

Three Gardens, Three Trees, Sinners, and a Savior

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[0:00] Take your Bible and turn to John chapter 20 and beginning in verse 11.

! I am going to read a lot of scripture today that will be a main one. I am reading again in verse 11 down through verse 18.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

They said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have laid him.

Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?

[1:24] Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, Mary.

Mary, she turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabbani, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

But go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he said these things to her. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

The Bible is a collection of books written over thousands of years and by various authors who lived through many different circumstances.

[2:27] But truthfully, the Bible is one book with one author, and that author is God himself. And if you've read it, you know that it truly teaches one story.

It's the story of redemption. It's the story of peace with God that was broken by sin. And the great lengths and efforts that God makes in order to bring peace to his rebellious creation.

It ends with that peace having been restored, and it's a peace that lasts forever. On Easter, or on Resurrection Sunday, we celebrate that peace, which is received through the redemption that comes through Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, whom Scripture foretold would come, who came, who died, who rose again, who ascended to the Father, and who is coming again to make all things new.

Remember the first time that I truly understood as a kid about Jesus' death and what that meant and why that was necessary, about his resurrection and why that's so important and vital.

And I was so in awe of the story. I remember going home and my neighborhood friends, you know, we would play sports, we would play different games, cops and robbers, and I remember leading them to play what we called the Jesus game, where we would go through the events leading up to the crucifixion, the crucifixion, and the resurrection.

[4:24] I was just so enamored by this story. I remember not too long ago that Jack, our son, was watching a video in our family room around this time of year, and it was a video geared towards children, but it told about the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And the whole time, as Danny and I were doing different things in the house, he was glued to the screen. And at the end, when the movie was over, I remember with tears streaming down his face, he turned and he looked at us and he said, now that's true love.

To which I replied, excuse me, buddy, it is. It truly is. John 3.16 encapsulates it.

There's a reason why that verse is so well known and so well loved. It encapsulates the story of Scripture. John 3.16, For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Again, the story of the Bible is encapsulated in that verse and there are other passages like it that tell the full story of Scripture in just a few sentences. But today, I'm going to focus on a handful of Scriptures.

[5:53] All of them take place in a similar setting, which is a garden. And the similarities and differences about them tell us the story of the Bible, which is the greatest story that has ever been or will ever be told.

It's the story of God's redemption. And my hope and my prayer is that as you hear it, you will be as enamored with it as you've ever been.

And that you, who know the redemption that has come through Jesus Christ, that you would be reminded of the great God and the great Lord in whom we have been called to know and to receive His love.

So normally, I preach expositionally. I'll take a passage or a book of the Bible and then we'll go systematically through that verse by verse. But today, like I said, we're going to do something different.

And there's an important reason why we're going to do that. But even though this is a little bit different than how I normally preach, I believe that it will be beneficial to you and that God will be greatly glorified as a result.

[7:11] So here's the main idea for this morning's message. The Bible is one book about one person with one divine author.

It reveals our sin, which leads to death, and our Savior, whose life, death, and resurrection have brought life to all who believe.

So we're going to look at three different scriptures primarily. Each takes place in a garden. Each is filled with rich symbolism and deep spiritual truth. In each story, we are going to see that there are three similarities. The setting is similar.

There are sinners, and there is a Savior. At this point in the sermon, I try to say something to motivate those who are listening to listen by explaining why this message is important and why it's important for you.

[8:25] This message is the most important message. This story I should say is the most important story that you could ever hear.

Why should you listen? Because this message has quite literally changed my life and continues to change my life.

I don't merely hope that the things that we're going to cover today are true. I know that they are true. And my hope and my prayer is that you would know that they are true too.

And if you know that they are true, my hope and my prayer is that in being reminded of the truthfulness of who God is, of what Christ has done, that you would be so filled with joy that you would go as Mary did and report the good news that Jesus Christ is risen indeed.

And so the first garden that we're going to look at is the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden. In the beginning is the well-known and renowned phrase that the Bible opens with.

[9:46] In the beginning it says that God fashioned the world. He made the universe, all that is in it. And having done so, He declared that it was very good.

and the pinnacle of God's creation was mankind. Genesis 1, 26-31 says this, Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the ground.

