



2019 April Sermon Series: Beauty for Ashes

Message #3 – The Tale of Two Gardens

Getting the Nod

Open with the Video: [Empty](#)

A man went on vacation to the Holy Land with his wife and her mother. While in Israel, the mother-in-law died from a heart attack. The couple went to a local undertaker, who explained that they could either ship the body home which would cost more than \$1500, or they could bury her right there in the Holy Land for only \$150. The man said, "We'll ship her home." Surprised, the undertaker responded, "Are you sure? That's an awfully big expense, and we can do a very nice burial here." The man said, "Look, 2000 years ago they buried a guy here and three days later He rose from the dead. I just can't take that chance."

And Jesus did conquer death! That's what we celebrate... the death, burial, but most of all... His resurrection.

Transition: There are so many story lines found in the Easter story...

Connecting Us

Story Lines Found in the Easter Story:

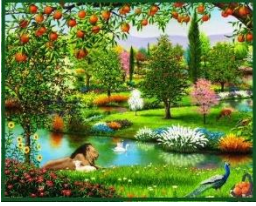
- **You have the fickle crowd.** The same crowd that laid palms and clothing down to claim Jesus as King is the same crowd that screamed "Crucify Him!" just a few days later.
- **You have the corrupt temple.** More concerned about killing Jesus than keeping the laws of protocol and forming a kangaroo court. Using violence, they struck the face of God.
- **You have this preacher that enters the temple and tosses the tables.**
- **Then you have Jesus' own disciples arguing about who was the greatest and who deserved to be seated the closest to Jesus.** Peter, the most prevalent of the 12 denying Jesus when it came down to claiming Him or not.
- **You have the dirty deal with 30 pieces of silver.** Another one of the 12 who conspired to sell out Jesus.
- **And there's the eyewitnesses who lied... probably staged.**
- **And then you have a Roman Perfect name Pontius Pilate...** being pressured to kill when he knew Jesus was innocent.
- **Beatings...** mocking's... torture and then there's the cross... on a hill that resembles a skull. Nails... suffering... and finally death.

Then there's the symbols:

- A donkey / a whip / a crown of thorns / a cross / a borrowed tomb / and a Sunday morning revelation... He is not here! He's alive!

Transitional Statement: There's a lot of drama and storylines in Easter. There is another storyline that I wish to speak on today... it's called ***"The Tale of Two Gardens."***

God's Take



NKJV | Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”



NKJV | Jn 20:11-18 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ” 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

The Tale of Two Gardens: (Show Garden Pictures)

- Involves two women. One at the beginning of time named Eve... one at the beginning of God’s new plan named Mary.
- Mary, the woman from Magdalene, was probably asking herself, “If only he hadn’t come in to Jerusalem during this time of trouble. If only his disciples had hidden him somewhere else. If only there wasn’t all of this tumult going on in the empire right now. If only Peter had been able with his sword to fight. If only.”
- She winds up in a garden, but Scripture tells us that what she is facing here isn't just a personal crisis, she is facing an ancient curse. As this woman stands in this garden, what she sees is not just a happy ending to a story she has been playing out to herself. What she sees is God reversing the whole story of the universe. I want to call us to this garden.
- To clarify, the first garden was the place where the worst decision ever made happened... the second garden was where the greatest event in history occurred... and changed the trajectory of human potential... while exposing God’s love for us all.
- Easter is a tale of two gardens!

Easter is a Tale of Two Gardens:

1. The first garden brought a curse... the second garden broke the curse.

- **The Bible tells us that at that beginning point of history, in that other Garden**, when the woman ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and when the man ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, a curse came up on the universe in which their bodies were turning into dust, in which the world that they live in is full of thorns and of thistles.
- **What the gospel of the resurrection tells us is that Jesus took that curse upon himself.** Those thorns that God said would appear on the ground were crushed down onto his head.

- **He, the King of all the universe, was taken down off of the cross**, purple and bloated and drowning in his own blood with water pouring out of his side. He was a dead body, he was a corpse, he was under the bondage to corruption and decay, and Mary expected to find him in that condition.
- **Mary was bringing with her some spices and** embalming stuff to try to keep him preserved just a little bit longer, but she doesn't find him there.
- **She doesn't find the corruption of that first Garden there either. Instead, she finds angels**, just as angels had been present from the very beginning.
- **In the first story, the angel was there outside the Garden with a sword** because God said, "I do not want my children who have turned themselves corrupt. I do not want them to eat of the tree of life and to live that way forever and ever and ever without hope."
- **This angel speaks to the woman and says to Mary**, "Go out into the garden." He points her out of that grave. As she runs out of that hole in the ground, **she runs into what she thinks is a stranger.**
- **The first garden brought the curse... the second garden brought our pardon! PTL!!**
- AND That takes us to the next point... you see...

