

# The Garden of Resurrection: Our Fourth Garden Hope

Bible Verses Mentioned: John 20, 1 Corinthians 15, Genesis 2 & 3, Matthew 27:51, Revelation 21, Revelation 22:12

Father, thank You for the gift of Easter. Thank You for the gift of worship music and that we can raise our voices to remember and proclaim the glory of Your resurrection and what happened so long ago that affects us now. I pray, Lord, You would open the eyes of our heart that we would be able to see the truth of You and Your Word as we open it today. We thank You, Jesus. We love You. We pray this in Your holy name.

Amen. How beautiful is this, by the way? Isn't this awesome? I love it. They do it right here. What a day. Do you guys have a good day? I had a really good day. This is our third or fourth service today. We started with the sunrise, and now we're going to go into the sunset. So that's the way to bookend it. I was preparing for my sermon today and was reading through John chapter 20, which was Charlie just read.

And I was remembering one of my favorite shows that I or shows that I get to see on television, or at least I get to watch little clips of, or shows like Antique Roadshow, or like Pawn Stars. Do you ever watch those shows? They're crazy, where these people bring in, they'll find like, I've got this old shoe in my attic, and they'll realize it was like, you know, Harry S. Truman's shoe from, like, you know, 19 ought, what? And it's worth \$10,000 or something of that effect. And I was reading this story that was attached to one of those shows. And it was about this guy who lived up in New Jersey.

I think he was a plumber. He was a blue collar guy. He didn't have a lot of money. And he lived really hand to mouth. And he had a grandmother that had this painting on her wall and it had hung there since he could remember. And she died when he was probably in his 20s and he got a few items from her house. And this picture was one of them. And he put it on his wall and it hung there until eventually he, you know, he got tired of it, took it down, put it in the basement. But he just kept walking by it and didn't see it anymore.

And when he was moving out, he called a buddy of his to ask him to help him move. And he was clearing the stuff out of the basement. And his buddy looked at this pain and he said, hey, man, he knew a little bit about it. He said, I think there's something going on here. This is too good to be just a copy of what this I think this is. So his friend allowed his buddy to take this to an art dealer. And what he had realized is that it wasn't just some picture, it was a Rembrandt that had been hanging on his grandmother's wall, and it was worth millions and millions of dollars.

What a crazy idea. I remember when I read that story, I had two reactions. The first one was, oh my gosh, like my mind's blown as it was anybody's would be blown. But the second thing that hit me and struck me about it was this guy was real hands to mouth, blue-collar dude. He did not have a lot of money. He was struggling to make ends meet. But he had been a millionaire his entire life. He didn't even know it. He had this treasure in his house that was priceless.

And he had no clue. And he just walked by it every day until one day he finally realized it. And can you imagine? He's like, I've been doing for so many years, struggling. Can you imagine how that felt? I tell you that story because sometimes I feel that way about the resurrection story. It's a wonderful story. And it's this treasure that we have, but it's really familiar to us, isn't it?

It's this story that we could recite in our sleep. We weave it into our liturgy. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. But it's like that Rembrandt. We've walked by it so much that sometimes it's just kind of lost its edge in our life. We don't see it for the treasure that it really is. I know Jesus rose from the dead. It's awesome. Let's go find some eggs, right? And one of the things I want to do today is I want to slow our roll a little bit and I want to get into John 20.

I want to try to recapture not just the power of that story, because it's not just a great story about what happened then. It's an incredible story about what happens now to us. And like what the power of the resurrection means for you, what it means for me. And that if this isn't true, then as our reading from Corinthians said, we are to be pitied more than anybody. Like, what hope do we have?

One of the things that routinely strikes me about Scripture, and I love the Bible. I love it. And it's not just the brilliance of the storyteller is telling, which it is brilliant. And it's not just the way that the 66 books of the Bible, we touched on this last week. It's not just that 66 books of the Bible written in three different languages over thousands of different years in all these different cultures.

And by a variety of different people from different contexts, it's not just the way that those things come together to tell one story, though that is amazing. What's amazing to me about it is the way that all those elements of those stories, the interplay in between them, the interplay in between the books, how each of the book props another book up and something that seems totally disconnected, a detail over here, somewhere in the New Testament that ties together.

And it creates this incredible nexus and understanding and point about redemptive history, who Jesus was, who you were, and why this story matters to us. It tells you, it just shows you that it is not only just a deliberate masterpiece, but you see that it's a deliberate masterpiece that no human could have written, period. And John 20 is no exception, the story we just read.

It's powerful. And not only do these passages fit together, but what happens oftentimes when you get into there and you'll dig in, you'll find that it's it's if you're trying to understand what a passage is about and you're wrestling, what does this mean, which is really common. If you see that it's connected to some other passage in Scripture, you read that other passage and it'll tell you exactly what it's about. And it's usually and often can be just a little small detail, a little small detail that becomes this big giant door.

