

Georgos: God the Gardener

John 15.1

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • October 27, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2019

Scripture Reader and Reading: Phil Joseph – Psalm 80.8–11

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Songs on God

Prelude:

I. John recorded Jesus as saying in John 15.1:

Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ γεωργός ἐστι.

A. Translation:

“I am the vine the true, and the Father of me the Gardener is.”

B. Instead of “gardener,” you may have,

1. “vinedresser,” or
2. “husbandman,” in your translation.

II. For my previous sermons on the names of God,

A. I have chosen Old Testament passages,

B. hence Hebrew names for God.

1. Jesus undoubtedly spoke Hebrew to His Jewish audiences, but
2. the Holy Spirit preserved His words in ancient Greek.

C. So, here John recorded Jesus as saying that the Father is the Gardener.

III. Have you thought of God as a gardener?

A. That is probably the way we thought of Him first, if you think about it,

B. such as when you think about the creation He made.

C. We imagine that in the beginning,

1. God made the whole earth a garden-like paradise, yet,
2. Genesis 2.8 shows that there was a special place on earth that God made:

8 The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put

the man whom He had formed.

– Genesis 2.8

- a) Just how wonderful do you think that garden was?
- b) Does not the earth have jaw-dropping beautiful places now?
 - (1) Yes, and that is all after a global flood!
 - (2) Yes, and that is all after God cursed the ground and caused thorns and thistles to grow after Adam's sin!
 - (a) What did the earth look like before those things?
 - (b) Yet, The Garden of Eden was better than the rest of creation.

IV. What is a garden?

- A. A garden is not wild, but
 - 1. it is a place that has been cultivated.
 - 2. A gardener has taken what is already beautiful and
 - a) done something extra with it.
 - b) It has been cultivated and protected
 - (1) either for food or
 - (2) for beauty or
 - (3) both.
- B. What Moses wrote next I think fills us with wonder:

9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is *pleasant to the sight* and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

– Genesis 2.9

- 1. So if God created the earth as a beautiful garden-like paradise,
- 2. I ask again: What was the Garden of Eden like,

- a) a place that He cultivated and
 - b) made better than the rest of creation?
- C. Like all special gardens, He put a barrier around it to make it special.

1. Genesis 3.24 implies this barrier:

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

– Genesis 3.24

2. There was a way in and out of the Garden of Eden.

V. Now think of God as Creator Gardener!

Persuasion:

I. Isaiah 5.1–7 • God Is the Gardener

- 1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved
A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:
My Well-beloved has a vineyard
On a very fruitful hill.**
- 2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
He built a tower in its midst,
And also made a winepress in it;
So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,
But it brought forth wild grapes.**
- 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.**
- 4 What more could have been done to My vineyard
That I have not done in it?
Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,
Did it bring forth wild grapes?**
- 5 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard:
I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;
And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.**
- 6 I will lay it waste;
It shall not be pruned or dug,
But there shall come up briars and thorns.**

I will also command the clouds

That they rain no rain on it.

- 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.**

– Isaiah 5.1–7

- A. God planted a vineyard and
 - 1. just as we do,
 - 2. He wanted something from it.
- B. Therefore, He found a good location for it, “a very fruitful hill.”
- C. He took out all the bad stuff,
 - 1. digging it up and
 - 2. clearing out the stones.
- D. He put in a special vine,
 - 1. the choicest vine.
 - 2. You do the same, wanting a particular plant or plants in your garden.
- E. He also built a tower in it,
 - 1. something that we do not necessarily do, but
 - 2. we do other things to protect our gardens from animals or other problems.
 - a) We might put up an enclosure.
 - b) We might do things to frighten away animals.
 - 3. And if you have ever depended upon your garden
 - a) as your main source of food or income,
 - b) then this becomes serious business.
 - (1) We had a man in Klamath Falls who worshiped with us a little,
 - (a) his mother, Ivey Dalrymple attended Nile Street, and

- (2) he had been shot in the leg when he was younger,
 - (a) for, now get this, stealing apples from an orchard.
- (3) I believe it was during the Depression or some time after,
 - (a) and he was taking that farmer's food or his income.
 - (b) It's just like we used to hang horse thieves in America.
- 4. God did not want anyone harming His garden, His vineyard.
- F. However, His vineyard failed to produce the grapes that He wanted.
 - 1. He even asked what more could He have done with it.
 - 2. He stated that He would have to destroy His vineyard.
 - a) It seems like that happens often with orange groves in America.
 - b) Something will infect the grove, and they have to burn the whole thing.
- G. Then He revealed that all of this was to illustrate His treatment of Israel.
 - 1. He did everything and
 - 2. He gave everything
 - a) for His nation
 - b) that they might produce good things.
- H. The point is
 - 1. that even as a gardener works in many ways to have a productive garden,
 - 2. the Lord God did with His people.
 - a) I think He does the same thing with the church.
 - b) He is the Spirit Gardener and
 - (1) He works with us that we might produce the Fruit of the Spirit:
 - (2) Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

