

Good Friday Chief Service C, 2013

Text: John 18:1-19:42

Title: The Gardens

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The story of Good Friday begins in a garden.

That's appropriate. That's fitting.

All stories go back to the garden, and not just the garden of Gethsemane, but the garden of Eden. That's where it all began.

In Eden there was peace. God and man walked together and talked together, food was plentiful, there was no death, no violence, not even a need to work. Adam and Eve loved and cared for one another, and all creation, too. God and man lived in total, perfect harmony.

Yet the peace of the garden was broken by selfishness and greed, a desire to be like God.

Adam and Eve wanted their own way and they got it. They chose to listen to Satan and their own desires rather than to God and His word. They put themselves first.

And so they brought pain and suffering and death into the world.

Adam would have to work the ground, and it would only yield thorns.

Eve would have pain in bearing children.

And together they were kicked out of the garden for their rebellion, lest they eat from the tree of life and live forever.

Today we are back in the garden, this time the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus, the second Adam.

Where Adam and Eve were rebellious, Jesus was obedient.

Where Adam and Eve listened to Satan, Jesus listened to His heavenly Father. He was already "like God," in fact He was God, but He still was obedient to His Father.

Jesus prayed, "Thy will be done." Where Adam and Eve said, "My will be done."

When the Lord came looking for Adam, he ran away and hid.

Jesus didn't run and hide when Judas and the soldiers came for Him. He said, "I am He." He had no need to hide.

When Adam and Eve were faced with their sin, they made excuses and blamed each other.

Jesus didn't make excuses or blame anyone else when He was arrested.

Adam and Eve made garments of clothing to cover their nakedness. Jesus was stripped naked, and exposed for all the world to see.

And just as Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, so Jesus Christ was cast out of the city of Jerusalem.

Just as Adam was cursed by thorns, so Jesus wore a crown of those same thorns as He hung on the cross.

Just as Eve was punished with pain and agony in childbirth, so Jesus suffered pain and agony as He gave birth to His children, the church.

Why?

For you.

Adam and Eve were not the only ones to sin. They were not the only ones to put themselves first. You, too, have been selfish and rebellious. You have listened to Satan's voice and given in to temptation. You have hidden from God and blamed others for your sins. You deserve to be thrown out of the garden. You deserve to die.

But here, today, Jesus takes your place. Jesus takes your punishment. Everything that you deserve is visited upon Him.

As Jesus crushes the serpents head, His heel is struck, and He dies for you.

Jesus dies so that you won't be banished from the garden forever. Jesus dies so that like the penitent thief, you will return to Paradise. Jesus opens once more the way that was shut.

The cross has now become the new tree of life, the source of life that lasts forever. If you eat His body and drink His blood, you will live forever.

The deed is done. It is finished, accomplished, once and for all. And yet there is still more to come.

But not right away.

Take a day to rest, a Sabbath. Sleep as Jesus slept in the tomb.

And return once more to the garden on Sunday morning, the first day of a new week, and see what will happen in the next garden.

