

A Walk in the Park Genesis 2:8-17

Gardens are beautiful to look at but a pain to take care of. Whether it's a vegetable garden or a flower garden or any other kind of garden they require work and lots of it if they are to retain their beauty or their productivity. It doesn't take long for a garden to become overgrown with weeds.

A garden is an enclosed plot of ground that is carefully cultivated. The Bible mentions a number of gardens. It mentions of flower gardens (Song of Solomon 6:2; II Kings 21:18, 26), spice plantations (Song of Solomon 4:16), orchards (Song of Solomon 6:11), and kitchen gardens (Deuteronomy 11:10).

We know about Nebuchadnezzar's hanging gardens. They are one of the seven ancient wonders of the world.

There is the Garden of Gethsemane outside the walls of Jerusalem. Jesus went there on different occasions to pray. It was there that His betrayal took place.

The other garden mentioned in Scripture is found in our text. It's the Garden of Eden. It is in this garden that we find the topic of our discussion today and for the next several weeks.

Turn to Genesis 2:8-17.

Let's consider the following this morning.

The placement of man in the garden

The provision for man through the garden

The purpose of man in the garden

The prohibition for man in the garden

I. THE PLACEMENT OF MAN IN THE GARDEN – v. 8

Let's remember from our passage last week that we were introduced to a new name for God. That name will be carried throughout this chapter. He is Jehovah Elohim – the Lord God. We considered

last week that God is a relational God, a covenant God. He wants us to have a relationship with Him. When we get to chapter 3 we will consider how that relationship got messed up. The rest of the Bible is about how we can have that relationship restored. We learn that it's only possible God's Son, Jesus Christ, when we accept by faith the gift of eternal life offered by grace.

Now we come to our passage in verse 8 and see that the Lord God planted a garden. We'll call it God's plantation for man.

A. God's Plantation For Man– v. 8a

I have mentioned before that Robyn has several gardens. They range in size and purpose. She has a knot garden. It's spelled K-N-O-T. I spell it N-O-T. A knot garden has a formal design usually in a square frame with a variety of aromatic plants and shrubs. Robyn's knot garden has a hedge on the exterior border with some bushes planted in the middle in some kind of design. IN the middle she has two hyssop plants that grow about four feet tall attracting all kinds of bees. If the dogs could stay out of it long enough it would do well. Until then I'll continue to call it an N-O-T garden.

She has an English garden with a variety of flowering plants that bloom at various times from spring to fall.

And then there is her vegetable garden from which many of you have enjoyed the fruit of her labor. This garden is perhaps 25' wide and 100' long.

Our text tells us that it was the Lord God who planted this garden in Eden. We know neither its size nor the boundary. From the author's perspective, the garden is in the east. Also bear in mind that scientists, even secular scientists, believe that at one time there was one giant land mass or super continent. Creationists believe that this super land mass was then broken up during the flood to form the seven continents and many islands around the world today. There is no real way of knowing

exactly where the garden was other than its description of being planted in the east. Many scholars put it somewhere in the region of Iraq. Others put it somewhere in Africa.

In the 19th century W. F. Warren believed that Eden was in what is now the North Pole.

British General Charles George Gordon believed that one of the 100 beautiful islands in the Indian Ocean was where Eden originated.

But really, no one knows for sure except for the one who made it in the first place.

The name Eden can mean either plain or paradise and may refer to both. Eden is considered a region within which this garden was placed. This is suggested by the choice of words used in the NIV saying that God planted a garden in Eden. It would be like saying the Cyprus Gardens of Florida, the gardens being within the region of Florida.

So while there are a number of speculations about where this garden was planted it cannot be accurately determined because the surface of the land changed after the flood. What we do know for sure is that God is the one who planted this garden. Now let me say in passing that this is still the sixth day of creation. We know this because of looking back at 1:27. Remember that chapter 2 is looking through the lens of a microscope at one specific part of the sixth day of creation.

From what we will see in a moment it must have been a garden with breathtaking views. That was God's plantation.

Now consider God's placement of man.

B. God's Placement Of Man – v. 8b
 “And there He put the man He had formed.”

Remember this is all God's doing. It was part of His plan and it was with purpose, which we will see in a moment.

God planted the garden for man and God placed

man in the garden. Adam didn't wander around looking for a good place to call home. He didn't need to call a real estate agency or scan the local listings in “changing streets.com”. God chose the place and the purpose for Adam to live where every need would be met. All he needed to do was trust God that He has his best interest at heart.

Do you believe that God in His sovereignty has placed you right where you are? Do you believe that He will provide for you in that place? All you need to do is trust Him, trust Him with all your heart.

If we ever wonder about God's plans for us maybe these verses will help.

Isaiah 25:1 “O Lord, You are my God' I will exalt You and praise Your name, for in *perfect faithfulness* You have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.” (Emphasis added)

Isaiah 28:29 “All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, whose *plan is wonderful*, whose wisdom is magnificent.” (Emphasis added)

Jeremiah 29:11

Always remember that God is the one placing you. He has a plan and a purpose. Jeremiah continues by noting that God will come to those who seek after Him with all their heart. Look at verses 12-14a.

Now in the context God is speaking to Israel who was in captivity that He would bring the Jews from wherever they were scattered back to the land.

In the garden where God had placed man would he seek God?

In the place where God has brought you are you seeking Him?

Remember it was God's placement, His plan. In this place He provided everything Adam needed.

II. THE PROVISION FOR MAN IN THE GARDEN – vs. 9-14

The author tells us that the Lord God made all kinds

of trees to grow in the garden and they came from the ground. It's a lavish description. Man needs two important commodities in order to survive. He needs food and he needs water. Any survivalist will tell you those are the two most important needs above everything else. In His wisdom when God placed man in the garden He met those two needs.

A. The Provision For Food – v. 9

The author shifts the focus on God who is likened to a potter fashioning man from the dust of the earth to that of a horticulturist who has provided for man what will sustain him in the garden. Within God's provision for food He gave man variety. Notice that God's provision was diverse.

1. God's provision was diverse – v. 9a

Our text says that He made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground.

We can only imagine the variety that God made for man in the garden. He provided for man's needs with an abundance of all kinds of things to eat. It was like moving into a fully furnished apartment with a fully stocked refrigerator and pantry.

Folks, God knows what you need. He is the great provider.

It was not only diverse it was delightful.

2. God's provision was delightful – v. 9a

For almost 30 years my Mom headed up one of the kitchens at Barakel. Her motto in running the kitchen was simple: it had to look good, taste good, and smell good. That can be a challenge when you're cooking for 150-200 people every meal.

Our text tells us that what God planted was pleasing to the eye. It was appealing because it looked good. After all, if it doesn't look good, we're apt to skip over it. Some of you might be a fan of Kale, I am not. I know Robyn is because she plants it every year. Someone posted a recipe for Kale on

Facebook. The suggestion was to cook it with coconut oil to make it easier to scrape in the garbage. I hope I didn't offend anyone who happens to like Kale.

What God made had eye appeal. It was good to look at. But to the picky eater, looking good is one thing, tasting good is something else. Our text has a word to say about that as well. God's provision in the garden was not only delightful it was delicious.

3. God's provision was delicious – v. 9a

It passed the taste test.

I suppose if I have offended some of you I might as well keep going and offend a few more. I don't know if coffee beans came before or after the curse. I have my opinion. I've talked to other non-coffee drinkers who can't stand the taste of coffee but who love the smell of it freshly ground. Not me. Robyn will apologize for my having to kiss coffee breath, but she keeps drinking it. Is that true repentance?

Following a Sunday service the pastor's young son was showing the visiting missionary the buffet being set for the fellowship dinner. He pointed out all the different dishes and who made each dish giving it a rating. He pointed out one dish in particular, which happened to be what his mother had brought commenting that it had come from a long line of bad cooks.

What God made was delicious. It was palate pleasing in every sense of the word.

God's provision was diverse – there was a variety. God's provision was delightful – it was pleasing to the eye.

God's provision was delicious – it was pleasant to the taste, good for food.

There's one more thing in this verse. God's provision was distinguished.

