

In the Garden

Shorty Langdon is a long time NAPA dealer in Manchester, KY. His wife, Kathy is a retired teacher and principal. They have two granddaughters, six and three years old. Grandma being the educator that she is, had the two girls out in the garden this Spring showing them where their food comes from. She went through the garden with the girls row by row naming the vegetables for them. "This row is peas. This is a row of tomatoes. Here is a row of peppers. These are carrots. This row is green beans. These are rows of corn." When she came to the green beans there were two rows, so she identified the first row for them and then passed over the second row of beans without naming them and continued naming the other vegetables. When she had finished going through the garden the youngest girl took her hand and led her back to the row of green beans that she had skipped over. The little girl excitedly pointed at that row and eagerly and somewhat anxiously asked, "Grandma, is them the mash-ed taters?" You can appreciate her excitement and concern when you know how much she likes to eat "mash-ed (two syllables) taters".

God understands what we like and what we need and provides for us abundantly because He loves us. When God created man, He planted a garden in Eden and placed the man in the garden to cultivate it and to keep it. He told the man the plants, vegetables and fruits were for him to eat and enjoy. God out of the ground grew all the trees beautiful and delicious. In my mind's eye I can see God hand in hand with His two children walking through the garden and naming the vegetables and fruits together. Man was designed and created to function and live best and most happily in an agrarian environment. And the further we get away from the soil, from the garden, from growing things, from keeping the flocks and herds, the less contented and satisfied we become. We also know that God created man and woman for fellowship with Him. Even more than we are suited, designed and created for life in the garden, we are suited, designed and created for fellowship with God our Creator and Lord. We are built in such a way that we need the garden and we need God even more. We need God more than anything else. We need fellowship and relationship with Him most of all. He is the one we must have. We can not be happy without Him. We can not be whole without Him. We can not live without Him. When we have Him we have all we need.

God told the man that he could eat freely from any tree in the garden except one. We know the tragic story that follows. As a consequence of our sin we became guilty, ashamed and separated from God. And we died. We didn't stop breathing at that moment. Our heart did not stop beating. We continued to talk, to walk, to marry, to work, to bear children. But we died spiritually. Our fellowship with God was broken. Our sin separated us from Him. And we were expelled from the garden, forbidden to ever return. We came under the curse of God and brought that curse upon all of creation. Now instead of the pure pleasure and joy of keeping and cultivating the garden of paradise, we toil, sweat and labor fighting the weeds, thorns, thistles, bugs, diseases, droughts, floods and hail trying to scratch out a living. We keep getting further from the garden and further from God all the time. Every one of us has joined Adam and Eve in their disobedience and sin, and we share with them the consequences. Like them we will return to the dust to face the judgement of Holy God. That is the bad news.

The good news is that God in His mercy and grace has provided the way back to the garden and back to Him. He has provided the way back from spiritual death to life eternal and abundant. Jesus Christ is the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him. God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Son of God became the Son of Man and gave His life on the cross so that we might be forgiven, saved, reconciled to God, accepted in the Beloved, adopted into God's family, made children of God, the Bride and the Body of Christ. God raised Him from the dead never to die again. Because He lives, we shall live also. And where he is, we will also be, forever.

The Bible says that because of one man's disobedience we all were made sinners and we all died. Yet by one Man's obedience we all are made righteous by faith in Him, and we live.

God has promised that this world with its pain, wickedness and corruption will one day come to an end. The Day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, a day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men. And the earth and the heavens will be burned up and destroyed. But God has promised that He will create new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Randy Alcorn has written a great book about it. The title of the book is HEAVEN. There will be a river there, clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and the Lamb. On either side of the river of the water of life is the tree of life bearing twelve kinds of fruit and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse – no weeds, no pests, no drought or flood, no sweat, no tears, no fears, no strife, no anger, no hatred, no murder, no loneliness, no heartache, no suffering, no oppression, no misery, no hunger, no sickness, no disease, no

death, no sin or wickedness of any kind. And we will be with God. We will serve Him and we will see His face. And I fully expect there will be a garden there. And I will not be at all surprised if God holds our hands and walks with us through the garden and names the fruits and vegetables for us. We will rejoice in where we are, what we are doing and who we are with. And it won't be like those great fishing vacations where every day brings you closer to the end, closer to leaving. This vacation is forever. We will not have to go home because we will already be home in the perfect place He has prepared for us for eternity. There will be no stress, no hurry, no rush, no dread, just pure unending joy, gladness, delight and wonder doing what we were made and created to do. And perhaps we will hear the voice of a child asking, "God, is them the mash-ed taters?"

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