II. Psalm 80.8–19 • God Planted a Garden

8 You have brought a vine out of Egypt;

You have cast out the nations, and planted it.
9 You prepared room for it,
And caused it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
10 The hills were covered with its shadow,
And the mighty cedars with its boughs.
11 She sent out her boughs to the Sea,
And her branches to the River.
12 Why have You broken down her hedges,
So that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit?
13 The boar out of the woods uproots it,
And the wild beast of the field devours it.
14 Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;
Look down from heaven and see,
And visit this vine
15 And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted,
And the branch that You made strong for Yourself.
16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.
17 Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.
18 Then we will not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.
19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!

– Psalm 80.8–19

- A. In verses 8–11, the psalmist acknowledged the work of God
1. in establishing Israel in the Land of Canaan,
 2. like importing a choice vine and casting out the stones.
 - a) He prepared a special place, a very fruitful hill, and
 - b) it took deep root,
 - (1) just like you want your plants to do, and
 - (2) Israel the vine filled the Land of Canaan.
 3. It cast a great shadow, and

- a) it reached from the Sea, the Red Sea
 - b) to the River, the Euphrates River.
- B. Yet, verses 12–13 showed a problem.
- 1. The hedges of protection were broken down, and
 - 2. everyone passing by took a little of Israel for themselves.
 - a) Boars and other wild beasts dug up and tore up the garden,
 - b) devouring it, when the nations warred against Israel.
- C. However, the psalmist pled with the Lord God to return and
- 1. then again called upon the name of the Lord.
 - 2. He was the Gardener, He could restore the garden of the nation.
- D. I pray the whole Psalm as a prayer about the church, because
- 1. the church is God's garden now.
 - 2. Consider the part that corresponds to this part of Psalm 80:

**You have brought the vine Jesus;
You have planted Him and His church in every nation.
You prepared room for it in America,
And caused it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
The hills were covered with its shadow,
And the mighty cities with its boughs.
She sent out her boughs to the East Coast,
And her branches to the West Coast.
Why have You broken down her hedges,
So that all the secularists who pass by the way pluck her fruit, our children?
The atheist boar out of the woods uproots it,
And the wild beast of evolution devours it.
Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;
Look down from heaven and see,
And visit the body of Christ,
And the church which Your right hand has planted,
And the Christians whom You made strong for Yourself.
We are burned with fire, as worldliness pulls away our young people;
Congregations perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.**

**Let Your hand be upon the spiritual body of Christ,
Upon the sons and daughters whom You made strong for Yourself.
Then we will not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.
Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine on the church,
And we shall be saved from perishing in America!**

III. Romans 11.16–24 • God Has an Olive Tree

A. Speaking to Gentile Christians about the Jewish tree in God's garden:

16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches.

1. Let us not think that we are better than the Jews.
2. There is a reason God cut them off and accepted us.

B. Remember who is greater:

But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

1. Why would He spare us, but not the Jews?
2. God is the Gardener and He will do what He has to do for this tree.

C. Here is what to think about God:

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

1. When you work in your garden,

2. if a plant has failed,
 - a) you prune the bad part off or
 - b) worse, you pull it up and you do not think much about it.

D. Paul continued:

23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

– Romans 11.16–24

Exhortation:

I. We Began and We Shall End in a Garden

- A. God put the first man in the Garden of Eden, and
- B. created the first woman from the man in the garden.
 1. God wanted them to take care of the garden:

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

– Genesis 2.15

2. That was to be their lives for the rest of their lives and
 - a) their lives would have gone on eternally in the Garden
 - b) had they not sinned.
 3. From the beginning of creation,
 - a) God has shown us that He likes gardens.
 - b) He wanted us to live in a garden on earth.
- C. However, the Book of Revelation shows
1. that although that first garden was lost,

2. God the Gardener has planted the true garden in heaven:

2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

– Revelation 22.2

II. Let's go back to John 15:

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

– John 15.1–8

- A. Do not let yourself be cut off and burned.
- B. Let the Father prune you, and
 - 1. you shall be what He wants you to be.
 - 2. Then you will glorify Him and
 - a) if you glorify Him,
 - b) He will bless you beyond measure.