So in this story, we just read, it's Sunday morning, Jesus had been crucified. The apostles are melting down, as you can imagine. Mary and her cohort, they're devastated. And she gets up early one morning and she comes to take spices to anoint Jesus's body. And she gets to the tomb, and we just read it. The stone is rolled away and she panics. She freaks out.

She goes and she runs and she finds Peter and John. And she tells the apostles and they're like, no way, no way. And Peter and John race to the tomb, which in one of the funniest pieces of Scripture, they talk about them racing. And it says, but the apostle that the disciple that Jesus loved got there before John or Peter rather. So John wrote that he won the race in his own gospel. I thought it was pretty funny. I beat you. Anyway, so they get there and they see that it's true.

And they return home. And Mary's left in the tomb. And she looks up and she sees these two angels that are sitting there. And she begins to cry. They say in the other passage we read today, they said, why are you weeping? Why are you looking for the living among the dead? And Mary turns around and she encounters Jesus, but she doesn't recognize it as Jesus.

And then the Scripture says in Mary, and Scripture says, "Supposing Him to be a gardener." She said to him, "Sir, if you had carried him away, tell me where you have laid him." Did you catch that little Easter egg in there that John drops, that little detail in the story? She supposed him to be a gardener. Why would Mary supposed him to be a gardener?

The only reason she would suppose him to be a gardener is if the tomb was located in a garden. And if you look at chapter 19, a little earlier, rewind, you realize that's exactly right. Jesus' tomb was located in a garden. Now, why is that significant? It's significant because the resurrection story is the single most significant event in human history, period.

And it is no coincidence where God chose for the resurrection to occur in a garden. And it was deliberate because it was in the Garden of Eden. It was in the Garden of Eden where the fall of man occurred. And it's in the resurrection garden where the redemption of man occurred. Now, that matters. These are the details that ties stories together because God is trying to make a point.

And the truth is, if you actually begin to pay attention to the word garden and you start to read the Jesus story a little bit, you're going to notice that gardens start popping up all over the place. And it's kind of this connects the dot game because the night before Jesus was crucified, where was he? He was in the garden of Gethsemane. And these are not coincidence, as I said.

You trace these gardens, and what you're seeing here is that every curse that was laid on humanity, every curse that was laid on Adam and Eve that was passed down to us was absorbed by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross and was reversed when He stepped from the tomb in the Garden of Resurrection. Period. It was in the Garden of Eden where humanity became subject to sin and death, where it entered Adam and Eve because they disobeyed and they betrayed God.

It was in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus obeyed God, and He allowed Himself to be betrayed by humanity again so that He could absorb our sin and suffer death. And it was in the Garden of the Resurrection that Jesus steps from the tomb and He breaks the back of sin and death once and for all. It's beautiful.

It was in the Garden of Eden where humanity is separated from God, where sin comes and he separates them from God and God pushes them out of the garden and he places a cherubim with a flaming sword and says you can't enter back in. It's in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is abandoned by His people. And then Jesus, God Himself, chooses to experience the abandonment of His own Father on the cross.

But the first thing we see of Jesus in the Resurrection Garden, when He steps out of the tomb, his relationship with humanity is restored. Where He comes and in this precious scene, He appears to Mary, and He calls her by her name. It's in the Garden of Eden that humanity is naked and they're ashamed and they struggle to hide themselves.

It's in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is taken and He is shamed by being arrested and He is taken to the cross and He's stripped naked and He's hung for all people to see. But it's in the Garden of Resurrection that Jesus steps from the tomb and He reverses the curse of shame rising in glory and clothing us in His righteousness. Do you see? It's brilliant.

There's no person that could have written this story. Because of the resurrection, we see this in the garden that he reverses the curse, but He also reveals His emerging kingdom. You know, one of the reasons the garden imagery is so important as it tells us what God is up to in this moment. He's not he's not working some plan B.

It wasn't that everything got screwed up in the beginning with his plans and creation. And now God is here. He's trying to pivot and he's trying to figure out some new way of moving forward. What God is doing when he steps from the tomb is he's actually working Plan A, the very first thing. He's restoring His vision. See, and what's happened here is you go back to the creation story. We've talked about this in here before. Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden of Eden.

And you know the story. The garden of Eden is this garden that has boundaries around it. The rest of the world is not like this. So what does God do? He gives them. He says, go exercise dominion. What I'm saying to you is go turn the rest of this world into the Garden of Eden. I want you to drag the realities of the garden of Eden into the rest of the world, or in the language of the New Testament, I want you to go and build the kingdom of God. You ever think about that?

Go build the kingdom of God. So when Jesus emerges from the tomb, what you see, you see something unexpected, or at least from that time. Jesus doesn't step from the tomb. It's some like glorified being of spiritual being. Jesus doesn't step from the tomb with wings and fly through the crowd.

