

SERMON – PASTOR GREG  
29.03.2024

GOOD FRIDAY. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Alicia and I often go for a walk through the Botanic Gardens or through Baldwin Swamp. We both enjoy going through gardens- I love the rainforest sections while Alicia takes great delight in the flowers and especially the little, almost insignificant, ones.

**THE FIRST GARDEN.** In the book of Genesis, we hear: *God saw all that He had made and behold, it was very good...The LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground- trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food...The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to serve it and to take care of it...The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him." ...The LORD God made a woman from the side He had taken out on the man and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man" .... The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

A well-known story. Let us hear again some key points:

God made everything and it was all very good. I am reminded of Psalms 148 and 150: *Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise Him in all the heights above. Praise Him, all His angels, praise Him, all His heavenly hosts. Praise Him, sun and moon, praise Him all you shining stars...Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths...you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds...Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.*

It was God who planted the Garden of Eden and made it flourish.

It was God who grew the trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

It was God who put the man in the Garden to serve it and to care for it.

It was God who created the woman- from the man and so: *For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*

And in God's wonderful creation the man and the woman were naked and were not ashamed. But soon they were covered with shame. The serpent came into God's glorious Garden and created doubt in their minds concerning God's word. *Did God really say?* The devil tempted Adam and Eve and they fell into sin as they doubted the word of God and through their desire to be like God and in their desire to choose for themselves without any limits. Freedom, ultimate freedom was their craving. But instead of freedom they became enslaved to Satan- the father of lies. And so guilt, shame, fear and death came into God's once glorious Garden. Corruption- not only of every human being but the whole of God's once GOOD creation (Romans 8).

**THE PROMISED GARDEN.** Adam and Eve gave up on God but God did not give up on them- He cast them out of the Garden and certainly they died- but not before God blessed them with children. But the children of Adam and Eve also gave up on God but again God did not give up on them. God saved Noah and his family but their descendants also gave up on God. So God began again with Abraham and Sarah and then Moses and the Israelite people. But still His people turned away from Him and went their own way. Death and destruction continued to plague the whole human race but still God did not give up. Through Jeremiah the Prophet God promised: *(31:1-14) They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD- the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered GARDEN, and they will sorrow no more.*

But for this to happen a dreadful thing had to be. Sin must be paid for. By blood: Hebrews 9:22: *The Law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

**THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE:** *Matthew 26:36: Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane (Gethsemane means 'olive press' and in John 18:20, we hear: When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a GARDEN and he and his disciples went into it.)*

And we know what happened in that garden: *(Luke 22:39): Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done...Being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.* Then betrayed by his close friend, arrested, beaten, condemned and killed. Now there really was blood on the ground. Real blood, Jesus' blood- the *blood of Jesus (which) purifies from all sin (1 John 1:7).* Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God is truly **THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.**

**THE GARDEN OF DEATH.** *John 19: Taking Jesus' body (Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus) wrapped it with the spices, and in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

**THE FINAL GARDEN.** Sin and death. Resurrection and life. Forever: *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing down from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And this Garden there will no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away. (Rev 21, 22).*

This is our ultimate future- no matter what tomorrow brings. This is our future because Jesus Christ died on this day to *atone for sins- once for all* (Hebrews 7:27).

So even on the day- Good Friday- let us join in all creation and PRAISE THE LORD. NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN.