

Garden to Garden Part 7

Personal Devotional

Day 1: The Cross: Where Justice Meets Mercy

"God put forward [Jesus] as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Romans 3:25-26

The cross stands as the ultimate intersection of divine justice and mercy. It is here that the seemingly insurmountable problem of how a just God can also be merciful is resolved. Jesus, through His sacrifice, pays the penalty for sin, satisfying the demands of divine justice. At the same time, this act of love offers forgiveness and salvation to all who believe, showcasing God's boundless mercy. The cross is much more than an instrument of suffering and death. It is a profound testament to God's unmatched love and mercy.

Reflection: How does understanding the cross as the perfect balance of God's justice and mercy shape the way you approach your relationship with God and with others?

Prayer Focus: Pray the Lord will give you deeper understanding of the profound events of the cross and how it shapes our lives, and especially our relationship with Him.



Day 2: Darkness as a Symbol of Divine Justice

"And on that day, declares the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight."

Amos 8:9

The prophet Amos foretells of a day when Israel will fall in judgment for their sins. The darkness of that day is akin to the darkness that fell as Jesus hung on the cross (Matthew 27:45). The supernatural darkness that covered the land during Jesus' crucifixion is a powerful symbol of God's justice and judgment. The darkness was a divine message that the cross was a courtroom where God's judgement against sin was executed and His justice was satisfied. It serves as a reminder that God alone is the righteous judge, and His justice is perfect and unyielding. Let us recognize the seriousness of our sin and the necessity of a Savior to bear its penalty.

Reflection: Do you recognize the seriousness of sin and the weight of God's justice? How does your recognition of sin and justice lead to a deeper appreciation for Jesus who was judged in your place?

Prayer Focus: Pray that God would help you to acknowledge your sin daily and repent, trusting Jesus who saves.



Day 3: The Afflicted Shall Be Satisfied

The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD!

May your hearts live forever!

*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.”*

Psalm 22:26-27

Matthew 27:46 tells us that Jesus cried out from the Cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” At first glance it appears that Jesus was forsaken as he bore the sins of the world. But how can God ever forsake or abandon God? Instead, what if Jesus is quoting, or more appropriately, singing a Psalm. Psalm 22 is a prophetic psalm and begins with the same desperate cry in Matthew 27:46? The verses above give us insight into what Jesus was accomplishing as he hung in agony. He was afflicted in the moment, but would be satisfied when those who seek him praise the LORD. He was making a way for doomed hearts to live forever. He was creating people from all over the earth who will worship His Father. Praise Jesus that, through His great affliction, we can know and praise the father forever (Psalm 22:26)!

Reflection: What message do you think Jesus was trying to convey by quoting from Psalm 22? Consider the hope that his loved ones should have felt when they heard him singing this Psalm.

Prayer Focus: Pray the Lord will remind you of the hope we have in the atoning work of Christ.



Day 4: Sovereignty in the Declaration of Completion

"No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

John 10:18

Jesus' declaration from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30), reveals God's sovereignty over the events of the crucifixion. Despite the chaos and suffering, Jesus remained in control, choosing the moment to yield His spirit. This act demonstrates that the cross was not a defeat but the completion of God's redemptive plan. It affirms His sovereign authority over life and death, reminding us that nothing happens outside of His divine will and purpose.

Reflection: Think about a situation that feels out of control. How can you trust in God's sovereignty and find peace in His plan?

Prayer Focus: Pray the Lord will remind you of his sovereign power over all things, especially those that leave you feeling anxious and out of control.



Day 5: Grace and the Torn Curtain

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh."

Hebrews 10:19-20

The tearing of the temple curtain from top to bottom signifies the removal of the barrier between God and humanity. Through Jesus' sacrifice, access to God's presence is granted by grace, not by human merit (Eph. 2:8-9). This act of grace invites us to approach God boldly, knowing that the separation caused by sin has been destroyed. It is a powerful reminder that we are welcomed into a relationship with God, not because of what we have done, but because of what Jesus has accomplished.

Reflection: How does the knowledge of God's grace and the removal of barriers change the way you approach Him in prayer and worship today?

Prayer Focus: Thank God for his mercy that provides away for sinners to know and approach Him by the torn body and shed blood of Jesus.

