

Title: Your Garden

Grant Hill, Garden Gathering, 4/21/24

The Christian walk is not about me. Say, "It is not about me." To be a Christian, is not about me.

Revelation 3:15-16 ESV

Song of Solomon 4 ESV

We are in the age of the Laodicean church. Don't let that scare you. In the book of Revelation, there are seven letters that are written to the churches. One of the letters was written to the church in the city of Laodicea. Those letters can be interpreted prophetically, because they match what the church has been going through in the generations since Jesus left. The Laodicean church is the one Jesus says, *"You are neither hot nor cold, but you are lukewarm, and I will spit you out of my mouth. You say that you are wealthy, but you are actually poor. You say that you are clothed, but you are actually naked. You say that you can see, but you are actually blind."*

We live in societies that have been walking this out for many years. We are blessed as a country. We are blessed as a society. We are blessed as a culture. But, by the time that Jesus comes back, the entire world will be in that age of the Laodicean church. Not every country or continent is in the place of America. America has a unique opportunity to be a forerunner in learning what it means to abound, yet be poor in spirit. You have to learn that when you have everything in the physical, then you have to be thirsty and starving in the spirit. You have to learn that when you are in the comfort of the culture, you are still burned up with lack in your soul.

Philippians 4:11-13 ESV

Paul says "I have learned to abound and have learned to be abased." He has learned what it took when things were going well and he was prosperous and wealthy. Like you would be in the comfort of having a paycheck every week, every month. His future was secure. The soul knew what was coming. "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound." The key to it is the scripture that almost all society knows. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

What did He have to learn? He had to learn that when things are abounding and "it is well with my soul," I have learned that through Christ, I "kill" myself. He strengthens me to sacrifice myself on the altar. He gives me courage to do that. He gives me courage to say, "it is not about me. I am not going to worship the false god of myself. But, I will lay my life down as a bondservant to Christ. I have learned to put myself on the altar, "through Christ who strengthens me."

But, on the other hand, if I have been abased, then I am not comfortable. I am being persecuted, or tormented, or I don't know when my next paycheck will be, or shipwrecked, which was the life of this apostle, who had been on a boat that was shipwrecked. He says, I have learned that when my physical state is in torment, uncomfortable, or in deep distress, not sleeping or eating. Then my spirit man comes alive. Then my spirit man is abounding. Then my spirit man is full. How did I learn this? Because, I relied upon my spirit to get me through it. I realized that the Spirit of the Lord is my strength. The joy of the Lord is my strength.

Sunday, April 21, 2024

The fruit of the Spirit is what I was eating on to sustain me through this hard time. You must learn both as a Christian. "It is not about me," it is about learning these two things. That, "I can do all of these things, in being abound and being abased, through Christ who strengthens me."

The United States is in a unique spot where God is calling them out and saying, "You thought you were wealthy, but you are actually poor." We do not like to look at these things. He is calling out the United States, saying, "You thought you could see, but you are actually blind. You do not want to look at it, but I am going to show it to you. I showed you a solar eclipse that showed you the effect of your heart in the broad daylight. Your heart is black. In the broad daylight your heart and your soul is black. But, heed my voice, because there is a glory that can come and bring you out of the darkness of your soul, and bring you out of the wickedness of your heart America."

Ninety-nine percent of the country saw the recent eclipse in some way. It is a sign to show us the blackness of our own heart. Yet it was beautiful in the way that God will see us through it. There is still beauty in what God has designed for this country. Yes, He will say to us that, "You are naked, but you think you are clothed with all the best clothes, and when I look at you, you are naked and in rags." America has a unique opportunity. The world is going to come into the Laodicean age. The world is going to come into that of "I am abounding." But, we have already been there. We have a unique opportunity as forerunners, to show that even if you are abounding, you can overcome the abundance and prosperity, and be hungry for God and starving for Holy Spirit.