4. God's provision was distinguished – v. 9a

Within God's creation of trees that were in the

garden two are singled out. We will look at them more closely in a moment and then specifically in chapter 3. For now we are only introduced to them.

- a. The tree of life
- b. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil

They are of importance in the overall plan of God for man in the garden. For now be satisfied with the understanding that God has provided for the needs of man to sustain him with food. He even placed on tree in the garden for a specific purpose. But man requires more than just food. He also needs water as do the things growing in the garden and God also provided for that.

B. The Provision For Water – vs. 10-14

The river in the Garden of Eden is without a name. Its purpose is twofold. The first purpose is to water the garden. Scholars believe the source of this river was from the subterranean region below the surface of the land.

If you drive through Rose City there is an artesian well in the side of a hill in front of one the homes. “An artesian well is a pumless water source that uses pipes to allow underground water that is under pressure to rise to the surface. This type of well seems to defy gravity because the pressure that builds up between layers of rock gets relieved when the water finds a path to the open air.”

This river is bigger than an artesian well because it is described as being the headwaters of four major rivers that coursed their way throughout the land. Like the Garden of Eden we have no real way of knowing the exact location of these rivers or even the land described for us in the text. So we guess.

Christopher Columbus thought the Orinoco River in South America was from the river in Eden.

Some have suggested that we know the locations of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers because they exist today. But that’s not necessarily the case since once

again the flood would have altered any rivers and landscapes. The names were most likely carried over from those who came after the flood. When people moved from England or other places in Europe and settled in the new world – America – they used many of the same names to identify states and cities. It would be the same with these rivers.

God abundantly provided for man who was placed in the garden. So why was man placed here in this paradise with all his needs met? Consider his purpose in the garden.

III. THE PURPOSE FOR MAN IN THE GARDEN – v. 15

At first glance it appears that the reason given for God placing man in this beautiful garden setting is redundant. Our text says that he was to work and care for it. It sounds like the same thing, but in reality they are two separate responsibilities.

God assigned to Adam specific duties for which he would be responsible. Like any home owner, Adam would have to take care of his new home. The first responsibility was to work it or till it. Kent Hughes in his commentary on Genesis suggests that even though the land had no weeds the ground was so fertile and the plant cover so lush that the growth had to be controlled and the plants channeled. Otherwise the foliage would have taken over becoming thick like a jungle.

Even in God’s perfect world work was still required. Only after the curse would it be laboring and difficult. So as any master gardener, Adam had responsibility to take care of the garden.

The second responsibility is found in the word ‘care’. The KJV uses the word ‘keep’. The word actually means to guard. This does not mean that there were enemies from which he had to guard the garden. Robbers weren’t going to come in and raid the land and carry away its abundance as we see in the book of Judges when raiding parties swept in and stole the barley harvest. Instead the word

carries the idea of stewardship. He had the duty to keep it beautiful. Again, Kent Hughes suggests that instead of exploiting its resources, Adam was to keep its ecosystem. In this perfect setting God had created a beautiful balance within nature that man was to guard.

In recent days certain groups of politicians are talking about what is being called the green dream. The underlying premise is that we need to get away from using certain resources that are causing problems for the environment. There is a lot of talk about global warming. Let's keep in mind that resources have been given to us by God, not to abuse, but to use sensibly. Of all people who inhabit the earth, we as Christians should work at managing the resources of our planet in creative ways that demonstrates good stewardship. We are to care for what God has provided.

We have looked at the placement of man in the garden, the provision for man in the garden, and the purpose for man in the garden. Let's conclude by looking at the prohibition given man in the garden.

IV. THE PROHIBITION GIVEN MAN IN THE GARDEN – vs. 16-17

I imagine God and Adam walking around the garden and God showing him everything there is to see. It's sort of like a realtor showing the buyer around the house, pointing out all the great things the home has to offer. I imagine God showing Adam the beautiful flowing river that coursed through the garden. He may have even pointed out how it broke off into four more rivers. As they walked he pointed out all the luscious things to eat. And then stopping in the middle of the garden God pointed at two specific trees and gave Adam a command. He could eat from every tree in the garden and he could eat as much as he wanted. It was there for his pleasure. Eating from any tree indicates the abundance available to him. Included in the command was the ability to eat from the tree of life. There was no prohibition on that

tree. He could freely eat from it along with every other tree.

