

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *The Garden of Gethsemane*
SERIES: *Easter*
SCRIPTURES: *Genesis 3 & Matthew 26*
SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*
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**Credit to Dallas Willard; John Ortberg*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you.

Today we continue with our Easter sermon series “The Gardener” (**Sermon Graphic**)

We said that the story of Easter can be traced through three primary Garden stories found in Scripture.

Last week we began in the Garden of Eden.

And that first Garden reminds us that we were created for a world of pizzazz and creativity, a world of order and rhythm and a world that is good, goodness determined by the Gardener! Eden literally means delight.

And so if you recall, we kind of left last weeks message with these words...

“God saw all that he had made and it was good!” (Very Good...Awana kids)

This morning, Palm Sunday, we want to turn our attention to the second garden story. Palm Sunday week begins with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It begins with crowded streets, waving palm branches, celebration, excitement.

But in the matter of just a few days, that all changes very quickly! By the end of Palm Sunday week...we are no longer on the crowded, bustling streets of Jerusalem. Instead we find ourselves, walking quietly with Jesus...to a garden.

I. The Garden of Gethsemane

If you have a Bible, open it up and turn to Matthew 26 and verse 36...

Matthew 26:36 - ³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

Gethsemane is the second Garden. And Jesus and his disciples have gone to this garden to pray. To meet with God.

And it's a rather humorous episode. Jesus prays, apart from his disciples and each time he comes back to check on his disciples. He finds them sleeping. The disciples of Jesus, these spiritual giants...sleeping when they should be meeting with God. I thought, you know, this has very practical application for all of us...you've have tuned in this morning to meet with God by watching the live stream in your pajamas...And so I just want you to know, Jesus is watching you this morning and he will be checking in to make sure that you are not falling asleep!

It actually happens three times. Jesus prays, disciples fall asleep. Let's continue and as we do, I just want you to listen as the humorous tone of this second Garden begins to change dramatically...

and he (Jesus) began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”

...he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

This is a very different tone from the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Delight, order, goodness. **Gethsemane is a garden of sorrow and trouble.** In fact, the name Gethsemane, means “oil press.” Likely a garden or grove of olive trees, olives being pressed, squeezed, crushed...the life right out of them.

Luke, one of Jesus other disciples describes the scene like this...

Luke 22 - ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.^[c]

Gethsemane is a garden of anguish.

But it doesn't stop there...turn back to Matthew's account...

Matthew 26:45 – 50 - ⁴⁵ Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Gethsemane is a garden with sinners and betrayers...

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

⁵⁰ Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”^[d]

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

This is a very different Garden. Eden was filled with turning darkness to light. Bringing chaos into order. God's creative acts, of wonder.

Gethsemane is light turned to darkness. It's order turning to chaos. It's mobs, betrayers, swords, clubs...drops of blood.

And there's a second layer to what's really going on? In Jesus, God becomes man and enters our world. The Gardener, who made delight, order and goodness enters the garden...Only to find sorrow, trouble, anguish. To be rejected, arrested, and we know where this story is headed...Palm Sunday week, ends ultimately with the gardener hanging, lifeless, on a Roman cross.

How did we get from Eden to Gethsemane?

What happened? What is happening? What went wrong?

To find the answer we have to return for a moment to the original garden...Eden...Genesis 3. There is a crucial, turning point in the story of humanity.

Genesis 3:6 - ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

In Genesis 3, humanity tries to take goodness into its own hands. We think that we know better than the Gardener. We ignore, deny, and reject the Gardener and the ways of his good Garden.

The church word for this is **sin**. Sin is what takes us from Eden to Gethsemane.

And so I just want to pause and talk about this for a few minutes. Because sin is not a very popular concept in our world. In fact author Dallas Willard says this...

“In intellectual circles, evil, like sin is a non-category. It is impolite and politically incorrect to speak seriously of it...” (Willard 58)

John Ortberg says think about it like this...

It’s fascinating, if you think about it we have gauges for other elements of church life. We generally monitor attendance. We keep track here at Five Forks of a weekly absentee list. We know how many people are in our small groups and Sunday school classes. Somebody counts the offering and keeps track of our finances.

But have you ever heard of a church that set a goal for a 5% sin reduction next year?
(Ortberg)

A. Sin is Real

The problem is, it becomes hard to do anything about our sin if we deny it’s existence or don’t actually believe there’s something about us that needs healing, saving.

Our youngest son Keagan, 6 years old (**PIC OF KEAGAN**). He’s a snuggler. He loves hugs and holding hands. Out of the blue, he’ll just randomly come up to Jenny or myself, from down in his bedroom and say, “Hug” and put his arms out. And so a few months, I joked with him when he went to hug Jenny, I said, “Don’t hug mommy you’ll get girl cooties.” He paused for a moment and thought about it and then he asked, “Are girl cooties real?” And so I said, “Let’s google it.”