That is what we have been called to do. That is actually what the dedication of this country was for. God has not given us a covenant, but He has let us dedicate ourselves to Him. There is a difference there. You can be dedicated to something and choose to fulfill your word to the Lord and He will bless you. America has to turn back to what it was dedicated for. It was not to make ourselves happy, fat and comfortable. We are actually dedicated to go and serve the nations. Liberty and justice for all, but to give it to all, you have to serve. You have to lay down your selfish ambitions and choose others over yourself. That has happened when we chose this book as the book of the land. When we have chosen this is not the book of the land, those things crumble and fall. We are seeing it with our eyes today.

Yes, the Song of Solomon is not about me. It is about giving yourself to another. The Song of Solomon is often called the "song of all songs." It is a song about love. The Bride in the Song of Solomon is a representation of the Bride of Christ. Her husband, the Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon, is a representation of Jesus. It does apply to modern day husbands and wives. At the beginning of the Song of Solomon, the Bride is tending to a physical garden. It is a part of her love. It is a part of who she is. She loves to tend to a physical garden and produce fruit, produce flowers, and produce spices in it to give to her husband, to the house, and her family. That was what she did.

Her brothers were a part of this. At one point, her husband comes and says, "Come, come away with me. Let's have a day together. I am going to my flocks. I am going to be out all day, but I want to be with you today. I want you to come away with me today." Her brothers give her a message saying, "Hey, beware of those little foxes that are going through your garden. She decides to stay and tend her garden, and says to her Bridegroom, "You go on." Then in the middle of the night, she yearns and wishes she had gone with her beloved. We read in the story in chapter four, where she has found him.

All of a sudden the metaphor changes, and the Bridegroom says to his wife, or the husband says to his wife, "It is not just about your garden. You are the garden. Your soul is the garden. You have become the metaphor. I delight in you." That is what we are going to read.

Song of Solomon 4:12-15 ESV

“A garden locked is my sister, my bride. A spring locked, a fountain sealed. Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes, with all choice spices— a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.”

Notice verse twelve, “A garden locked is my sister, my bride.” It is a very interesting phrase. The Lord is telling us that we are His sister. We are. He is the first born among the brethren. It says, He is the firstborn son, and we are His children. In the same way, when we get married to a sister in Christ, she is first our sister in Christ. She is first God's daughter. He is first God's Son. So, when two believers are married, their identity is first who they are to God. Their identity is first who they are to God. You are a daughter of Zion. You are a son of the Most High. The Lord has given you to each other in marriage.

The second identity is my bride, my love, my beloved one, my sister and my bride. I want you to pick up on that. God is very intimate. The way to kill yourself is to understand His intimacy. You will do anything for love. There are lots of stories and songs about that. You will do anything for love. You will also give up anything for love. You will even deny yourself for the love of God. You will deny many things. You will deny many things to go and be loved by someone. You will deny many pleasures of your heart to go and spend time with that someone.

In the same way, you will deny yourself to be loved with the intimacy of God. When you have done these things, and you have made Him your beloved, and the “lover of your soul,” it says in the New Testament. When you have made Him the Bridegroom King in your soul, all of a sudden, your soul can now be developed into a garden. It is called the fruits of the Spirit. Of these, there is no law. What is the fruit of the Spirit? “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self control. Of these things, there is no law.” They are fruit of the Holy Spirit. They are fruit of this intimacy. There is fruit in this relationship.

But, when we grow this fruit, it is not for us to indulge in. Who eats the fruits of our spirit? Those around you. You actually produce fruits of the spirit for others to indulge. It is not about you. Even your intimacy with God is for you to produce fruit that is for others to enjoy. It is not even about you enjoying it. What? The first one that should enjoy the fruits of your intimacy with Christ, is God, Himself and for His glory, for His Kingdom, for His ways, for His thoughts, and for His delight.

Then, it is for others. That my love would be for you. My joy would be for your strength. My peace will settle your soul. My goodness will shine upon you. That my gentleness, my graciousness, and my patience is for you. That my self-control keeps me in the way of the Lord and doesn't offend the Body of God and doesn't offend the Spirit of God. The enemy cannot blaspheme me, because I have been in self control.” Do you understand? Even the fruit that you are producing of the Spirit is not for you to just indulge yourself in. It is for those around you to know the goodness of God in the land of the living. Wow.

