

## A Tale of Two Gardens

### Luke Series #57

Luke 22:39-53

David Sunday

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Let's pray together.

Lord, it has been so good to sing of You, to pray together and to hear Your Word. Now, Lord, we thank You that here, where there is nowhere else to go but to You—to the green pastures of Your Word—You're going to do amazing things that could not be done by any other means. So we pray, Lord, for the help of your Holy Spirit and we thank You for the gift of Your Word. We thank You for the hope of the gospel that pulsates on every page. And we pray that You would show us Christ, as we ask this in His name. Amen.

The story of Scripture can be presented as a tale of two gardens—two gardens full of epic significance, the events of which will determine the eternal destiny of every human being. Whether your life will result in everlasting misery or everlasting joy and blessedness depends on what happened in these two gardens and how you respond to it.

There is the Garden of Eden, where human history began, and there is the Garden of Gethsemane, where humanity is given the opportunity for a new beginning. We find the story of what took place in the Garden of Eden in the third chapter of Genesis. The story of the Garden of Gethsemane is so important it's included in all four of the Gospels. Please turn to Luke 22 where we will focus our thoughts.

The comparisons between these two gardens in Scripture—the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane—are so profound and searching. With God's help, what I want to do is highlight nine of these comparisons. So let's dive right in and get started.

#### **Comparison #1: In both gardens, Satan was influential.**

You remember in the Garden of Eden, Satan presented himself as a crafty serpent, casting doubt on God's Word. He came in the form of a snake. In Gethsemane, Satan was filling the heart of one of Jesus' own disciples, Judas. Satan came in the form of a betrayer and a band of religious bullies, who carried Jesus off to a mock trial to see that He was crucified on a cross the next day. Jesus referred to the power and influence of Satan in Luke 22:53, where He said these words: *"But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."* I like how the NIV translates

that: *“But this is your hour, when darkness reigns.”* Darkness is reigning in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Frederick Leahy<sup>i</sup> said, “God reserved this hour for Satan. In all of time this hour was especially his... In this dread hour Satan had free rein... He was free to do his worst, and he did.” In both gardens, Satan was influential.

### **Comparison #2: In both gardens, humanity was tested.**

Think back to the story of the Garden of Eden. Let’s read the test from Genesis 2:13-17:

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*

This is great generosity: “You can eat anything but not from this one tree.” There’s the test in the Garden of Eden.

There’s another test in the Garden of Gethsemane and Luke, among the four Gospel writers, seems most intent on highlighting this aspect because of the way he brackets the story of Jesus’ prayer in the garden with a command from Christ to His disciples. As they went into a time of testing, Jesus told His disciples, “There’s only one way you’re going to find strength to stand up under this test.”

We see this in Luke 22:40 which says, *“And when he came to the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’”* There’s the test. Pray. Do this one thing; follow this one command. Pray that you may not enter into temptation. As to highlight the importance of that command, we see at the end of the account the last words of verse 46: *“Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”*

In both cases—in Eden and in Gethsemane—we have one simple command, one thing God is requiring His people to do. It seems very clear, straightforward and simple. It is like when you are going out on a date with your spouse and you clearly say to the kids, “Please wash the dishes and clean up the kitchen so that when we get home everything is straightened up.” It is very simple and clear. But sometimes you get home and realize, “Well, apparently that wasn’t as simple as I thought.”

We will be tested. We are being tested. How will we stand the test?

### **Comparison #3: In both gardens, the way to stand the test was clear.**

In the Garden of Eden, the way to stand the test was to heed the Word God has spoken. God has given a command, so listen to God's Word and obey it.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the way to stand the test was clear: depend on the power that God has promised to provide. Listen to God's Word and pray. This is God's strategy for victory in battle. This is God's recipe for strength in the midst of testing. "Listen to My Word and pray."

We don't have the wisdom or strength in ourselves to stand the test. We need the guidance and wisdom of the Word and we need the strength of the Holy Spirit that is given to us as we cast ourselves in dependence on God through prayer. We need the Word and prayer. It's very simple.

Is there any test that you might face in life for which the Word of God and prayer are not sufficient sources of strength to endure the test? Have you ever found the Word of God and prayer to fail you in the face of testing and temptation?

We often fail to give God's Word and prayer adequate opportunity to prove their sufficiency and power in our lives. We have not yet fully engaged the usefulness, versatility and durability of these two strategic weapons God has put in His arsenal to supply us with what we need for spiritual warfare. Read about the "full armor of God" in Ephesians 6 and you'll see that these are the two offensive weapons we are to use in battle: the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and praying always in the Spirit. The way to stand the test was clear.

