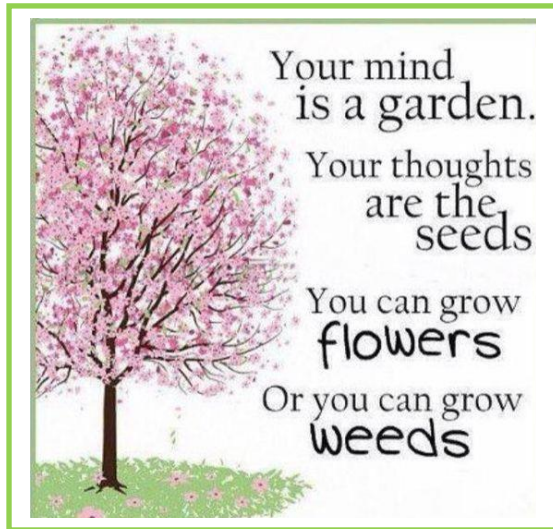


Welcome and Opening Prayer

First Song with lyrics.

God will Make a Way Don Moen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsMAXhc0QTs>



HOLY REFLECTOR SERIES

Mission and the Creation

Mandate

Over the last few weeks we've been looking at who we are as human beings. In the first week we talked about how we are all made in the image of God, that God made us for a purpose, on purpose. This means that we have great value.

Last week, we looked at how sin has distorted the image of God in us, and so we sin much damage and destruction in the earth. We also looked at how Jesus is THE image of God *par excellence*, and how he has made it possible for us to live once again out of our identity as people made in God's image, for a purpose, on purpose.

Having come to an understanding of who we are, both from creation and from our re-creation in Jesus, what's next? How do we live that out on the earth? This is the question we will look at today.

If we go back to the Genesis accounts, it gives us two reasons why God created us, and what He intended our role to be on the earth:

Parishioner to read both readings

Genesis 1:28 *“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground”*

Genesis 2:8,15 *“Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed... The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it”*

These two elements – subdue the earth and tend the garden are related.

I love the spring weather – it is a beautiful time of the year. The cold of the winter has been replaced by the warm, budding growth, leading towards summer. And due to the Covid restrictions, many households have been busy choosing just the right flowers and vegetables to plant; while others have worked out the perfect location to provide sufficient sun and shade for their gardens.

It is not that easy for some – we have to cultivate the soil, mulch, plant the seeds, ensure we keep watering and tending our gardens. And hopefully, as the season flows we will see an amazing garden full of lush, delicious vegetables or beautiful, healthy flowers.

Cultivating a garden requires that the gardener takes authority of it, including the weeds and pests. If we leave our garden unattended many things can and will invade it. Weeds that will stunt the growth of healthy plants, aphids, caterpillars and many other bugs that quickly invade and

destroy the plants entirely or at a minimum leave behind diseases, munched leaves and broken remnants of what was to be a rich harvest.

Not only does tending the existing garden require subduing the earth but subduing the earth *outside of the garden extends the boundaries of the garden.*

Genesis 2 tells us that God “planted a garden... in Eden”.

Now as we have seen, a garden is a cultivated space, it is a space where an order has been imposed. It is a space where the gardener’s authority is exerted, in the same way that in a Kingdom the authority of the King is exerted.

So the mandate of *extending God’s garden out into all the world is a prophetic picture of the extension of God’s kingdom out into all the world.* The mandate to tend the garden and extend it into all the earth is the first biblical requirement of our mission to extend the Kingdom of God. What does this look like?

Tending Our Own Gardens

The first step in mission is tending our own gardens. It is amazing how similar this process is to that of our growth in the Lord. As we talked about last week, while God created us good, we all have a few “weeds” growing in the garden of our lives.

A garden does not simply appear out of nowhere full of beautiful flowers and delicious vegetables any more than our spiritual lives suddenly produces the virtues, characteristics and traits that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has called us to develop in our lives.

Part of the Christian life is the ongoing process of pulling up the weeds and picking the caterpillars off the cauliflower of our heart. This is a process that God enables us to do by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit shows us the parts of our lives that need tending, and together with Him we deal with the issue.

