



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 31.03.2024

“Three Gardens”

Preacher

Ps. Nathan Bean

Scriptures

Due to the number of scriptures for this message, we encourage you to read the following in your Bible, or via <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

- [Mark 16:1-7](#)
- [Luke 24:13-33](#)
- [John 20:11-18 & 24-29](#)

Thought

Christianity can essentially be explained across three gardens. The garden of *Eden*, the garden of *Gethsemane*, and the garden tomb of *Golgotha*.

As we journey through this Easter season, we remember the agony of *Gethsemane* on Good Friday, we remember that the reason Christ died was to restore the relationship with Him which was broken in *Eden*, and on Easter Sunday we remember that He rose again, appearing to Mary Magdalene in the garden tombs of *Golgotha*.

Not only are there three gardens, but there are three main reasons why we might find ourselves struggling to accept the risen Jesus in our lives.

The first is disqualification. In Mark 16, the Angel specifically tells the disciples to go and tell the others “and Peter”. Peter knew he had messed



up. In the moment of Christ's greatest need, Peter turned away, denying even knowing him. And yet, the Angel of the Lord is specific, "tell Peter". Could it be that the message of Jesus this Easter is that we're not too far from Him, we're not disqualified, even if we've messed up?

The second is our doubts. In John 20, we find the story of 'Doubting Thomas'. Like Thomas, we so often hold out on fully believing until all our questions are answered. Yet, when Thomas encountered Jesus face to face, he immediately understood. It wasn't that his questions were answered, they just lost all importance when truly encountering the risen Christ.

The third reason is disappointment. In Luke 24, we find two disciples walking away from Jerusalem and every hope and promise they thought would unfold there. Yet, on that dusty road of disappointment, Jesus comes alongside them.

And so, as we look at Mary Magdalene, we see that the Christian story ends where it began - in a Garden. But this time, instead of us having to run and hide in shame as with Adam and Eve, we can encounter Him face to face as with Mary, allowing our doubts to fall away, our failings to be swept away by grace, and our disappointment to be overcome with the hope of our risen Lord.

No longer are we separated from Christ, but we can now sit down at His table and dine with Him, our eyes opened to His presence, to see that He is, and always was, walking with us, bearing our burdens, speaking into our lives and setting our hearts on fire with the neverending promise of His love, His grace and His presence. Jesus, who took all our failures to the cross, invites us again to walk with Him in the cool of the day, no longer upon a dusty road, but in a garden where there is now only new life, rivers of overflowing grace, and the promise of a new and limitless dawn.

Becoming Christlike

BEING, **THINKING**, AND DOING

Conviction of a Disciple: Secure in our identity in Christ.

Confident that God's grace is sufficient.

Thought

Christ made a way for us, yet we often struggle with disqualification, doubt and disappointment.

Scripture beautifully paints a picture of all three of these challenges, which Pastor Nathan so beautifully unpacked in this Easter Sunday message.

The underlying key for all three of these areas of struggle is to truly understand our identity in Christ and to be confident that His grace is sufficient. It's easy to say, but often takes a lifetime to learn. May we take one more step on that journey today.

Practice

Step 1 - **Reflect:** What stood out to you in this message?

Step 2: **Assess:** Being honest with yourself, which of the three 'struggle' areas do you most relate to (disqualification, doubt or disappointment)?

Step 3: **Act:** What is a very practical way that you can change the way you think about an area of struggle this week?

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank You that You see me, You know me, and You walk with me no matter what I've done or how often I doubt. Today, may I truly walk in confidence, knowing that Your grace is indeed sufficient for me both now and always.

Amen.