#### **Comparison #4: In both gardens, humanity failed the test.**

In the Garden of Eden, temptation came as the serpent insinuating, "Did God actually say...?" He began casting doubt on and distorting God's Word. Eve began to disbelieve God's goodness, which led both Adam and Eve to disobey the clear command of God's Word. This failure set humans on a trajectory of ruin and destruction. That fall was great in its ramifications.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, we find the disciples, after Jesus agonized in prayer, sleeping for sorrow. Verse 45 says, "*And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'*"

As we see the failure of humanity in these two gardens, it begs the questions: How strong are we really? How much can we take? How much weight can we bear?

I read a sermon<sup>ii</sup> by Daryl Dash, a Canadian pastor, and I want to share a few encouraging things on this point that I gleaned from him. Dash talked about a chair at Ikea with

lots of different layers of wood glued and pressed together. Ikea wants to show you how strong this chair is and how much weight it can hold, so they have a testing machine that pushes a 220 pounds weight on the seat of the chair and a 70 pound weight on the back. It does this 50,000 times.

Some tests, trials and temptations are like that. They're not weighty in and of themselves; it's the sheer repetition of them that keep beating at you with their relentless pressure. Eventually, though it's not a very weighty trial itself, through the repetition of it you are worn out and fail. Other tests are heavy. They come at you with full velocity and are often unexpected. There are people in our congregation right now who are facing tests like this.

You may have heard of the glass-bottom skywalk that stands 4,000 feet above the Grand Canyon floor. How much weight will that thing hold? You're probably confident enough to walk out on that skywalk, thinking they have done enough tests to make sure it can hold you. But if you pulled up to that skywalk and there were 16 caged hippopotamuses standing on that skywalk, would you still step out onto that glass? Wouldn't you be thinking, "What if my 100-some pounds is going to be the straw that breaks the camel's back? Would that be able to hold me?" Sometimes trials come with the force of 16 hippos dropped on top of you at once and you cave in under the sheer pressure.

Jesus told His disciples, "A severe, weighty trial is coming upon the world and you're not going to be able to face this one. This is a trial I'm going to have to endure alone for you. There's only one thing you need to do and that is pray that you will be exempted from this trial. Pray that this is an exam from which you can be released. Pray that you would not enter into this testing, temptation and struggle because you don't have the strength for this. This is too much. There's just one thing you need to do and that's bow before the Lord, get down on your face like I'm doing in this garden and plead with God, 'Lord, we are powerless. We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on You (2 Chronicles 20:12). You give us the strength we need.'"

It's a simple command: pray. But they failed. This revealed what they were able to handle in the face of testing and it wasn't very impressive. They couldn't handle much. It causes us to think, "How strong am I? Do I think I'm stronger than these disciples were? Do I think I have more spiritual power and strength than they had? Or have I, like them, found myself frequently failing, quickly coming to the end of my endurance and messing up in following the simplest of spiritual instructions."

*"Pray that you may not enter into temptation."* Too often we try to present a picture of ourselves that looks much stronger than we really are. I think this illustration captures how uncomfortable we are when we face our great weakness. It's from the life of Rebecca Pippert.

She attended two different events on the same day. In the morning, there was a graduate level psychology class at Harvard University and then later on that day she attended a Christian Bible study adjacent to Harvard. She offered observations, contrasting the two experiences—the psychology class in the morning and the Christian Bible study later in the day. Listen to what she said:

First, the students [in the graduate-level psychology class] were extraordinarily open and candid about their problems. It wasn't uncommon to hear them say, "I'm angry," "I'm afraid," "I'm jealous" .... Their admission of their problems was the opposite of denial.

Second, their openness about their problems was matched only by their uncertainty about where to find resources to overcome them. Having confessed, for example, their inability to forgive someone who had hurt them, [they had no idea how to] resolve the problem by forgiving and being kind and generous instead of petty and vindictive.

So that's the psychology class—people who are very free to talk about their problems but don't know how to find solutions. Then she went to the Christian Bible study. Listen to how she describes this:

One day after the class, I dropped in on a Bible study group in Cambridge. [The contrast] was striking. No one spoke openly about his or her problems. There was a lot of talk about God's answers and promises, but very little about the participants and the problems they faced. The closest thing to an admission [of sin or a personal problem] was a reference to someone who was "struggling and needs prayer."

The church is for broken people, not just for people who have it all together. I get the feeling, "We have problems but we have a greater Savior." Listen to how Becky summarizes this:

The first group [the psychology class] seemed to have all the problems and no answers; the second group [the Bible study] had all the answers and no problems.

