

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Garden Restored*  
**SERIES:** *Easter*  
**SCRIPTURES:** *John 20; Revelation 22*  
**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*  
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*\*Credit to Brian Zahnd, John Ortberg*

Well good morning and happy Easter Five Forks Church it so great to worship with you today.

If you are a guest with us this morning, we are so honored to have you as part of our church family today. That of all the places you could have chosen to be on your Easter morning it is tuning here with us.

There was a post going around Facebook, a wife talking about how things were going with her husband...she writes, *"We are now 4 weeks into quarantine. It has been really tough watching my hard-working and very active husband, who is now out of work. I often find him standing at the back door, gazing into space, with tears in his eyes. It really breaks my heart to see him like this. And I have agonized, trying to think of how I might cheer him up...I've even considered letting him inside."*

In one sense we may think, why is all of this happening now, around Easter, the climax of the church calendar.

And yet in another sense, isn't it ironic that at this time of sickness and confusion...the church, not just our church, but all around the world, is telling this incredibly powerful story of hope, healing and restoration!

And so with that perspective in mind, may we be refreshed and rejuvenated in the telling of the Easter story and its significance in our lives.

This morning we come to the end of our three week Easter sermon series. And if you're just joining for this morning, I'll just catch up very quickly.

Our Easter series has been called, "**The Gardener**" (**Sermon series graphic**)

The storyline, in the Bible, in many ways can be traced through a series of three primary Garden stories.

The first story in the Bible takes place in a Garden...the **Garden of Eden**. And we said, that first Garden represents "the way things were created to be." The name Eden, literally means delight. It's a garden of wonder, pizzazz, order and goodness.

But it does not last. Human disobedience, the Bible calls this sin, ruins the gardens goodness.

And that took us to the second garden story in the Bible, the **Garden of Gethsemane**. And that's not a pleasant garden, because in that Garden we humans, arrest, betray, deny and drag off and eventually kill the gardener (**Pic of Cross**).

That second garden reminds us that sin is real, the results and consequences of sin are very real. The crucifixion of Jesus is the ultimate picture of the devastation caused by human sin.

And I'll just tell you that for many people in our world, that's the end of the story of humanity. Despair, brokenness, uncertainty, failure...the story of humanity is a two-garden story.

But the Christian faith, is NOT a two garden story, it's **a three garden story**.

In fact, "Salvation, (healing, restoration) in Scripture almost always has a three themed approach."

*The Old Testament is filled with what might be called "third-day stories." When Abraham is afraid he's going to have to sacrifice Isaac, he sees the sacrifice that will save his son's life on the third day. Joseph's brothers get put in prison, and they're released on the third day. Israelite spies are told by Rahab to hide from their enemies, and then they'll be safe on the third day. When Esther hears that her people are going to be slaughtered, she goes away to fast and pray. On the third day, the king receives her favorably. Jonah is swallowed by a great fish and vomited out, rescued on the third day.*

Easter is a third day story.

*The apostle Paul wrote about Easter's third day, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day."*

(FaithLife Article)

The Garden of Gethsemane is not the final Garden story. There is a third Garden in your Bible did you know that. That third Garden is found all the way at the end of your Bible. Bible begins in a garden, and ends in a garden. Turn with me for just a moment...to the very last chapter, Revelation 22.

**Revelation 22 - Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb...On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse....<sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their**

**foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.**

Wow what a garden. Are you able to see so many connections back to the first Garden. There are trees, rivers, fruit, light reigning over darkness. There are healed nations and no longer any curse of sin.

Revelation 22, is the third and final Garden story. It's an incredible picture of salvation, restoration, healing, renewal, new life! At the end of Scripture, we come full circle...the Gardner restores the Garden of Delight!

So, how do we get from Gethsemane to the Restored Garden? The answer is...Easter!

And so let's take a look at the Easter story this morning. Turn with me to John 20.

**John 20 - Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"**

Now, just pause for a moment.

Did you notice Mary's response?

Mary goes to the tomb, only to find it empty. What is her assumption? "The body's missing" and that can mean only one thing...someone must have taken it!

So she runs to get the disciples. And Peter & John, go running to the tomb. Pick up the story in verse 6...

**<sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter...went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup> as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.**

Notice how the disciples respond...verse 10...

**<sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.**

The body is missing. The disciples respond in a similar way to Mary. Someone must have stolen it. That's it, the end. So they head for home discouraged, defeated. Two garden story. Sin & death are the end. Have you felt that way about your life? There is a relational wound so deep, it cannot heal. There is a harmful temptation or addiction or habit so strong, you can never seem to find relief. There is failure in your life, expectations you've never been able to live up to. What do you do?

Perhaps you end up like Mary.

Mary is so convinced of the stolen body she remains by the tomb, crying.

**<sup>11</sup> Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been...**

**<sup>13</sup> They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"**

**"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." <sup>14</sup> At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.**

**<sup>15</sup> He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"**

**Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”**

It’s a fascinating response in some ways. In one sense, she is totally wrong. Because this is not the cemetery gardener. But in another sense, she is completely right.