2. **The first garden brought separation... the second garden bought our reconciliation.**

- Notice also that in this garden **God reverses the story of alienation**. Mary is standing there, in verse 11, outside of the grave. She thinks that she is alone in the garden and she is sobbing and crying.
- **She thinks that her whole world has come to an end** when someone speaks to her and says, "**Why are you crying, why are you upset, what's wrong?**"
- **She at first thought that this was a hired worker** who was there tilling the ground in the garden, and she turns, and she starts sobbing to him. She does not know who he is **until he speaks her name...**
- **You see, in the first garden sin came into our lives it alienates us from one another**, and it alienates us from God.
- **God used to walk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day... but on that worst day...** after sin... we started hiding from God and He had to alienate Himself from us... because of sin.
- **But in this second garden, something is different!** Jesus looks to her and he calls her by name.
- **The first garden brought alienation from God... the second tells us He knows our names!!!**
- And then Jesus tells her to tell the others! They too were hiding like those in Eden. But Jesus reverses the alienation!

3. **The first garden brought condemnation... the second garden bore our justification.**

- God also reverses the story of condemnation. Jesus does not have anything to hide. Jesus has perfectly kept all of the law of God. There is no break in the fellowship between Jesus and his Father. Jesus says, not only am I not hiding in the bushes, Jesus says, I am walking right into the presence of God.
- Only one human being was able to walk away from condemnation, walk away from the rule of death, and walk into the presence of his Father. Jesus. And that is important...

because every one of us in this room has been under that sentence of condemnation, and everybody in this room has been hiding. Some of you still are... just like Adam and Eve.

- You're not hiding behind bushes... but it's something intended to keep God from noticing you.
- Now, some of you in this room are still under condemnation. The only hope that we have before God is that Jesus shed his blood for us and that God raised Jesus from the dead.
- So the reason that we are brothers and sisters of Jesus is not because we get our life cleaned up, it's not because everything is turned around in our life; it is because we are asking God to count his death as our death. We must pray... "Father, count his resurrection as my resurrection. We look and we see Him and we say, I want to follow him even through death and out to the other side, Lord, have mercy upon me.:"
- **The first garden brought condemnation... the second garden bore our justification.**

4. **The first garden brought us deception... the second garden gave us resurrection.**

- Notice finally that he reverses the story of deception. Jesus speaks to Mary and what's really significant in this garden is that **he is speaking to a woman.**
- **Scripture tells us that in the beginning of the story the serpent came to the woman** and he deceived her. The story also tells us that this woman used the relationship that she had with her husband in order to speak to him, to say to him, "Join me in this rebellion."
- God was saying to Adam in the first garden, "You listened to the serpent and you listened to the voice of a woman and both of you, all of you, are deceived."
- But notice what happens here in the second garden. Jesus shows himself to her and then tells her to spread the news to the disciples!!!
- **The first garden brought us deception... the second garden gave us resurrection.**
- **And God took the one from ashes... and made her a beautiful instrument for Him!**

5. **The first garden saw a woman ruined... the second garden saw a woman chosen.**

Transitional Statement: Easter is a tale of two gardens. Jesus reversed the curse. Jesus reversed the destiny of mankind.

Our Response

Jesus reversed the story of Adam, but he reversed Mary's story too.

- Mary isn't a cardboard cutout figure in the Bible. She was involved in the occult. She lived a hard life.
- Scripture says when Jesus first met Mary, she had seven demons within her. She was the kind of woman that if she were at that point in her life to have walked into this congregation, all of us would be scared of her.
- Jesus knew her and Jesus loved her. Jesus redeemed her, and Jesus chose her to take that story to the disciples. "Go and tell my brothers," he said, and Mary went and took it to those men, who then took it to other people, who then took it to other people, who then took it to other people, and I'm telling it to you. He used this former demonized, occultic, hopeless woman to save the world through the message of the gospel.

- Jesus came to reverse our story of destruction and loss. And He accomplish that through an empty tomb...

Transitional Statement: Let me close with this...

Drawing the Net

Some of you are still under the curse. There are a thousand different stories in this room, but there are really only two. One story walks from a garden into a grave, and the other story walks from a grave into a garden.

- God is calling you by name. It doesn't matter how awful the story is that you have written for yourself. It doesn't matter how terrible the story is that you have enacted for yourself, he can reverse it. He can turn it back.
- The empty tomb is telling us to trust Christ... the One who reverses our punishment to peace.

Illustration: The Empty Egg

Little Philip was born with several health challenges. He attended a third-grade Sunday School class with several eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical of that age, the children did not readily accept Philip with his differences, according to an article in leadership magazine. But because of a creative teacher, they began to care about Philip and accept him as part of the group, though not fully.

On Easter Sunday the teacher brought Leggs pantyhose containers, the kind that look like large eggs. Each receiving one, the children were told to go outside on that lovely spring day, find some symbol for new life, and put it in the egg-like container.

Back in the classroom, they would share their new-life symbols, opening the containers one by one in surprise fashion. After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom and placed the containers on the table.

Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After each one, whether a flower, butterfly, or leaf, the class would ooh and ahh. Then one was opened, revealing nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment." Philip spoke up, "That's mine." "Philip, you don't ever do things right!" the student retorted. "There's nothing there!"

I did so do it," Philip insisted. "I did do it. Look, it's empty. The tomb was empty!" **Little Phillip got it... do you?**

(Sermon Partially Resourced through a sermon from Pastor Russell Moore)