So God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. And God blessed them and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth and every tree with seed and its fruit. You shall have them for food.

And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breadth of life, I have given every green plant for food and it was so.

[11:17] And God saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning the sixth day. You see, mankind was unique because of all that

God had made, only they bore His image.

And so we wonder, well, what does that mean to bear God's image? Well, in part, it means that mankind is a being who reflects the attributes of God.

Like God, mankind is an intelligent being. He is a rational being. A being that possesses emotions and has a will and at least initially also reflected God morally.

They, like God, were pure and sinless. Scripture states in Genesis 2.15 that the Lord God took the man and He put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.

Eden, that word means delight. So this was a garden of delight.

[12 : 31] Imagine a world in which everything exists in perfect harmony with nature and with mankind and with God. They exist in a seamless, harmonious unity that is uninterrupted, that is unfrustrated in any way.

This was that world. This was truly a garden of delight. And this was God's design. The intimacy and the harmony that existed between creation and its creator was designed according to God's purpose and pleasure.

The garden of Eden was a place of perfection and it was so because of its perfect creator. can you imagine a world like that?

People have sung songs about such a world. People today labor in different ways pursuing different things in order to try to make the world a better place, a more perfect place.

I'm sure that you, like me, have seen the disharmony that exists in our world despite any of those efforts and you've thought, I wish that things were different.

[13 : 56] Why can't we all just get along? Well, in the garden of delight, a location in the midst of a perfect world, God placed Adam and Eve but he also gave them one prohibition.

In Genesis 2, 16-17 it says, And the Lord God commanded the man saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

So, to this point there was no death, there was no sin, no bloodshed, no disease, all was as it should be in this unspoiled, untainted, perfect environment that was delightful to live in.

However, it's obvious that that description no longer reflects the world in which we live today. And so we have to ask, what happened?

Genesis 3, 1-8 tells us, Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

[15 : 22] And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden neither shall you touch it lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be open and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

So the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise. She took of its fruit and ate and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths and they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden.

You know, rebellion is alluring. Recently, a group from our church went on our monthly visit to a local prison where we minister to the prisoners there.

[16 : 38] We conduct two worship services with them and I remember recently speaking to them about this very thing, about how alluring temptation and sin is and I used for an example in their sanctuary over in the corner there was a door.

I had no idea where that door led. It was probably just a closet but I just said for example, say that in your first time coming here your chaplain told you you have access to anything in this building just whatever you do don't go through that door.

What would you want to do? Go through that door. At least wanting to know what it is and then I remembered as they all agreed with that and as I'm talking about sin and how sin is enticing at a prison I know that I was speaking to the choir but they fully understood and they fully agreed that

that is the way that we are and in fact I heard some of them say to one another now I want to know what's behind that door.

The allure to rebel is a result of our sinful nature and Satan like he did then continues to pick at that very same thing in us today that desire.

Sin looks good it's alluring in the moment of temptation we are captivated by the thoughts of what acquiring or having that thing or experiencing that thing will bring to us.

[18:10] We like Adam and Eve see the fruit we are enticed by it we begin to imagine how good it might feel to hold how good it might feel to taste but we fail to see the thorns that creep up as a result of that decision later on.

This is how sin works it looks good at first but it has disastrous consequences not just for you but for those who are around you.

James 1 14 through 15 gives insight into how this thing works but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire and then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The end result of Eve's action and additional crunch of her husband's biting into it instantly broke that bond and that fellowship that they had with God and they went into hiding as a result they covered themselves with fig leaves in an attempt to cover a new emotion that they were experiencing for the very first time shame.

God calls out to Adam and Eve he asks them about what they've done and they each shift the blame to the other first God speaks to Adam and Adam blames Eve and then in blaming Eve also blames God it was the woman whom you gave me that has caused me to sin.

[20:00] Eve deflects as well and she points to the serpent for blame. It's interesting to notice here that no one took personal responsibility for the sins that they committed.

No one even asked for forgiveness. Each was only concerned in that moment with defending themselves. Each was unwilling to pay the price for the sins that they committed.