Google says, that **“girl cooties are a child’s term for imaginary germs or disease that one can catch by touching another person.”** He hesitantly said, “See dad they’re imaginary.” So I, decided to go all philosophical on my 6 year old son and said, “You’re right. See they are real imaginary germs that you can catch.”

And then he paused again...he had to think about that “real, imaginary germs.”

Of course, after that we joked about it. “Truth is girl cooties aren’t real, no matter how you philosophize about them.”

Unfortunately this is what many people try to do with sin. Maybe if we go all philosophical we can explain it away. Maybe it doesn’t exist at all. Ironically, one of the things the Bible teaches us about sin, is that one of sin’s primary characteristics, is a tendency to deny it’s existence.

“Lostness is a factual condition of the self, of the ruined soul. You either have it or not, just as you either have or do not have a certain physical disease that can kill you. If you have that condition, you may not know it...because it is inherently a condition of self-blindness.” (Willard 58)

You, me we have ruined souls, and one of the first signs of a ruined soul, is denying you have a ruined soul. It doesn’t mean that all you do is evil or that you are irreparably ruined! Hopeless, beyond saving. That’s not what I’m saying. In fact, that’s why you must tune in next week...that’s what Easter is all about.

But there is a part of you that is lost, ruined and in need of saving, restoring.

Sin is real, no matter how you philosophize about sin. John wrote these words in 1 John...he made it real simple for us.

1 John 1:8 - “If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

Romans 7 – “What a wretched man am I, who will rescue me from this body of death.”

Isaiah 6 – “Woe to me!” I cried, “I am ruined.”

And so the first thing you need to come to terms with this morning, is that there is a part of you in need of fixing.

The group Alcoholics Anonymous...recognized that the very step in overcoming alcoholism was admitting the problem. My name is Shaun, I have a sin problem.

But second, it's not just that sin is real. It's that sin has consequences. And for me this helpful. Talking about the consequences of sin helps us to move from a theological conversation about sin to real life, practical stuff. Because consequences are much easier to see.

B. The Consequences of Sin

Of course the most immediate consequence of sin is:

1. A separation between ourselves and God

Genesis 3:23-24 - ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side^[e] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

In just a few short verses, we've gone from a good garden to separation from God. Now again, to clarify...this is not separation in the sense, that God can't stand being around you, that he avoids looking at you, that he stops listening to you. But our relationship with God is broken, it's distorted, it's incomplete.

"Don't eat from that tree." God says. And humanity answers, "Not your will but my will be done." That's sin. It separates us from us God. "I don't want you, I don't want to submit to you or your will or your way."

*I remember when Jenny and I had our first child, Landon (**PIC OF BABY LANDON**) and getting ready to leave the hospital. He was so tiny. He looked so small and fragile, his car seat dwarfed him. I buckled him in his car seat, in the back seat and then I jumped in the drivers seat. I remember being so nervous driving home that day. I bet I never drove over 30 mph. Every turn, I slowed way down. I was terrified about getting that precious little cargo home safely.*

But as nervous as I was that day, I've been told by parents that there's another trip you'll take with your kids, one day, that is far more terrifying. Want to guess what day that happens. The day your child turns 16. Because on that day, I won't buckle Landon in the back seat and head for the drivers seat. Instead, I'll give the keys to Landon, he'll head for the driver's seat and I'll be heading for the passenger seat.

And when that happens, there will be this terrifying sense in which I'm no longer in control, Landon is.

(Illustration Adapted from John Ortberg)

The separation that happens between God and humans, is that the driver's seat is actually God's and we don't like that, so we try to take his place.

Leo Tolstoy said it like this... ***“There are two God’s. There is the God that people generally believe in – A god who has to serve them. This God does not exist. But the God whom people forget – the god whom we all have to serve – exists and is the prime cause of our existence and of all that we perceive.”*** (Willard Renovation of the Heart pg 40).

Our desire to sit in God's seat, separates us from God. Our souls, our lives are in rebellion against the creator. We're grasping to hang on to the keys. You've felt this before haven't you...

The keys to our finances (it's mine, I earned it), keys to your ego (I am better than those around me), keys to the words you speak, keys to your thought life, keys to your attitude...as long as we hang on to the keys, we will remain separated from the Gardener.

This is why, Jesus came along and said this about being his follower, **“unless you deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow me, you can't be my disciple.”** The gardener says, **“give me the keys to your life. I drive, you ride.”**

And not much will change, in our lives, until we hand him the keys.
The second consequence of sin is

2. Separation between ourselves and others

Genesis three is the story of Adam and Eve's rebellion against and separation from God.

Do you know what the very next story in your Bible is? Turn to Genesis 4.

It's a story about two brothers. Cain and Abel. I'm not gonna go into a detailed account of the story. But jump down to verse...

**Genesis 4:8 - ⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let's go out to the field.”^[d]
While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.**

Sin turns brother against brother, sister against sister.