“Well, they say, what is for me? Him, and if it is not Him that you want, then you are in the wrong place. If you are wanting something other than just Jesus, then we sold you the wrong gospel. Then you have misunderstood my message. If you are wanting something other than just Him, Jesus, then I have been delivering the wrong gospel. It is Him and Him alone. He is more than enough for you. He is more than enough for us. He is our inheritance. What He does is because He loves us. What He gives us, is because He wants to. But, I do not get into this relationship with Him, because I want all of those things. I get in the relationship with Him, because I want Him. No matter what He gives me. This is the right mindset of the Christian.

Sunday, April 21, 2024

This is the mindset of, “all that I have and all that I am is yours.” Whatever you want to give me, it is up to you, Jesus. I am following you. I do not care where that leads me. I do not care where that takes me. I do not care what I have to say. I do not care if Jim Bob and Sue get all of the blessings and I walk a hard road. I did not ask. I did not seek. I sought you and that changes the mindset of self, self, and self. That Christianity is about what I can get to secure my future.

Now is there goodness in the Lord? Yes. Is there mercy? Yes. Is there forgiveness? Yes. We seek Him, because of those things. But, that is not the main thing. We encounter Him, and we receive His goodness. We encounter Him, and we understand what true forgiveness is. We encounter Him, and we understand. He is merciful, and He has not treated me according to my sins, but He has every right to. Hallelujah, my God has saved me. Hallelujah, He loves me. Yes. It is not a guilt consciousness. But an “I am blessed consciousness, and an “I am forgiven consciousness.” Yes.

There are many things that you can grow within the soul of your heart. When you are in Christ, you are a living, breathing garden. Many years ago, God gave us this name. It is part of why we are called the Garden, but it comes from an encounter with His presence. The fruit grows, because you are encountering His presence. In the book of First Corinthians, the apostle says, “Some watered and some planted, but God causes the growth.” I am up here watering, and I am up here planting. But, you produce the soil. You produce the softness of heart. Jesus says in the gospels, “some seed lands in rocky ground, some lands in hard ground, and some gets picked up by the birds.

But, then there are some hearts and souls that are already tended to and are soft waiting for encouragement and waiting for the word of the Lord. When your heart is soft, then I can plant in it as a minister of the Lord. I can water as a minister of the Lord. I can encourage as a brother and sister in Christ, but the Holy Spirit in your walk with Him causes the growth. Encountering His presence lets you grow. His blood is your life source now. The blood is delivering life, life, life into your mortal body to grow, grow, grow spiritually. Look at these amazing scents and tastes, that are growing within you if you seek the Lord.

Song of Solomon 4:13 ESV

“Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates and with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all choice spices— a garden fountain, a well of living water.”

Jesus said, “Come to me all who are thirsty and I will spring forth out of you rivers of living water.” When you first encounter Him, “you are a fountain sealed up.” As the Holy Ghost comes upon you, He is like, I want to burst that well open. I wants to burst the rock open. Your heart might be hard as a rock, but I am going to be like Moses. When I speak forth, you are going to burst with living water. You cannot stop it. You cannot stop it. You won't stop it.

The Song of Solomon constantly has a phrase that says, “Beloved, do not awaken love till it so desires.” When you encounter Jesus, you realize you have never been loved before you encounter the love of God. You realize you have never actually encountered love. When that happens, He is your first love. He is the first love, and it opens up something that is brand new. My life is new. I have never been like this ever, and now I am alive in every way. It is the love of God. It is the love of God.

Song of Solomon 4:16 ESV

“Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat it's choicest fruits.”

