

4-4-21 Easter Sunday 6:30, 8:30, 11:00

Sermon- Praising the Gardener!

Scripture- John 20:1-18, CTW PS 118:1-2, 14-24

Hymns- 258, 260, 264

Theme- On Easter Sunday we all rejoice in the Good News as we hear once again the words of John Chapter 20. Today I would like us to understand Jesus' role as the Master Gardener. God started human history in a garden, and Jesus began a new history of salvation in the Easter garden which gave to man new life, new joy, and new hope.

I. Introduction:

A son kept asking his father questions until the father lost patience. He decided and try to quench his son's curiosity with the old cliché, "Remember, curiosity killed the cat."

The son replied, "What was the cat curious about dad?" The plan backfired, for the boy was even curious about curiosity.

The curious mind can be a nuisance, but its constant probing can make valuable discoveries, even in the most unlikely places.

This is true for me when it comes to John's record of the events of the first Easter. I am curious about a very minor detail that seems almost incidental and inconsequential.

A. I am curious about why Mary thought Jesus was a gardener in verse 15. Why is such a seemingly trivial thing like that recorded in the Word of God?

At the close of his Gospel, John says that the world cannot contain all the books that could be written about Jesus. Why then would he use up even one precious line of his Gospel to tell us that Mary Magdalene mistakenly thought Jesus was a gardener?

The Holy Spirit had some reason for having it recorded,

and a little searching could open up some valuable insights into the mind and plan of God.

The first thing this mistake in identification tells us, by implication, is that the garden in which Jesus was buried was a beautiful and large garden with many flowers and shrubs.

In other words, it was a sizable garden and well kept. The reference back in **John 19:41** just says the place where He was crucified had a garden, and there was a new tomb in it where no one had ever been laid.

If it was not for Mary's mistake we could never have guessed how nice a garden it was. Her mistake, however, tells us that it was large enough so that it took a hired man to maintain its order and beauty.

She never could have supposed Jesus was the gardener unless she was in a garden that obviously needed the care of a gardener to maintain it.

The hymn writer was not merely dreaming, but had a good basis when he wrote, "I come to the garden alone while the dew is still on the roses..."

In this early hour the dew would be on the roses, and all of the flowers. It is fitting that He who is called the Rose Of Sharon and The Lily Of The Valley should come out of the tomb of the earth and first be seen in a garden.

B. Like all flowers, He had to burst forth from the blackness and darkness of the earth into the light of life.

Everything about this Easter garden is appropriate and fitting to the plan of God as it is revealed in Scripture. As we examine the Bible we discover that gardens play a major role.

God started human history in a garden, and it was no accident, but a deliberate plan. **Genesis 2:8** says, "And the Lord planted a garden Eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom

He had formed."

God was the first gardener, and He made the first man a gardener. Adam's job was to keep the garden beautiful. It is no mistake that the second Adam (Jesus) was mistaken for a gardener.

He came to restore the paradise the first Adam failed to maintain because of his sin. How beautiful that the resurrection should take place in a gorgeous garden, for by His resurrection Jesus did in reality restore what Adam lost.

If man fell in a garden, it is fitting that he should rise again in a garden, and that is just the way God planned it. God loves order, beauty, and what is fitting, and that is why He saw to it that His Son would be buried in the garden tomb of a rich man.

Kings who were anything at all had their gardens of beauty, and we see in numerous places in scripture some of them were buried in their garden tombs. **II Kings 21:26** and Nehemiah both refer to such situations.

The point is, that kings had gardens, and it is therefore appropriate that Jesus Christ, as the conquering King over death, should have His garden as well.

C. Jesus made His first appearance after His resurrection in a garden, and to a woman.

Satan made his first appearance in a garden and to a woman.

It is no mere coincidence, but a part of the total order of God's plan of redemption.

As a woman was the first to be deceived by Satan, So she was the first to receive the revelation of the risen Christ. A woman brought the first word of temptation to man, and now it is she who brings the first word of ultimate truth to man.

The environment was a garden because it adds to the beauty of the truth of the resurrection. It symbolizes the truth of paradise regained, and God and man reconciled.

God loves a garden, and He loved to walk in the cool of the evening with man in the garden of Eden.

Jesus experienced this Himself, for His most intimate meditations and struggles in relationship to the Father took place in the garden of Gethsemane.

This was a garden where Judas betrayed Him, and where He was tempted to let paradise be lost forever, but where He gained the victory, and choose to go the Father's way, even to the depths of hell, that man might walk again with God in the garden.