Adam the first man threw his wife under the bus by indicting her and then God he refused to take responsibility for what he had done and he abandoned his wife in an attempt to pass the blame on to her to save himself.

Genesis 3 14 through 19 records the consequences of sin's curse that God being perfectly just specifically and systematically pointed to each one of them and sentenced humanity to a frustrating life apart from the delight of the garden experience.

What made the garden so delightful was the bond that man enjoyed with God his creator within it now that had been severed but God in the midst of pronouncing the curse of sin revealed a glimmer of hope for his broken and sin cursed creation.

[21:40] Genesis 3 15 God speaking to the serpent Satan says I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

And so here we have the very first mention of the gospel. The offspring mentioned there refers to Jesus Christ who would one day come and though he would have his heel bruised referencing his suffering on the cross he in the end would deliver the fatal blow to Satan to sin and to death.

Here hope is given to the hopeless and a compass is given to the lost. God then covers Adam and Eve with skins replacing their meager and insufficient leaves that they'd sewn together to try to cover their shame.

The Bible doesn't say specifically what kind of animal that that was but I believe that it was a lamb foreshadowing the lamb of God who would one day come and who would likewise shed his blood and give his life in order to cover our sins and remove our shame.

This was God's plan even as he evicted humanity from the garden of Eden. He was already setting into motion a plan that would one day see their return.

[23:21] Genesis 3 24 says that God drove out the man and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life.

So here we see that the setting was of a garden of delight and we've seen how paradise was lost through sin.

The sinners are Adam and Eve but also the rest of us who were present in them who are born fallen and sinful as a result of the sin of our first parents and their rebellion.

But a Savior is present too and the promise is made and given by God that He would one day come and show us the way back to delight in Him again.

So the first garden tells us how paradise in fellowship with God were broken. But it also promises us that the seed of the woman would provide us with the way back.

[24:48] That was the first garden the garden of Eden now we move on to the second garden the garden of Gethsemane. So by this time Jesus has arrived on the scene.

The eternal Son of God has added flesh to His deity. He has become the God man. On the night of His arrest Jesus led His followers to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives where there He poured out His soul to the Father in prayer.

There He pleaded for the protection and the unity of His immediate disciples who were there with Him but also for all of those who had become His disciples through their faithful ministry.

There the seed of the woman promised by God back in Genesis 3 commits to carry out the plan of redemption no matter how agonizing it would be for Him.

Luke 22 41 through 44 records the agonizing moments of our Lord as He prepared to go to the cross. And He Jesus withdrew from them about a stone's throw and He knelt down and He prayed saying Father if You are willing remove this cup from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done and there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening him and being in agony he prayed more earnestly became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground I spent so much time explaining the first garden so that we can now compare the events of that garden to the events of this second garden!

[26:43] while Eden meant delight Gethsemane means olive press olive press no doubt in reference to the olive trees that grew there that filled that garden that would be picked and would one day be pressed to make olive oil but what a fitting place for the son of man for the son of God to be as he was being pressed by the weight of what he was about to endure on the cross even though Jesus was pressed by the sorrow of what he would endure and was distressed by it he completely submitted to the father's will Adam was guilty and he tried to pass the blame of his sin on to others Jesus was innocent and he willingly took the blame and punishment for sins that he did not commit while

Adam began his life in the garden Christ the second Adam came to the end of his earthly life in a garden in Eden Adam sinned in Gethsemane the savior was resolute to do what was necessary to overcome sin in Eden Adam hid himself in Gethsemane Jesus boldly presented himself to those who came to arrest him knowing that they would lead him to the cross in Eden a sword was drawn to prevent Adam's entrance back into it in Gethsemane the sword would be sheathed in the body of Jesus Christ who would bear the judgment and the just wrath of God for our sins in Eden Adam's sin brought a curse that saw the ground produced thorns in Gethsemane the king of kings would soon be adorned with a crown made of thorns that would be pressed into his head we can scarcely imagine the horror of the moment that

