

Reading: Genesis 2:4-25

Theme: Eventful Gardens (PowerPoint)

Over the years we have visited many **lovely gardens** at **National Trust** properties and some have much history associated with them - royalty visited, historical events and even some were used as sets on TV programmes or films. Some of the gardens we have seen have been **immaculate x2**. We have visited people's houses and their gardens have been like **display gardens**, others **not so!** Yet others are more "lived in" and have a **football or cricket "pitch"** in it, or an ecological area. We tried to zone **our garden** in Barton and had a lawn area, a chicken area and then **the fruit and veg** area. The level of tidiness and productivity of it depended on my spare time, but mostly my inclination!

Gardens feature in the Bible and this harvest time I thought I'd look at some of these gardens and the important events associated with them. I've picked out 5 and the events we will deal with in them get better as we progress through them. So we see:

1. The Garden of Sorrow.

This may be a term we feel we could use of our gardens – **now or previously!** The one I have in mind here was initially Paradise - **the Garden of Eden**. That was the garden to have - no weeds, no thorns or thistles, it would appear to have produced fruit and veg so easily - no backbreaking and sweat inducing slog. It was perfect and

into this perfect paradise garden, God placed a perfect man and woman - Adam and Eve. There they fully enjoyed all the good God-given provision. There was no pain, no sickness, no diseases, no sorrow, no spiteful words or thoughts, no relationship problems, there were no natural predators, no natural disasters - it was paradise on earth is and what is more the Bible says that every evening God came down and **walked and talked** with Adam and Eve – the privilege of knowing God in a personal way as their Friend.

Yet that **all changed** and that garden became a garden of real sorrow; for all the world's problems began in it - pain, sorrow, disease, marriage problems, relationship problems, sufferings, natural disasters, weeds, hard work and death. In this perfect paradise Adam and Eve didn't listen to and obey God in the one thing He told them not to do. They ignored God and each said in effect **"Not your will, but my will."** God was ignored and they did their own thing. The Bible calls any disobedience of God's commands and ways **"sin"**. As a result of Adam and Eve's sin the whole of **Creation was cursed**, death and **suffering entered the world** in the Garden of Eden, Paradise was lost to mankind and they would be excluded from it and it remains impossible for men and women to find or make their own way back to it.

We would all like the world to be as it was before Adam and Eve blew it for us all – paradise on earth. Yet God's

original design was paradise on earth and yet mankind caused chaos to invade. That's why the world is like it is and why people are still rebellious against God and His ways. Don't imagine "*people*" as being others, for it includes and focuses on you and me as individuals. We all basically want our own way even at the expense of God's ways. We are biased, attracted to do the wrong by nature. Yes we can rise and do great things, but there is within us the rumbling potential for so much evil even from the nicest man or woman, boy or girl. People, all people have this ***potential to do great evil and wrong***. In some we can see them openly doing wrong and evil, but within us all is this destructive force of sin. It began back in the Garden of Eden, which became the Garden of Sorrow. Next we see:

2. The Garden of Agony.

Mankind blew it in the Garden of Eden, but God already had ***a plan in place*** to sort out ***the mess***. This awesome plan involves something daring and startling - God would sort out the mess and ***not at a distance***, high up in heaven, but God would come down to earth Himself and sort out the mess.

The plan involved God the ***Son becoming a man*** - we are now at the focal point of Christmas and He would live among us, knowing what we know, feeling what we feel, being truly of our bone and our flesh. Yet He came to deal with the problem of our wrong, sin and its guilt. Jesus came and lived a perfect life, did great miracles

that **backed up**, His teaching and proved His claims that He really was God in the flesh. He did many great things, but His chief work was to die in our place as our substitute and there to take the punishment that **our sins deserved**.

That suffering in our place was going to be no easy or pleasant thing to do. It was an awesome and terrifying thing to do and was most agonising. The night before it happened, Jesus was praying in the **Garden of Gethsemane** and He was in agony just anticipating all that He would go through the next day on our behalf and in our place. It wasn't that He was a coward, or scared of death, but as He considered all He would suffer for us – for He would die suffering the full punishment our wrong and sins deserved; He would suffer our hell, for our wrong words, desires, thoughts and actions. Gethsemane was a garden of agony, but even that agony there was nothing to the actual horror and suffering of the agony He went through on the cross as He dealt with our sin.

As Jesus contemplated the horror and agony He would go through, He said **"Not my will, but your will"** - He would do totally what God wanted him to do. He did that and this leads us on to look at:

3. The Garden of Hopelessness.

Near Calvary where Jesus died on the cross, there was a garden (*John 19:41*). In that garden, a secret follower of Jesus, who now openly owned he followed Him, had **a tomb dug out** of the rock for himself and he counted it an honour to bury his Master in it. He and another influential Jew had permission to get Jesus' body (*as executed criminals were usually buried in unmarked graves*) and they took **Jesus' body down off the cross**, carried it to this garden and they wrapped it in strips of cloth, packing lots of spices into these. As they did these heart and gut wrenching things, they would have looked for a sign of life, but it was hopeless. The Romans knew how to kill a person and they knew a dead man when they saw one. It was hopeless, so they put His corpse into the tomb and then rolled the huge stone into place, down a channel that then dropped into a locking slot and as it clunked into place it declared "*No hope. Hopelessness reigns.*" The garden that contained the tomb was a garden of hopelessness - all their hopes died near there and **then were buried there**.

Perhaps our life seems like this - a place of hopelessness as we see failures in ourselves, our relationships, our dreams, our health and our hopes. These may seem shattered and if not **dead and buried**, then as good as. Perhaps you are wondering if God, if Christianity can help and yet even that seems a disappointing battle as you are seeking, trying to believe, even wanting to, but there is so much that makes you feel it is **worthless and**

hopeless to try. Listen and listen well because it is not hopeless, for we see:

4. The Garden of Hope.

Incredibly that same garden of hopelessness was **transformed** on the morning of the third day after **Jesus' death and burial** - for we are shown, told and have the evidence of His rising again from the dead. Not as someone barely alive, who swooned and was then restored by the cool of the tomb, but as one who was really dead and had risen as Conqueror of death and who had defeated death completely. The Bible says His resurrection declared Him to be the Son of God with power and it declares that His sacrifice as an offering for our sin was accepted. Because of this we can have hope, the certain hope of having our lives sorted out, our sins forgiven and having peace with God and eternal life.

Jesus didn't die again. He still remains risen from the dead and after 40 days He went up to heaven as **King and Conqueror** over death. **All who believe** on Him as their **Saviour and Friend** have the hope, the certain hope of eternal life and that One's help and presence now. His resurrection guarantees our resurrection also and therefore gives us a tremendous hope.

The question is have you trusted the **Lord Jesus as your own Saviour** and Friend? If not then as lovely as you are, as nice a person as you are, then you are in a spiritually hopeless situation and yet that can be

transformed into a situation of sure and certain hope. Those of us who have trusted the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we should live conscious of our hope and **it should show in our lives**. The disciples were different people when they knew Jesus was alive and they turned the world upside down and affected history. Let's pray we will have great joy and peace in believing and also affect our day and age. Finally we see:

5. The Garden of Joy.

This garden makes even the best gardens we **have ever seen**, or will ever visit, seem as absolute rubbish. It is described in the **last chapter** of the last book of the Bible and a great and amazing picture is presented to us of heaven. The Bible pictures heaven in so many ways for us, but this one is of a huge garden, a country park even and is a lovely picture. In that place there is no sin, no sorrow, no pain or suffering, there are no needs, no fear, every tear is wiped away and no death is ever present - it is Paradise restored. It would be great to see it, but it will be even better to be there and experience it for ourselves. **Naturally none** of us can go there. We are by nature shut out, excluded and banned from going there. There is only one entrance to heaven and the entrance **price is too much for anyone**. Yet the good news is that the entrance fee **has been paid** for us and it is now free to all who will believe on the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. On the cross, in all He suffered, Jesus **paid the price** to allow us to go into **heaven**.

Would **you want to be there** in the garden of joy - in heaven? It's not by how we feel, or by some experience we have had, or by being good enough or doing enough good works or being religious enough to earn heaven. It is not us **doing anything** to get ourselves into heaven. It is not even by coming to this church or any church, whether it has been for years or even if this is your first time. It is only by **trusting the Lord Jesus** for your salvation that you can get into heaven. To get into heaven we have to trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and as soon as we do so then we will have eternal life and a home guaranteed in heaven, as well as knowing God's help, love and care in all we go through in life – have the Lord Jesus as our Friend.

One of the last verses **of the Bible** is an invitation (**Revelation 22:17**) *“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”*

Once we have trusted the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, it will affect our day by day lives and make a difference in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, sports teams - in fact every area of our lives. As we live for Him we can make a difference in society as our life is not just to be talk, but to be faith in action and we live to do His will and way as best we can.