Sunday, April 21, 2024

What are we referring to? The north wind is referring to adversity, and it goes back to “whether I am abounding or whether I am abased.” I have learned how to produce the fruit of Jesus. The north wind is that cold wind. We actually felt it this week, right? Thursday was hot, sticky, and dusty in Texas. Right? Then you wake up on Friday and it is cold and gray in Texas, right? Then Saturday was wet all day long. The wind changed from Thursday to Friday. If you pay attention, the winds move, they change. One was hot and the other was cold. Each wind brings something different to the atmosphere. It brings something different to your circumstances. It brings something different to your daily life, that you have to deal with.

The Bride is actually asking for a north wind. “Awake O north wind.” The Bride is actually asking for a trial. The Bride is saying, “come on north wind. Come on north wind, blow upon me.” Let me see if I can produce the same spices of my life. “Come on south wind.” South winds are times of refreshing warmth. Springtime is coming. Usually in our town, in our region, the south wind brings rain. Because it is coming from the Pacific, it usually brings rain. So, south winds are good things in our region. South winds bring heat and warmth. North winds bring cold fronts. So, the Holy Spirit is quickening the Bride to say, “Come, no matter what is coming.” Can you produce the same spice out of your garden? “Blow upon me,” that the same incense of my soul, the same attitude of my heart, the same state of my being is still abounding. It is still thriving, because I have learned through all of these things, “It is Christ who strengthens me.”

What a beautiful little phrase. But, then it is not just so that the incense goes before God, who is it for? “Let my beloved come to his garden and eat, take delight in me, eat of my fruit, eat of the fruit of the Spirit.” That God would find a place where He is pleased to dwell. “I am the temple of the living God. I am the garden of the Holy Spirit. I want to be a place, a sanctuary where God wants to visit.”

In the very beginning, God created Adam and Eve and He placed them in a church, right? A church with four walls, wood floors, and seats. He came and visited them every Sunday. No, what did I mess up? God made Adam and Eve and He placed them in a garden. He walked with them, daily. He wants us to be in our soul, the garden of His sanctuary. In the natural, we have cultivated gardens and uncultivated gardens. What garden do you want to go into? Cultivated gardens are magnificent and beautiful, producing fruit every month. They have a flowering plant or a smelling flower that is like, wow! Right? You would want to have gone to Washington DC last month, because the cherry blossoms came forth. They are a cultivated orchard. It is a place of, wow!

A place of peace, and a place of refuge for my soul. God says, “That is you, beloved.” Cultivate yourself, prune yourself, and soften yourself, so that the growth of the fruits of the Spirit may be where I can take delight in, and walk with you there. There is an old hymn about that. “He walks with me, and He talks with me, and tells me, I am His own.” Have you ever heard of any drumbeat like that? No, it is like a whisper, because it is so intimate. “It’s me and you.” There is an intimacy there that you can be embarrassed about, but it is true. It is true. “Awake O north wind and come O south wind, blow upon my garden, and let its spices flow.”

Luke 6:20-23 ESV

“Jesus lifted up His eyes on His disciples and said.” Who is He looking upon? His disciples, the ones following Him. The ones who have said, “yes, I am going to follow you.” He is looking upon His disciples, and He says, “Blessed are you who are poor;” I think it is the gospel of Matthew that says, “poor in spirit.” Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.” My disciples, if you are poor in spirit, I am going to give you the Kingdom of God. You have to stay that way. You have to find a way to be poor, and to hunger and thirst for God, constantly, consistently, and daily. “But, you who are hungry,” now, “you shall be satisfied.

Sunday, April 21, 2024

Blessed are you who weep.” now, “for you shall laugh.” This is spiritual. I hope you are hearing the spirit of it, “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, they revile you, and they spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.”

We just did Philippians chapter four here. You have the abounding and abased. Those that understand how to be spiritually poor, spiritually hungry, and spiritually travailing for God, are going to receive the Kingdom of God. They are going to be satisfied, and they are going to be filled with the joy of the Lord. Some are in the physical, walking through hate and persecution, and exclusion. It happens all the time. They are my friend, until they find out what I do. “Oh, you are a pastor? All of a sudden, I was excluded. I am serious, that is the truth with us All of a sudden, they never talked to me anymore. “Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, and when they revile you, and when they spurn your name as evil on account of Jesus.” That is often the hard truth.

