bridegroom.

The Rose of Sharon

Point of Interest: The Plain of Sharon extends along the coastal and inland region of ancient Israel from Nazareth all the way down to Bethlehem – quite a coincidence, don't you think? Surprisingly to some, this is part of southwest Asia making our Lord's nativity of oriental, and not occidental, origin. The Plain of Sharon is a fertile plain which is watered by the warm air masses moving from the Mediterranean over the land mass of that bordering Plain of Sharon. As the water-laden air is lifted by the rising terrain, it is cooled and loses its moisture content. The countryside is dotted with a variety of beautiful white, purple, red, or light blue flowers known as the Rose of Sharon. The scientific classification of Rose of Sharon, also called "*althaea*" or "*althea*," is *Hibiscus*

Syriacus. The red and purple Rose of Sharon is also known as Lil Kim perhaps deriving that name from Korea where it is the National Flower (Mugungwha).

The Rose of Sharon is, first of all, a flower of great beauty, and soothing to both the eye and the smell. Its fragrance is sweet and subtle. Our Lord is beautiful to behold in the eye of the believer, and His Gospel fragrance is a sweet-smelling Savor to all who recognize it in the wilderness regions. Even those who are physically blind, and who seek, are able to find the Rose of Sharon simply based on following that fragrance to its source in the same way that the physically blind may find Christ by knowing the sweet and wonderful aroma of the Gospel which emits His character and nature. Fanny Crosby, a blind, prolific hymn-writer, stands at the bar in wonderful testimony of that truth.

The Rose of Sharon is not a cultivated, but rather common, flower of the Plain of Sharon. Jesus Christ came among us as one like unto those for whom He came to save and to redeem. He was not found by the Wise Men in a King's Palace at Jerusalem, but rather in a lowly dwelling-place in the little hamlet village of Bethlehem. The Rose of Sharon, being a common plant of the Plain, was free for the taking by the random passers-by. So is Christ available to all who hear His Voice, respond to His Love, and know His Calling.

The Plain of Sharon, where this beautiful flower flourishes, was a place of verdant pastureland for feeding of sheep. So is the Church, Bride of Christ, a place of feeding and nourishment for the people of God. It was the area in which David, of Bethlehem (City of David), fed his sheep. ²⁹ *And over the herds that fed in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite.* (1 Chron 27:29) So does the Son of Man (David), and of God, feed His sheep today on the common plains of humanity with the rich, nourishing Word of God.

The Rose of Sharon must be plucked from the stem in full bloom or else it fades and withers. There is a time when a sinner must respond to the beckoning and calling of God, or else that call fades and withers in his spirit. ¹⁶ *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.* (Matt 20:16) Our Lord knows His own and is known of them. In justice, He calls many, but few in mercy are the elect at the last.

The Rose of Sharon may be taken and enjoyed as the sole property of its taker; but our Lord Jesus Christ is a Rose of Sharon that can be owned both individually and popularly by many everywhere.

The Lilies of the Valley:

We must immediately recognize that this verse does not claim Christ as our comfort and presence in only one forlorn and sorrowful valley of this life; but rather in every low point and valley of an entire lifetime. He is the Lily of the Valleys – not Valley, as the old gospel song goes.

The flower of this plant displays humility in the way it hangs its head on the branch. In fact, it is shaped like a bell which reminds us of the great poetic dissertation of that old Anglican cleric, the Rev. John Donne of old, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and quoted by Ernest Hemingway in his book by the same title:

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

"Neither can we call this a begging of misery, or a borrowing of misery, as though we were not miserable enough of ourselves, but must fetch in more from the next house, in taking upon us the misery of our neighbors. Truly it were an excusable covetousness if we did; for affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough, that

is not matured and ripened by it, and made fit for God by that affliction. If a man carry treasure in bullion or in a wedge of gold, and have none coined into current moneys, his treasure will not defray him as he travels. Tribulation is treasure in the nature of it, but it is not current money in the use of it, except we get nearer and nearer our home, heaven, by it. Another may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels, as gold in a mine, and be of no use to him; but this bell that tells me of his affliction, digs out, and applies that gold to me: if by this consideration of another's danger, I take mine own into contemplation, and so secure myself, by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security." (excerpted from MEDITATION XVII. NUNC LENTO SONITU DICUNT, MORIERIS)

A point worth considering: the Lily of the Valleys is poisonous even to death. The life of our Lord led directly to His death in remission and redemption of our sins. Knowing this in the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, we are made hopeful even in death by that pure white Lily that lines our Way on that Narrow and Upward Path.

The Lily of the Valleys is easily seen in minimal ambient light. In the darkest night, we can find our way by that pure white flower that lines our way. *Yea though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I shall fear no evil for thou art with me.* Christ is with us everywhere and every time.

The Bride of Christ

"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." The Lily of the Valley forms a root system underground that feeds the growth of many other plants. So the Church, when oppressed, goes underground to bear much more fruit than in times of calm and rest. Each successive plant formed bears the same fruit of like nature to the parent plant. So the Church, filled with disciples and believers of Christ, bear fruit deriving their nourishment from unseen spiritual sources. And their natures bear a likeness to that Great Lily of the Valleys that bore their burdens before the time of harvest.

"Convallaria majalis (Lily of the Valley) is a [herbaceous](#) perennial plant that forms extensive colonies by spreading underground [stems](#) called [rhizomes](#). New upright shoots are formed at the ends of [stolons](#) in summer, these upright dormant stems are often called pips. These grow in the spring into new leafy shoots that still remain connected to the other shoots under ground, often forming extensive colonies. The stems grow to 15–30 cm tall, with one or two [leaves](#) 10–25 cm long, flowering stems have two leaves and a [raceme](#) of 5–15 [flowers](#) on the stem apex." (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

From the stump of Calvary's cross life springs anew in the season of new birth (Spring) to populate the Church as the Lily of the Valley grows from those upright stubs of summer's heat.

The Church of Christ is like their Redeemer who bore the Crown of Thorns for us. We are as the Lily among thorns since we have our own cross to bear daily in following Him. The Lily among thorns must struggle double-well to grow and bloom among those thorns. But in the struggle, it grows to a stronger plant, and blooms in spite of ill fate of thorns. The Love of Christ blooms among us deriving nutrition from unseen sources, that Love is evidence of who we are as a Church in Christ. *³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* (John 13:34-35)