Jesus was facing the God man pure and unstained by any sin of his own was going to become sin so that in him his people would become the righteousness of God the promised savior was going to suffer the full weight of all the sins of his people he was going to experience the separation from God's blessing that unrepentant sinners endure forever in hell if you are saved then you should know that on the cross Jesus quite literally endured hell for you here we see that the setting was of a garden filled with pressure Jesus was pressed by the reality that he would become our sin he would have a cross of thorns pressed into his brow he would be pressed against a tree of death by nails that pierced his hands and his feet just as you and

I were present in the first garden with Adam and Eve so too we were present in this garden as our sinless savior was overcome by the burden for our sins for our sins and of course the savior is present here too though he was pressed he was willing no one took his life from him he willingly laid it down the sword that blocked the path to Eden would be plunged into his side and through the cross he made a way back to the father for you and for me so the second garden tells us how paradise and fellowship with God has been restored as the promised savior endured the wrath of God by becoming a curse for our sins there is a third garden and that is the garden tomb the garden tomb all four gospels record the burial of

Jesus in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea John records the following details about it in chapter 19 verses 41 through 42! Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had been laid so because of the Jewish day of preparation

since the tomb was close at hand they laid Jesus there and then three days later Jesus gloriously conquered death by rising from the dead in that garden early in the morning on that resurrection day at least five women with spices came to visit the tomb in which Jesus had been buried when they arrived they discovered that the massive stone that was there had been rolled away from the opening of the tomb and they were able to see that Jesus body was no longer there again as it's been pointed out before that stone was rolled away not to let

[32 : 46] Jesus out but to let the world in after informing the disciples of these things Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb where she would be the first to witness our resurrected Savior I'll read verses 11 through 13 again but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept she stood to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lain one at the feet they said to her woman why are you weeping she said to them they have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have laid him of this interaction J.C.

Ryle observed two thirds of the things we fear in life never happen two thirds he said of the tears we shed are thrown away in vain her tears are for the tears of a broken heart forlorn frustrated lonely not understanding anything that had happened having lost the object of her pure love she looks in and she saw two angels in white sitting one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus was lying now immediately what comes to mind when we see through Mary's eyes the picture that should come back to us is a picture of the Old Testament primarily in Exodus chapter 25 where there if you recall God gave instructions to his people on how they were to build the ark of the covenant which was to be placed inside the holy of holies which was first placed within the tabernacle and later placed within the temple he identified a place that he called the mercy seat that was the place where

God said that he would meet with his people that was the place where on the day of atonement the high priest would sprinkle blood to atone for the sins of God's people and where they would receive his mercy and forgiveness in turn that mercy seat was the lid of the ark of the covenant it was made of pure gold it was located again inside the holy of holies and if you recall that there is something special on each end of it cherubims angels on each end which takes us back to eden and the cherubs remember and the sword that stood in the place blocking man's return to the garden of delight the holy of holies was the place where God said he would meet with his people there between the two cherubs God met with men in a tent and then later again

God would meet with his people there when the temple was constructed but now see the place where God meets us is in the empty tomb of Jesus Christ where there we had an angel at his head an angel at his feet the final forever atoning sacrifice has come has given his life and has died and he has risen!

again now and forever! more! God meets us in the empty tomb of Jesus Christ and there declares that the way back that had been blocked is now open our fellowship our access to God has been restored and it's been restored to us through Jesus Christ his precious son the sinless lamb of God who has taken away our sins!

[37 : 02] Before the angels could speak in response in verse 14 it says there that having said this Mary turned around and she saw Jesus standing but she did not know that it was Jesus her eyes were so filled and blinded by tears her thoughts were so clouded with grief she felt alone she felt forsaken she was broken hearted she had never experienced a love like Jesus loved for her she had seven demons!

and he had rescued her from them from that traumatic experience he was her teacher he was her lord he was her savior and now it appeared to her that he had been taken away from her yet again first through death now she thinks somebody has robbed the grave and taken away his body!

and so she lingered at the tomb perhaps thinking that something would come to mind that she would find him dead somewhere but Jesus lingered there too and he lingered there to show Mary his first eyewitness among whom would be many that he lived John 20 15 through 16 again Jesus said to her woman why are you weeping whom are you seeking supposing him to be the gardener she said to him sir if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away and Jesus said to her Mary she turned and said to him in Aramaic!