The reality is that the Christian religion is often the one to persecute the believer. That has been since Jesus. It has been before Jesus, because the ones that believed in God, killed the prophets in the name of God. They did not receive Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel and all the way to Malachi. They persecuted them, tormented them, and killed them in the name of their God. This is the way it is. You will often find in this walk, that the hardest persecution you run into is not from the lost. It is by the saved. It is the religious spirit that hates the Holy Spirit. “Blessed, are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, when they revile you and they spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in Heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”

Luke 6:24-31 ESV

“Woe to you who are rich,” as in the Laodicean age, “for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now.” Saying, ‘Listen, man, I am full, I am satisfied with God,’ for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. But, I say to you who hear, love your enemies and do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from the one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” Say it with me. “It is not about me. Self is a false god.”

Verse 32, “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.” How are we different? “Even sinners love those who love them.

Verse 33-34, And if you do good to those who only do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.” We must be different. How can we be different, if we are doing the same things with the same attitudes?

Verse 35, “But Love your enemies, and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. And your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. He gives to those who do not know that He is God.” Right, He gives to anyone, to the ungrateful and even the evil. Even if they ask of Him, He gives it,

Verse 36, “Be merciful even as your Father is merciful.”

Verse 37, “Judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.”

Sunday, April 21, 2024

Verse 38, Give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Jesus is saying a warning here. That if you judge, you will be judged the same way back to you. Pressed down, shaken together, running over into your lap. He is not saying never judge. But saying, beware of how you judge, because in the same way that you judge someone, they will have a right with good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over into your lap, to judge you the same way back. So, if you are clean and you are whole, and you are doing a judgment righteously, then they will be clean and whole and judge you back righteously. Is that a given? No, but that is what He is saying. Make sure you are clean before Me when you judge.

But, it doesn't say, never judge. He is giving you a warning on how to do it. Do you see it? Otherwise, we would be saying, “Don't forgive,” because it is in the same verse. Judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. We say, “Oh, do not judge,” constantly. Oh, judge not. Okay, well then, “do not forgive.” Right? This is the verse. This is the whole verse. Understand the whole verse if you are going to quote it. If you judge, understand that it will be given back to you the same way that you judged.

So, parents cannot be afraid, if they know that they are standing in righteousness and they are making a righteous judgment. They are speaking the truth. You cannot be afraid if it is the truth. This is a judgment. This is the truth. In the same way that you have judged your kids, then they will judge you back. But, if it is with love and kindness and for their good, they will judge you back with love and kindness and for your good. It totally changes how you should hear that verse now.

“Give and it will be given back to you.” We never say, “do not give.” We never say, “Oh well, do not give, because then you know nobody will have to give to you. Some people might think that. But, that is not how you live. “Give and it will be given back to you, pressed down, shaken together, running over into your lap. The same measure that you have given to someone, it shall be given back to you.” It may not be by the same person. It may be just from God, Himself. But, “it is not about me. It is not about me.” You will give to people, and they will walk all over you. Because, Jesus gave to them and they walked all over Him. Now, you are in Him.

Verse 43, “For no good tree bears bad fruit. Nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes. Nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush, the good person out of the good treasure of His heart,” the spices of your heart, out of the fruit of your garden,” out of the good treasure of His heart produces good. And the evil person out of the evil treasure of His heart produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks.”

Verse 46, “Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I tell you?”

Let's stand and give God the glory. If you need prayer, we are up here to pray for you. If you need wisdom, we are up here to ask God for wisdom. “Holy Ghost, we thank you and we give you the glory. “It is not about me.” It is about you. The fruit that I am producing and cultivating and growing, is not for me. It is for those around me to eat and know the goodness of God, in the land of the living. Show me God how to be in this country, how to be in this culture, and learn how to be abased in spirit, yet abounding in the flesh. Teach me, God, how to suffer in the flesh so that my spirit can grow. Teach me God, how to be poor in spirit when my soul is in comfort, and I will receive the Kingdom of Heaven by your word. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.