I've shared this story with the teens, but it's one of my memories from my childhood. I have two brothers, one older and one younger (**PIC OF KIPE BROTHERS**) and when we were growing up we all shared a bedroom together. The bedroom had bunk beds. There was a single bed on top and that's where my older brother, Hylton, slept and there was a double bed on the bottom and that's where my younger brother, Nick and I slept.

And Nick and I were masters at provoking Hylton. We would lay there at night and it would start off just the two of us, talking. But pretty soon Hylton would get annoyed and he'd say something like, "Guys, be quiet I'm trying to sleep." And of course, you know how brothers are...that only made us talk a little louder. And he would get even more annoyed.

Then if we really wanted to provoke Hylton, there were metal slats that held his mattress, and Nick and I could put our feet between those slats, onto Hylton's mattress. And then we'd count to three and push our feet, with all our might and we could fling him up into the air.

Of course that made him really mad and that point we knew it was time to jump up and run...because he was coming...he would come flying over the side of the bed and pound us...

Brother against brother. Of course, in our case, it was often done in good fun. I have a great relationship with all of my siblings, we truly enjoy being around each other. But the relational separation from sin is often far more serious than this. Leading to all kinds of separation, divorce, isolation.

Return to the Garden of Gethsemane for just a moment...think about this...Judas has been a follower of Jesus, he's been one of the twelve. He is part of Jesus "in-group". But in Matthew 26, Judas comes to Gethsemane with...

a large crowd armed with swords and clubs...

48the betrayer... (he no longer comes as a companion and follower and friend instead, he is now the betrayer...)

49 Going at once to Jesus, said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

50 Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”^[d]

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

That’s what sin does. Friend is turned against friend. Brother is turned against brother. Human against human. And we see it’s consequences all over our world.

Sin is in the face of every battered, abused woman.

Sin is in the cry of every neglected child and bullied teen.

Sin is in the death of every victim of every war.

Sin is the source of every harsh, unkind, slanderous, word that is spoken.

Sin is the source of every sex-trafficked victim. Every betrayal.

(Adapted from John Ortberg)

We can philosophize all we want, but sin is real and we see it in broken relationships all around us.

Third,

3. Sin effects the physical creation.

Paul wrote to the church in Rome...

Romans 8:22 - ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Paul says that one of the effects of sin, is that even, physical creation is going through painful, prolonged suffering. And we can see this in the world all around us. We see it in disease, natural disasters, cancer, wild fires...

Of course the current virus pandemic is a reminder of how the physical world is groaning, effected by sin.

A couple of weeks ago I was reading an article, and saw some images. There are swarms of locusts ravaging crops and grazing lands in the Sudan (**Images from Sudan**). A country that is already reeling from widespread hunger and civil war.

These desert locusts can eat their entire body weight in greenery per day. Meaning that a swarm 1 kilometer square can eat as much food as 35,000 people in one day!

So I did a little bit of calculating, a square kilometer is a pretty big area. I'll put in Franklin County farming language. **1 square kilometer is equal to 247 square acres**. In my mind, I thought, well that would be a pretty big swarm. Until I did some checking, it turns out locust swarms in the desert can be as big as **460 square miles, which is the equivalent of 295,000 square acres** and can eat 423 million pounds of plants each day.

I'm not saying that locusts are evil. But I'm saying that we end up living in a world where Sudanese people are already starving. And in the midst of that broken system, the already weak become even weaker by the infestation of locusts. The starvation of Sudanese people is part of the global impact of sin. A groaning creation.

The second Garden story reminds us that sin is real, it is the factual condition of our ruined souls and it has very real consequences. It effects your relationship to God, to

other people, and even affects the physical world. I told you the second Garden story is not a pleasant one.

And the climax of the destructiveness of sin is where we started this morning. The Garden of Gethsemane. Where we humans decide to kill the gardener.

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

But the second Garden is not all hopeless. Something happens in that second Garden that gives us...

C. A glimmer of hope.

Many scholars note a striking parallel drawn between Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and Adam in the Garden of Eden.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam chooses His way over God's way and it ultimately leads to destruction, alienation, and separation. Adam said, "my will be done."

In Gethsemane, Jesus is faced with the same test. Listen to Jesus' anguished prayer in...

Matthew 26 - ...he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death...he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me..."

Jesus is in the midst of temptation. What will Jesus do?

Yet not as I will, but as you will."

"Your will be done."

Jesus does what Adam failed to do. He hands over the keys.

And so Paul wrote, these incredible words of hope, to the church in Rome...

Romans 5:18-19 - ¹⁸ just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The Garden of Gethsemane represents brokenness and failure; a stark reminder of the reality of sin. But in the midst of that failure, there is a glimmer of hope, that perhaps Gethsemane is not the end of the story. Jesus does for us, what we would not do on our own.

Which is why, you have to tune in next week.

The Christian story is ultimately the story of HOPE. This pervasive belief that though we live in a world that is not as it should be...all is not lost. We have a savior and Messiah. So please join us next Sunday...The Garden Restored!