Rabbani which means teacher let's go back to John 10 2 through 3 to see something very important about this interaction between Jesus and Mary there Jesus speaking says but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep to him the gatekeeper opens and now understand this part the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out each time that

Jesus revealed himself after his resurrection he had to identify himself to those who encountered him on his way to ascending to the father he had to do that because he was in a different form he had a glorious resurrection body and while there were many similar elements to that body for example the piercings this was not the same body as had been pressed to the cross this was an eternal resurrection body that would never die that would never undergo decay but look Mary hears his voice and just as Jesus said when the sheep hear the voice of their shepherd they instantly know and she instantly knew the voice of her shepherd it was Jesus calling her there's a song that we often sing here at our church called he knows my name and isn't that song so true Jesus knows our name she heard her master she heard her lord she heard her savior call her name that's all he had to do and she knew she was the first to know the glorious truth of Christ's victory over sin and death then Jesus sends Mary on with a task in verses 17 through 18 Jesus said to her do not cling to me for

[41:12] I have not yet ascended to the father but go to my brothers and say to them I am ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples I have seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her it's interesting here to note too that this is the first time in John's gospel that believers are referred to by Christ as brothers he's called them disciples to this point slaves friends but never brothers how could disciples slaves and friends become brothers well Hebrews 2 9-10 explains it to us but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels referring to Jesus Christ namely Jesus crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of

God he might taste of death for everyone for it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist in bringing many sons many brothers many sisters! to glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering in Christ we go from slaves to sin to adoption as his brothers and his sisters as co-heirs with him and like him we too will undergo the same transformation 1st Corinthians 15 42 through 49 so it is with the resurrection of the dead what is sown is perishable what is raised is imperishable it is sown in dishonor it is raised in glory it is sown in weakness it is raised in power it is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body if there is a natural body there is also a spiritual body thus it is written the first man Adam became a living being the last Adam became a living spirit! but it is not the the man heaven praise God and so while the first garden tells us of brokenness and the second garden tells us of restoration this final garden tells us of resurrection the third garden tells us of Christ's victory over sin and death through his resurrection and promises to those who believe in him that they too not only share in his victory but they too share in his resurrection in this garden there is a sinner it's

Mary there is a savior it's Jesus but what about a tree we saw a tree in the first garden in the second garden the tree was the one that Jesus was looking to which would be the cross well let's flash forward here to the end of the book in Revelation chapter 22 to a vision that our resurrected Lord and Savior shared of this future garden of paradise there in verses 1 and 5 it's described the angel showed me the river of the water of life brightest crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb through the middle of the street of the city also on either side of the river the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations no longer will there be anything accursed and his servants will worship him they will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads and night will be no more they will need no light or lamp or sun for the son of

God the Lord of God will be their light and he will reign forever and ever in this garden sin has forever been banished no more suffering no more shame no more pain no more guilt no more coronavirus no more death ever again only paradise only peace only perfection only Jesus forever and for always have you tasted and seen that the Lord is good do you know this truth if you don't I encourage you to trust in him today and I'm telling you

[46:37] I'm promising you that if you do if this message has spoken to you and you see your sin you see that God's just punishment for it is to make you pay for it forever but that you see that God in his love has sent Jesus his son to endure it for you on the cross that he's been raised from the dead and that you too in believing in what he has done have eternal life what greater news could you hear and I'm telling you and I'm promising you it will transform your life and if you believe in that if you're believing in that and hearing this message please get in contact with me we want to know we want to continue to teach you about Jesus and help you be a disciple of his who makes more disciples and for those of you who do know this who have tasted this my encouragement to you is

simply to delight in the

Lord your God who has made the way for you to be restored to him delight in his love delight in his grace delight in his mercy delight in his son your Lord and your savior but also understand this as we delight in this wonderful truth that Jesus has been raised from the grave we like Mary on that first resurrection morning continue to be his witnesses and we must continue to go and share the good and glad news that Jesus is risen he's been risen indeed and to report it to all those in our families and our neighborhoods in our communities and support those whom we send on mission around the world to declare this wonderful life transforming glorious good news that Christ Jesus is victorious over Satan over sin over death and we share in that victory too amen amen to you