

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

JULY 2, 2023 | WRITTEN BY PASTOR KYLE WIDRICK

FURTHER REFLECTION

- MATTHEW 13:1-43
- JOHN 10:9-10
- ISAIAH 43:18-21
- PSALM 1
- JOHN 15:1-17
- 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17-18
- ISAIAH 55
- JAMES 1:21-25
- EPHESIANS 4:17-5:21
- GALATIANS 5:16-26
- DEUTERONOMY 11

THE GARDEN OR YOUR HEART

It's summertime in Northern New York and with that comes gardening. We are passing the peak of strawberry season and many people are well on their way to plentiful harvests of fruits and vegetables from their gardens. Who doesn't like a lush, green garden bursting with vibrant green life, fruits, and vegetables? Or, at least the idea of this picture. Picture in your mind a garden with lush greenery. There are many plants blooming and producing fruit. The soil is dark and rich. In the cool of the evening, after a hot, sunny day, the garden is alive with vivid scents and dripping from being watered. Just the thought of it brings peace and relaxation.

The reality of gardens is that they take much hard work. It is not enough to just hope for a lush and productive garden. The soil must be prepared, the rocks need to be removed, the seed needs to be planted. And then, there are the weeds. Those plants, that are left unchecked, will rob the good plants of vital nutrients and at least will hinder their fruitfulness and even kill good plants. Adequate watering and fertilizing is also necessary to assure a plentiful harvest.

The same is true of the human heart. It is meant to be a place of vibrant, rich, and fruitful spiritual life. It is meant to be the place where the Holy Spirit resides - is planted - and where God's truths are also planted. With the right "soil conditions" and correct care and upkeep, the human heart can be a lush oasis of fruit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. A life exuding these things is definitely of benefit to the person whose life it is,

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but, it is also a blessing to the lives of others around that person. This was meant to be. We were meant to bear spiritual fruit for the glory of God and to draw people into a relationship with the master gardener, Jesus Christ.

So, what is the condition of the garden of your heart? Is it well watered, free of weeds, no rocks to be found, and bursting with spiritual fruit? Or is it dry and arid with no signs of spiritual life but overrun with the weeds of sin? Be encouraged! Your heart, no matter what state it is in today, can become that vibrant, full of life, fruit bearing spiritual oasis in the middle of a dry and arid land. The choice is yours. It is true that it is God that causes growth and life by His Holy Spirit, but He has called us to tend the garden of our hearts.

In Further Reflection there are several passages that are worth meditating on and seeking to obey as part of the tending of your heart. My prayer is that you would receive the seed of God implanted in your heart, that you would invite the Holy Spirit to do His job of bringing life to you and renewing you, and that you would bear fruit that lasts for an eternity. Start today to tend the garden of your heart.