Just as we must make a decision to plant a vegetable garden in order to enjoy its harvest, we must also make a decision to plant our spiritual garden. This is a process that God enables us to do by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit shows us the parts of our lives that need tending, and together with Him we deal with the issue.

Just like our garden, if we are not diligent in our care and maintenance, if we are not careful many things will invade and/or grow up within us which can strangle and destroy the virtues and characteristics that our Lord wants to grow within us.

Parishioner to read

Colossians 3:5-10 *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

God tells us that those who are in Christ will be conformed to the image of His Son. When we believed in Jesus we were justified with God. As we journey in our Christian lives, we grow more and more into the image of Christ, into holiness and in likeness to Christ. And because we are all impaired in some way with God has given us the gift of His Spirit to remake this image of Christlikeness in us.

Parishioner to read

Colossians 3:12-15 *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all of these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”*

Extending the Garden Into All The World

We work together with the Spirit to subdue the weeds and pests in ourselves, to tend our own garden and to extend God’s garden—His Kingdom—in our lives. This is a process that will continue our entire lives. Jesus reaffirmed the creation mandate when He commissioned His disciples:

Parishioner to read

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have

commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20).

In this commission we see two elements. Firstly, we are given authority by God to undertake the mission He has given us. Secondly, we are told to make disciples, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

This is the process of extending God’s garden when we make disciples, we help to bring them into relationship with Jesus, and then teach them how to tend their lives.

Conclusion

When we have experienced the freedom of living out the knowledge of who God created us to be and have the redeemed image of God in us with the help of the Holy Spirit, how can we not share this with others?

There are so many people in our world who have believed the enemy’s lies that they are unimportant, unloved and purposeless. There are so many people in our world who have been hurt by sin. There are so many people in our world who are not free to live their lives in holiness. We have to share the good news with them!

Every human being is made in God’s image. This bestows on each of us a great dignity and worth. Not only do we bear God’s image, but God made us that way on purpose, for the purpose of ruling over the earth on God’s behalf. This is still the purpose that God calls us to.

Yes, there is sin and destruction in our world, and many of us have been hurt by it. Sin has distorted the image of God that we bear. However,

God has made a way to redeem and restore that image-bearer identity in Christ. We can all walk in our role of image-bearers by being in Christ. From that place God gives us His Holy Spirit to work in our lives, extending God's kingdom, His garden in our lives.

So what condition is your garden in?

Have you been diligently attending to it?

Or has it become overgrown with weeds of bitterness, resentment, discord, criticism and fault finding or invaded by the bugs of self-pity, gossip, malice, hypocrisy, lust, drunkenness, deceit, disobedience, envy and slander?

Now is a good time to make an honest evaluation of the condition of your spiritual gardens as Scripture warns us to rid ourselves of all that would cause our spiritual gardens to lose its abundant harvest.

The good news is, just as there are ways to keep our flower and vegetable gardens healthy and free from all that would destroy them; there are also ways for us to keep our spiritual gardens healthy, lush and beautiful, producing the rich harvest the Lord desires from us.

Just as we weed our vegetable gardens, we too can pull up the weeds that grow in our spiritual gardens. We can rid them of all the unwanted pests that do so much damage by treating them with the Word of God.

We can nourish and tend our gardens by being in fellowship with God. We can spend time in prayer, read and study the Bible, listen to Christian music, attend Bible studies and learn God's Holy Word and His ways.

We can come together with others who love the Lord and seek to honour and obey God in all things. And we can strive to continually seek to grow closer to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Second You tube song with lyrics.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cc0QVWzCv9k>

Communion: Noel.

Benediction and Closing Prayer.

God Will Make a Way

[Don Moen](#)

Oh, God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me

He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness, He'll lead me
And rivers in the desert will I see
Heaven and Earth will fade but His word will still remain
And He will do something new today

Oh, God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me

He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness, He'll lead me
And rivers in the desert will I see
Heaven and Earth will fade but His...

How Great Thou Art

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