This is THE GARDENER!

But even when Jesus stands before Mary and speaks to her...her immediate reaction is: this must be the Gardener, it can’t be Jesus! And so let’s just get real raw and honest for a moment and talk about this.

At the heart of the Christian faith lies the question of Jesus’ resurrection. Can you believe that a dead man came back to life?

The story of Easter seems unbelievable. It did back then to Mary and the disciples. And it may to you also.

So, I just want to say, if that’s where you are, we’re glad you’re tuning in to our services and we want you to know that you’re welcome here. For many who grew up hearing the story of Easter, it can be easy for many to overlook or downplay the intellectual challenge of the Resurrection. And we often come across as simplistic or even foolish.

And so, I’ll just say this...we want to be the kind of church at Five Forks, where we can be honest about our faith, about what’s in our hearts and our minds.

Intellectual dishonesty is not helpful. What’s happening in the Easter story is nothing less than a...

## **1. Paradigm Shift.**

Are you familiar with a paradigm? We all have a way of understanding the world, reality, what's possible. This is called your paradigm for understanding reality.

Our paradigms are influenced by the culture/community we grow up in, by the teachings we were exposed to, by our families, by our experiences in life.

One paradigm of reality, that has existed and still exists almost everywhere in the world is: **“once dead, always dead.”** The two things you can be certain of are death & taxes. We even express the finality of life, in other phrases that we use. “What’s done is done. You can’t change the past. No use crying over spilt milk.”

To talk about a dead man coming back to life is a paradigm shift. That’s the reason Mary and the disciples behave the way they do in the story.

**To change governing ideas...is one of the most difficult and painful things in human life.** (Willard 98)

A few years ago, I heard someone talking about the nature of our paradigms and he said. Often when we come across something that doesn't fit our paradigm for reality, our initial response is either **FIGHT** or **FLIGHT**.

If you give me or try to convince me of information that doesn't fit my paradigm, my most likely reaction is gonna be to run away from you. Or to fight you.

It's important to realize this, in talking about the resurrection event. It is a miracle. In other words, by definition we are saying this is a unique supernatural event that does not fit our paradigm of reality. The resurrection is not something that can be replicated by humans or discovered somewhere else in nature. It is an impossible event that only happens by God's supernatural power.

Maybe you've felt like Mary and the Disciples on that first Easter morning. Let's acknowledge to ourselves, that the initial response of many to this story, may be "That's impossible. I'm not sure I can believe that." And we don't need to be threatened or offended by that response.

By the way, if you're one of those folks who is interested in some of the intellectual conversation regarding the resurrection, a good place to begin is an author by the name of NT Wright. Most of his scholarship is around the resurrection event, one of my favorite books is "Surprised by Hope."

Just one of things I want to say about the uncertainty of the resurrection of Jesus and how we talk about it.

Some people will say that ancient people were superstitious and more gullible than us modern folk. Since we're smarter today, we know the resurrection couldn't have happened. CS Lewis calls this **chronological snobbery**.

Truth is even people in the ancient world knew that when something or someone is dead it tends to remain that way. The resurrection of a dead Messiah is unique in ancient historical biographical literature. You don't find other stories of dead Messiahs coming back to life. Matthew, Mark, Luke & John are unique in their claims that Jesus was dead and came back to life. And it's the reason that a small band of rag-tag, defeated, persecuted followers turned into the Church!

*It is why even though Jesus never wrote a book more books are written about his life than any other person and even though Jesus never posed for a painting, his face is the most recognizable face in the world. This is why to this day we divide human history into BCE, history before Jesus and CE, history after Jesus. (Ortberg)*

Author Andy Crouch says it this way...

**The resurrection of Jesus was and is the most culturally significant event in history. It has changed (the world) more than anything else before or since. I think that is not just a religious statement but an empirically verifiable one. If you don't believe in the resurrection, substitute "whatever (it is you believe) happened just after the Passover in CE 33," because \*something\* happened that year that changed the world—and that's not a phrase I use lightly.** (Andy Crouch, Culture Making)

Paradigm shift...and I know it leaves lots of questions.

And so the second thing you need to know...is that...

## **2. The Gardener is patient with uncertainty.**

Did you notice this with Jesus? He doesn't berate, belittle, or disown Mary or the disciples in the face of their uncertainty. He doesn't say to Mary or the disciples, *"I'm shocked and horrified that you don't believe I am alive. I told you this was gonna happen and you still don't believe."*

Jesus is patient with Mary's uncertainty.

In fact, all throughout Jesus ministry with his disciples, he was patient with their moments of uncertainty. On several different occasions Jesus says, "Oh you of little faith..." Jesus closest followers were often those of little faith.

If we're honest, we are very much like Mary and the Disciples...imperfect, little faith. We wonder, how much certainty, how much faith, do I need to follow Jesus? I'll use another garden analogy that Jesus uses.

He says, faith the size of a mustard seed will do.