Jesus' resurrection was not his escape pod to go back to heaven so he could finally say, I got that being human part over with. When Jesus stepped from the tomb, he doubles down on his humanity. He's resurrected as a human being. He comes out. He still has wounds in his hands. He still has wounds in his hands. Why does that matter?

It matters because what he's saying is that this creation matters, that this isn't some fleeting state. So I like to say you didn't get sent to the wrong address or this isn't God's grand holding room that you're just waiting here until you can die and then you get to burst forth and go fly away and sit on a cloud and strum a harp. That's not God's plan. Plan A was that we are going to redeem the creation.

What God is doing is that he's on a mission, the mission that he called Adam into. The mission to build his kingdom of God that Adam failed at. He's calling you into that mission. He's calling me into that mission. This is not a new idea that happened in the resurrection. This was the original idea that he is now making possible. But instead of trying to drag the realities of Eden out of Eden into the earth, what he's saying is, now because you are in Jesus, you are a new creation.

You are forgiven from your sins. You have the Holy Spirit given to you. And what you're called to do is that you're called to not drag their realities of Eden into the rest of the world. You are to drag the realities of the new heavens and the new earth into this world. The resurrection power, the realities of heaven, and to bring them to bear. How do we do that? We proclaim the resurrected Christ.

We reject the wisdom of this world, period. We reject the wisdom of this world. We bring light where there's darkness. We bring love where there is indifference. We comfort those who are hurting. We laugh with those who are laughing. We weep with those who are weeping. We care. We sacrifice expediency for connection.

We do everything we can to manifest the life of Christ that has been poured into us. Our journey this side of heaven is of what we call sanctification is not me trying to become something I'm not. My journey of sanctification is to tease out the realities of what God has already made me in Christ. And the way I can do that, the best way, the most profound way, the most effective way is by me trying to build and cooperate with the Holy Spirit to build the kingdom of God where I am planted.

That doesn't mean you have to quit your job and go move to Guam and scrub people's sores. It might. That might be what God's calling you to. But it might mean you got to stay home and love your family well or be faithful in your job or serve at your church or show up on an Eastern night when you've been at it all day, right? I don't know your story.

I know a lot of your stories, but the way the Holy Spirit bubbles through you is going to be different than the way He's going to bubble through me. The way He's going to build His kingdom is going to be different in the way that He's going to build it through me. Revelation 14 tells us that those things that we do here, that we do by faith, that they're not in vain. They're eternal things that they last, that they endure, that somehow, and I don't know what this looks like, but when we do something to build the kingdom of God here, we're laying a brick in the foundation of the heavenly kingdom that will one day come.

That's a powerful. I don't know about you, but when I hear that and I think about, man, I've been restored and I've made a new creation. I've got God's Holy Spirit. I've been inviting into this kingdom work that he's originally called the original people to, and he's rekindling his image, and now I'm being called back into it. I got to tell you the truth. Sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it hurts.

And there are times where I get frustrated. And I think to myself, what do I do? Because see, what happens is now we live in the already of the kingdom, but we also live in the not yet of the kingdom. We live in already that we have experienced the living realities of Jesus. We know the resurrected Jesus that stepped from the tomb that we just read about.

He's ascended, is seated at the right hand of the Father, but we also still live in a fallen world. And this is a world where people get sick. People die. Our friends hurt us. We fail. We get up. Next time we don't fail, then we fail again. We live in the night yet. And that's why the promise of the resurrection is so powerful because it reverses the curse.

It reveals His kingdom, but it restores our hope because there's a fourth garden. We have the Garden of Eden. We saw Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. And then we saw the resurrection garden. But there's another garden that we will see one day with our own eyes. Revelation 22, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

And on either side of the river, the tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. That's the new heavens and the new earth. It's a city, but it's a garden. Do you know in Scripture, except for one quick reference in the book of Proverbs, that the only other place you see the Tree of Life mentioned besides the book of Genesis is right here.

This is where it comes back. It's the fourth garden, and it's the garden that we are heading to. It's the garden where it says, this is the place where Jesus finally makes his dwelling place with man. Where one of my favorite scriptures reaches, it says, where the tear wiping hand of God comes down, where weeping will be no more, and suffering will be no more.

Yes, we live in the already, and we suffer the pain of the not yet. But there is a fourth garden that's coming, and it is a garden that is prepared for us, that we in some mysterious way, get to be a part of building. And that is the holy city that Adam was supposed to have built, that Jesus built, and he says, "I'm waiting for you." So as we as believers, when we read this story, what we read and we realize is when we hope, we don't hope in vain.

And when the world whispers in my ear and he's telling me, "Hey, your pain is all there is. Your suffering is all there is. Your failure is all there is." What the gospel says is that's not true. You don't believe it. There's another garden and it's coming. And there's a place in it with your name on it. And Jesus is waiting for us there. Amen. Amen.