Surrounded by beauty He sweat drops of blood, for He had to endure the desert of damnation if men were ever to have the joy of perpetual garden beauty.

We can be sure of this: Mary's mistake in supposing Jesus was a gardener was no mistake as far as God was concerned, for no gardener ever created so much beauty as Jesus did.

He could invite the thief on the cross into paradise, for He made it possible for all men to have access again to the garden of God, and the tree of life.

D. Jesus is the only gardener that raises people. He raises them to life out of death. He beautifies them, and prepares them to wear the garments of glory for all eternity. No gardener can match Jesus.

When Jesus reaps what He has sown, all of the universe will be a glorious garden.

Therefore today it is fitting to look at some reasons why the garden is an important symbol of the truth of the resurrection.

I. THE GARDEN IS A SOURCE OF LIFE.

A. The garden and the abundant life go together.

The garden is a source of fruit, and when Adam and Eve were put out of the garden it was the end of abundant and fruitful living for them. The loss of the garden meant hardship, hunger, and a life of toil and sorrow.

The desert is the opposite of the garden. The desert is symbolic of death and barrenness. Sin brings a desert of life. It is the life without fruit. God does not like a desert.

We are all created for garden living. God started with a garden, and can never be content until the garden is restored, and the desert blossoms as the rose.

The prophet Isaiah tells us of God's love and plan in **Isa. 61:11**. "For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."

The Gospel of the resurrection is the source of abundant life to be taken to all the world. It is of interest that there were four rivers flowing out of Eden. It was really one river which divided in four ways, which produced a symbol that has influenced all of history.

Many ancients had gardens with the four rivers, and Persian carpets often have beautiful gardens on them with four rivers which cross and make the symbol of the cross in the garden.

That is just what we see in the New Testament picture. We see a garden tomb with the cross nearby. The cross is symbolic of the four rivers which flow out of the garden into all the world.

B. The garden and the Gospel go hand in hand.

Jesus is the world's best gardener because He is the only gardener that can bring Spring and new life the year around.

Jesus came to turn our personal deserts into gardens, and to give us life abundant. This is one reason why it is fitting that the resurrection took place in a garden. The garden is a source of life, and so is the resurrection.

II. THE GARDEN IS A SOURCE OF JOY.

A. People plant gardens not just for food to sustain life, but just for the sheer pleasure of seeing beautiful things grow. Flowers and plants are the source of so much of the joy of life. Joy and a garden go together in God's mind and plan.

Isa. 51:3 says, "For the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song."

When God really wants to bless His people, He grants them the joy of a good garden.

A garden of beauty is a good environment for the production of the fruits of the Spirit. The Word of God, and all of history witnessed to the truth that a beautiful environment can promote beautiful living in harmony with the author of all beauty.

The Christian poetry on the joy of the garden and flowers, and especially Easter lilies and the rose is voluminous, and they all relate to Jesus who became the greatest flower ever to bloom when He burst forth from the tomb.

B. Christmas joy is completely dependent upon Easter joy. The birth of Jesus began the plan of our salvation, but the birth from the tomb made our new birth possible, and that is why the resurrection garden is the source of our joy.

III. THE GARDEN IS A SOURCE OF HOPE.

A. When anyone plants a garden for the sake of food, or the beauty of flowers, they do so with expectation & hope. When the seed is planted you hope for what you cannot see.

Jesus often spoke of the kingdom of God in terms of sowing and reaping, and He even spoke of His own death and resurrection in these terms when He said in **John 12:24**, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Jesus looked at His own life like a seed, and by planting it in death He knew it would come forth from the earth in resurrection and bear much fruit.

B. Therefore every garden in the world the symbolic of the Christian hope of the resurrection. The garden is such an obvious picture of our hope that Paul uses this imagery often to describe our resurrection hope.

In **Rom. 6:5** He writes, for if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.

In **I Cor. 15**, the great resurrection chapter of the Bible, Paul again refers to the radical change that takes place when you plant a seed. It looks worthless and of no value whatever, but in rising from the earth it changes to what is beautiful and fruitful.

You can look at that bare seed you plant in your garden with hope, for the resurrection will transform it, and so also you can look at your body with all of its sin and weaknesses.

No, it was no mistake when Mary supposed Jesus to be a gardener, for He is not only the King of Kings, He is the King of gardeners. Today is all about praising the Master Gardener!

Jesus is also the Lord of the harvest, and when He comes again He will reap the harvest from the seed He has planted in the world as the Sower. Praise God from whom all these blessings flow!

Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed! Amen? Let us come to the table, set for us by the Master Gardener of our souls!