*Your uncertainty may be really big and your faith really small. It's ok with Jesus if you start there.* (John Ortberg) In fact when Jesus was calling followers, he usually didn't say "come and believe all the right information about me and then you can follow me." He more often said, "come follow me, and eventually you'll come to believe the right stuff about me."

How many times will I lose my temper before I learn? Oh you of little faith.  
How much selfishness, greed, materialism, grumbling? Oh you of little faith.  
How many impure thoughts? Oh you of little faith.

This third Garden story is a story filled with grace and patience in the face of our uncertainty. You just start in little ways, in small moments of your day to follow Jesus, his life, his teachings.

Third, the Easter story reminds us that the...

### **3. The Gardener is personal.**

*The work of a gardener is always earthy and personal.* (Brian Zahnd)

Gardeners have to get their hands in the dirt. When you're planting, you always start by digging a hole? When the weeds begin to grow, you're out there, pulling them out. You get that dirt in under your fingernails. The work of a Gardener is personal and earthy.

Go back for a second to Jesus conversation with Mary...

**<sup>15</sup> He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."**

Then notice how Jesus addresses her the second time...I just love this.

**16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.”**

He calls her by name. And that moment she recognized who He was.

Ever walked through a flower garden with a real gardener. They know the names of their flowers. Take a walk with me around the Kipe house, some of the flowers blooming in our gardens.

When I look at this **(PIC OF hyacinth)**...to me that's a flower. Or to be really technical it's pink flower.

But to a real gardener this flower has a personal name. This is a **hyacinth**. Actually it's more than that...technically it is: **Hyacinthus Orientalis** in the scientific class **Liliopsida**.

How about this? **(Pic of daffodil)** Do you know what this is? That's right, it's a flower. It's a white flower...to me. But to a real gardener this flower also has a name. This is a daffodil. And technically it's scientific name is **“Narcissus”** also of from the scientific class **liliopsida**.

Jesus, The Gardener, gets personal with us. He knows us by name. He calls us by name. Mary is not just human, she's not even just woman...she is Mary.

**Isaiah 43:1 - This is what the LORD says—he who created you...he who formed you...“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.**

Our Gardener is Emmanuel which means “God with us.” God enters the messy world, the sin-infected garden. He is earthy and personal. He took on human flesh.

Our Gardner reached out with his hands to touch lepers. Our Gardener eats with tax collectors and sinners.

Easter week, our gardener put on the garments of a servant and he got down on his knees to wash the feet of his disciples. Including the betrayer, Judas.

In fact, our gardener was so personal and earthy ...on Easter weekend he allowed himself to be buried in the earth.

Jesus, the true Gardener, gets earthy and personal with you and me.

I've shared before, I'm a sucker for Country Music. One of my favorite artists is a singer Brad Paisely. Back in high school I bought the very first CD he ever recorded. At the end of that CD he sings a hymn, that's become one my favorite hymns as corny and sentimental as it sometimes sounds. The hymn is actually called "**The Garden**"...one of the lines in that hymn says,

*"And He walks with me and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own.*

Shaun, **I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.**

The Easter story is so personal. It's that each day of my life, I'm given a personal invitation by the Gardener to go for a walk through life. Shaun, walk through this day with me. Hold my hand. Lean into me. When temptations come today. Walk with me. Hear me calling your name. When you are about to lose your temper. Walk with me. When coronaviruses come, just walk with me.

Finally, as we choose to walk with Jesus, in this new paradigm of reality, where resurrection is real it opens us up to...

#### **4. The Gardener offers Hope.**

Change is possible

Many of you are probably familiar with **Helen Keller**. She was both deaf and blind.

Much of what we learn and experience, the reality of life, comes through these senses. Imagine for a moment a life where you can't hear or see. Close your eyes, place your fingers over your ears for a moment.

For the longest time, words, language, meant nothing to her. Because she could not associate words with any kind of image or picture of reality.

She writes in her autobiography, a fascinating description of her own moment of change, a paradigm shift in reality, the day when this all changed for her...

*"We walked down the path to the well-house...Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly.*

*I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. (Up until now, no understanding or meaning in her life...then...Suddenly I felt consciousness...and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me.*

*I knew then that "W-A-T-E-R" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought.*

*That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! (Eternity in Session 125 & 142)*

In that moment Helen Keller received a new paradigm for life. Water finally had a name. A whole new world of meaning opened up before her.

That's what we believe the resurrection is. It's our entrance into a new kind of reality and understanding about our lives and our world.

From death, God brings life.

From brokenness God brings healing.

Perhaps you've looked around your world and all you can see is the ruined garden.

Perhaps you've looked at your own heart, and all you can see is the ruined garden.

It seems irreparable, it seems lost, hopeless.

Paul said, **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."**

Despair, loneliness, depression even corona-virus's don't win. Jesus does.

Easter points us to that third garden...

**Revelation 22 - Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb...On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse....<sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.**

We believe in a three garden story. That's what Easter is. That's what we're celebrating today.