

The Grave, the Garden, and the God of New Creation

John 19:40-20:18

Summary

We all know the tension of living in a world where beauty is mixed with brokenness. We want to enjoy the good things in life, but we are constantly confronted with the reality of pain, loss, and death. Ultimately, we are all looking for a garden without a grave. In the beginning, God created us for a perfect garden, but human rebellion fractured our relationship with Him and introduced the grave into our reality. But God has not left us in our brokenness. Jesus, the Author of Life, stepped into our fallen world to make things new. He took on the curse of sin and death, and was buried in a grave...in a garden. When He rose from the dead, Mary Magdalene mistook Him for the gardener, but she was actually right. Jesus is the Greater Gardener who has conquered the grave, and He is calling men and women from all nations by name to become part of His new creation. While we still experience the thorns of this life, we have a secure hope that one day God will make all things new, and we will live forever with Him in a garden city with no grave.

Sermon Outline

I. Beauty Mixed with Brokenness

- Springtime brings the joy of good weather mixed with the misery of allergies.
- This mirrors the universal human experience of encountering beauty mixed with brokenness.
- Humanity fundamentally longs for a world functioning as it should – a garden without a grave.

II. The Garden Motif in the Gospel of John

- Of the four gospels, only John highlights that...
 - Jesus was arrested in a garden.
 - When Peter denies Jesus, he is accused of having been in that garden
 - Jesus was buried in a new tomb located within a garden (mentioned twice)
 - Following the resurrection, Mary Magdalene initially mistakes Jesus for the gardener (John 20:15).

III. The First Garden and the First Grave

- God created Adam and Eve to live in intimate relationship with Him in a perfect garden.
- Their rebellion fractured their relationship with God, each other, and creation.
- God cursed the ground with thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:17-18).
- Sin introduced pain, death, and the grave into the human experience.

IV. Jesus Begins a New Creation

- John uses language from Genesis 1:1 to show that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God is beginning a new creation (John 1:1-3, 14).
- Jesus lived the perfectly obedient life that the first Adam failed to live.
- He absorbed Adam's curse on the cross, wearing a crown of thorns and experiencing separation from God.
- The Author of Life was laid in a grave, in a garden.

V. Personal Transformation: Mary and the Greater Gardener

- Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb expecting to grieve at a grave.
- Jesus, having conquered sin and death, calls Mary by her name, turning her mourning into joy (John 20:15-16).
- While Eve listened to the serpent and gave the fruit to Adam, Mary listens to the Lord and carries the message of the conquered grave to the men.
- Through Christ, individuals are invited to experience a new beginning and become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

VI. Conclusion: The Final Garden City

- In this fallen world, we still experience brokenness now, but because Christ conquered the grave, we hold a secure hope for the future.
- God promises a new creation where He will dwell with humanity (Revelation 21:1-5). The biblical story with beauty and no brokenness; a garden without a garden forever.