In Ezekiel 47:12 it's referred to as the tree that brings healing to the nations.

We see the tree of life again in Revelation. It is reserved for the righteous after the last judgment.
Revelation 2:7
Revelation 22:2, 14

When eaten, the tree of life would perpetually sustain the physical life of Adam.

Peter Gadsby writes that "the Tree of Life was there to perform a sacramental function. If Adam passed the test of obedience, it would be the means of God's imparting eternal life to him, not by magic, but by the working of his Spirit 'by, with and under' the fruit of the Tree."

We will see in chapter 3 that the expulsion of Adam and Eve was a necessary measure of God's mercy and love to keep man eating from the tree of life and forever being kept in sin. There would have been no hope of redemption.

John Calvin suggests the following Adam's "earthly life truly would have been temporal; yet he would have passed into heaven without death, and without injury." Perhaps very much like Enoch who walked with God and was taken before he saw death.

Adam could have freely eaten from the tree of life. It was available to him and like the rest it was pleasing to the eye and good for food.

But the command also had a negative aspect to it. He could eat freely from every tree except one – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was it. Enjoy to the full everything else except that one in the middle. Now the fruit itself wasn't somehow toxic and in the eating would poison him like the story of Snow White. Death wasn't in the fruit but in the taking, in the disobedience to take what God had forbidden.

Adam could eat from any other tree except this one.

We'll see in 3:6 that it was also good for food and pleasant to the eye and that it was good for gaining wisdom. Eating it in disobedience meant they were rejecting God's control of their lives and seeking to control it themselves. In essence if they obeyed God, held Him as Master and Creator, they would have life, but if they disobeyed then there the consequences would bring God's judgment and death. God didn't mean they would die immediately, but rather that a fundamental change would begin whereby their bodies would begin the process of aging and ultimately they would die physically, but more importantly they would die spiritually. Their fellowship with God would be severed and they would be separated from Him. What would he do? Notice in this verse that God takes judgment seriously. There would be no second changes, no time outs. One act of disobedience would lead to judgment – death.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil refers to moral knowledge or ethical discernment. He already knew good, but he had not yet known evil. God intended them to have life as indicated by the availability of the tree of life. Eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil meant he would be seeking a human source of discerning good and evil rather than seeking if from God. It meant a desire to be independent from God.

Kent Hughes writes "The temptation to eat from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' was to seek wisdom without reference to the word of God. It was an act of moral autonomy – deciding what is right without reference to God's revealed will."

Joshua 9:14 gives us an example of what happens when we make decisions without seeking wisdom from God. It's the account of the deception of the Gibeonites. "The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did inquire of the Lord."

This single test would reveal whether or not he loved and trusted God. John 14:21 says that if we love Christ we will keep His commandments. The

test of our love for God is in keeping of His Word.

Life or death hung in the balance of Adam's decision to obey or disobey God's command. It was simple. It was clear. It was concise. God's judgment was clear: Adam "would surely die." He was created morally free to choose even if that choice meant choosing something wrong. God ran the risk of being rejected by creating man with a will to choose.

We are given the same choice to accept or reject God today. Kent Hughes states "The great temptation for all of us today is to establish our wisdom apart from God's Word." That's the essence of the post-modern world we live in, to be our own god at the exclusion of THE God, to make our own moral choices apart from Him. In a post-modern society man determines what is right and wrong. In choosing his own path he has eaten the fruit to his own judgment and will bear the eternal consequences.

Because eventually Adam would choose to eat from the forbidden tree and not the tree that would give him life, he chose death. History will show us another tree from which death resulted, but because death came to the one who hung on that tree anyone who comes to that tree acknowledging that Jesus died for them will receive life. The sad reality is that many will choose the wrong tree deciding to live their lives like Frank Sinatra's song and do it their way.

God has provided everything needed for eternal life if He is obeyed.