

LENTEN MIDWEEK

March 9, 2022

GARDEN TO GARDEN: EDEN TO HEAVEN

Gardens are places of beauty. Gardens are places of rest. Gardens are places that bring joy to our hearts as we walk through their midst. The Garden of Eden was such a place — of beauty and perfection, of joy and peace. But man could not resist temptation, and the result was a view of the beautiful garden from the outside. No more joy, no more peace, only pain and sorrow, sweat and tears. Today, our journey is from the Garden of Eden (from which we have been exiled) to an even more beautiful garden, the Garden of Everlasting Life. This will not be an easy journey. There will be much stumbling and falling, many bumps and bruises—after all, the world has been infested by sin and all the hazards that go with this reality. A difficult journey, but one that has been taken first by our Lord and Savior Jesus. Because He has first made the journey and suffered in our place, the gates of the new, heavenly garden stand open before us. No more tears, no more sorrow, this garden is our place of perfect rest, joy, and peace.

Hymn “We Are Exiles from the Garden”

We are exiles from the garden,
Banished by our sinful choice,
Terrified to seek His pardon,
Hiding from our Father’s voice.
Underneath the branches swaying,
Sweat and blood fall to the ground.
In the darkness, Christ is praying;
He comes forward to be bound.

Leaves will fail our vain concealing
Our true nakedness and shame.
We must rend our hearts, revealing
All our guilt and sinful blame.
Jesus takes our flesh and sentence
As His clothes are claimed below.
We fall down in true repentance;
His new robe He will bestow.

On the mount, the Lord is waiting
For the proper sacrifice.
What is worth His wrath abating?
Who could pay the dreadful price?
God the Son will be the scion.
God the Father will provide.
God the Spirit points to Zion;
There, with God, we will abide.

On this journey we are taking,
We fear not what lies in store.
Though our feeble wills are breaking,
We know Christ has gone before.
As we walk the way completed,
On His throne, the Savior waits.
Death and hell have been unseated.
We behold the open gates!

Opening Sentences

P: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears!

C: **For I am a sojourner with You, a guest, like all my fathers.** *Psalm. 39:12*

P: Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to Me, says the LORD of hosts,

C: **and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.** *Zechariah 1:3*

P: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

C: **let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.** *Isaiah 55:7*

P: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

C: **they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.** *Isaiah 35:10*

C: **Glory be to the Father**

and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning,

is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears!

C: **For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.** *Psalm 39:12*

Confession

P: We are on a journey from a deserved exile to a gracious promised land. Although we merit nothing, because our heavenly Father promises forgiveness and mercy to all who call on Him for Jesus' sake, let us go to Him, confessing our sin.

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination

P: Heavenly Father, we are fallen creatures, prone to hiding our faults from one another, yet knowing our sins are laid bare before You.

C: **Forgive us and clothe us with Christ's own righteousness.**

P: We have erred and strayed from Your way.

C: **Forgive us and turn our feet toward the paradise You promise.**

P: We have attempted to placate Your just demands by our own efforts.

C: **Forgive us for the sake of Your Son's sacrifice in our stead.**

P: We have often failed to reflect the new life You granted us in our Baptism.

C: **Forgive us and drown the old Adam within us.**

P: We have eaten "forbidden fruit" in our disobedient thinking, speaking, and acting.

C: **Forgive us and grant us the new life won on the tree of the cross.**

P: We have failed to trust Your care and protection as we journey through this wilderness.

C: **Forgive us and accompany us on our pilgrim way.**

Forgiveness

P: Our gracious God, even when we were dead in our trespasses, You made us alive together with Christ. You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. May He Who began this good work in you bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Ephesians 2:5, 13 & Philippians 1:6*).

C: **Amen.**

Scripture Reading *Genesis 3:14–24 (God clothes, then expels Adam and Eve from Eden.)*

P: After Adam and Eve sinned, God spelled out the results of their disobedience. But He also clothed them and promised that a descendant of Eve would triumph over Satan. A reading from the third chapter of Genesis.

The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

**C: I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
He shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise His heel.”**

P: To the woman He said,

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for your husband,
but he shall rule over you.”

And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

**C: By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”**

P: The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

C: And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

P: Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Reading *Revelation 22:1–5 (The description of heaven reflects Eden.)*

P: A reading from the twenty-second chapter of Revelation.

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; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And

night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Hymn #427 "In The Cross of Christ I Glory"

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.

All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me;
Lo, it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way,
From the cross the radiance streaming
Adds more luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

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Sermon *"Garden to Garden: Eden to Heaven"*

Offering

Prayer of the Church

P: We are returning from exile, listening to the inviting Word of God, full of grace and truth. Let us respond to Him in prayer. Gracious God, offering full and free forgiveness,

C: we come in spiritual sackcloth and ashes, painfully aware of our sins and failings. Graciously wash us and clothe us with the robe of Christ's own righteousness so that we may live eternally with all Your saints.

P: Eden's Lord and ours,

C: hear us and all who call out to You in pain and sorrow, sweat or tears. Remind us of Your painful victory over every temptation, and strengthen us to follow where You have led the way.

P: Loving Father, calling us to Mount Calvary,

C: remove from us our fear of Your righteous judgment for our sins; strengthen our faith in the all-availing sacrifice of Your Son in our stead.

P: Spirit of life,

C: remind us again of our Baptism, in which our old Adam was drowned; strengthen us to live in the freedom of the children of God.

P: Lord Jesus, Savior and Guide,

C: give us the eyes of faith to see the tree of life awaiting us in heaven, and guide us to follow where You have led the way.

P: Protecting Father,

C: assure us of Your presence on our journey through the desert of this world and bring us at last to the paradise purchased by Your Son.

P: O Holy Spirit,

C: nourish our faith and restore our souls each time we come to the Table of the Lord and receive His body and blood, a foretaste of the feast to come.

P: Holy and merciful Lord over all,

C: we feel the burden of our sin; renew in us the firm faith that Your Son has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, giving His life for ours.

P: Everlasting Father,

C: Our Savior has conquered death. Fill us with rejoicing, confident that we shall therefore gather around the eternal throne of the Lamb, Your Son, Who with You and the Holy Spirit are one God, now and forever. Amen.

P: Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

C: Our Father Who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29–32 (antiphon: liturgical text)

P: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping,

C: that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace.

P: Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled.

C: My own eyes have seen the salvation which You have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal You to the nations and the glory of Your people Israel.

P: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping,

C: that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace.

Benediction

P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, and ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless you and keep you.

C: Amen.

Hymn #878 “Abide with Me”

final verse will be sung a capella

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

*And when at last You come again to save,
Raise us to life and bring us from the grave!
And then with all Your people, strong and free
I shall rejoice, for You abide with me.*

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Dismissal

P: Go in peace as you serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

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