Which group would you rather be a part of? My guess is that 90% of Christians want to be in the group that has all the answers and no problems. We don't want to have to talk about our problems. We're very uncomfortable facing our weaknesses. We go to great lengths to present ourselves as strong and not needy. I think that's either because we imagine ourselves to be stronger than we really are or because we're afraid that there is not a grace strong enough to hold us through our failures. We're afraid that there's not a grace amazing enough to save us from all our miserable messes. That's why comparison number five is so important.

**Comparison #5: In both gardens, there is hope in the face of tragic human failure.**

In Genesis 3, that hope comes in the form of a promise. The Lord God said, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15).

That is the first announcement of the gospel in the Bible—Genesis 3:15. “From the seed of the woman is going to come a Conqueror Who is going to destroy you, Satan. He’s going to crush your head.”

In the Garden of Gethsemane, this promise arrived in a Person—our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke was very intent on showing us in verse 39 that Jesus went *“as was his custom”* to the Mount of Olives (where the Garden of Gethsemane was), and the disciples followed him. Jesus did what He had customarily been doing. He wasn’t trying to hide from His enemies or seek seclusion. Judas, one of the 12 disciples, knew exactly where this place was. He had been in the Mount of Olives that very week. He knew Jesus had been going into Jerusalem and then out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus went exactly where He had customarily gone, knowing that Judas would be looking for Him. Jesus was not on the defensive.

What we see here in this passage is a picture of a King Who is moving deliberately into the place of battle. He was entering the lines of combat, advancing to face the enemy. He was not shrinking back from His foes<sup>iii</sup> but was doing what the old hymn writer described in contrasting the Garden of Eden and Adam’s sin with Jesus’s triumph, when he said,

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
and to the rescue came.

(Praise to the Holiest in the Height by John Henry Newman, 1865)

Jesus was engaging in mortal combat and was readying Himself to face the fight. But before He made that final call and passed the point of no return, the Father said, “Son, I don’t want You going into this battle blindfolded. If You are going to fight this fight and be the Emmanuel Who will ransom captive Israel, free Your own from Satan’s tyranny and put death’s dark shadows to flight, then You must fully know what it will cost. You will not enter into this battle unaware of the price that You are going to pay to free Your own from Satan’s tyranny.”

(Words adapted from O Come, O Come Emmanuel; author unknown.)

**Comparison #6: In the Garden of Eden, the curse for human sin was pronounced. In the Garden of Gethsemane, that curse was distilled into a potent poison and presented to the holy Son of God.**

God spoke of the consequences upon humanity, upon the world, upon the ground and upon creation. He pronounced the curse for human sin in Genesis 3 in the Garden of Eden. However, in the Garden of Gethsemane, that curse was distilled into a potent poison. It was presented to the Son of God for Him to stare into the cup.

As we read our Old Testament, we see passages like Psalm 75:8: *“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”* There’s symbolism in the Bible of the cup of judgment—the bitter cup, the cup of staggering, the cup of the Lord’s wrath on human sin—and the Lord was holding this cup up to the lips of His Son. The ingredients of this cup were like poison to His holy soul. He Who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Foaming in that cup was the scum of all our sins—our forgetfulness of God, selfish conduct, foolish pride, filthy lusts, hypocrisy, bloodshed, hard-heartedness and deceit. All these evils and 10,000 times more were mingled into this cup. They fomented and fermented together into an awful potion. The Father held the cup up to His Son and said, “Son, the victory is going to be magnificent but the price You will pay for their ransom is going to be ghastly, horrifying and terrifying.”

When Jesus drank this cup down to its dregs, He felt the full extent of what sin is. He saw sin’s despicable vileness and experienced sin as sin. The very thought of it—the very prospect of it—terrified Him.

We think lightly of sin and judgment. How foolish it is to neglect to prepare our souls to meet God! How can we stand secure in our sins, unafraid of God’s judgment, when Jesus recoiled with horror at the very thought of it?

I want to share a quote from Jonathan Edwards that I think describes this well. He said,

The thing that Christ's mind was so full of at that time was...the dread which his feeble human nature had of that dreadful cup, which was vastly more terrible than Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. He had then a near view of that furnace of wrath, into which he was to be cast; he was brought to the mouth of the furnace that he might look into it, and stand and view its raging flames, and see the glowings of its heat, that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer. This was the thing that filled his soul with sorrow and darkness; this terrible sight as it were overwhelmed him... None of God's children ever had such a cup set before them, as this first being of every creature had.<sup>iv</sup>

In the Garden of Eden, the curse for human sin was pronounced. But in Gethsemane that curse was distilled into a potent poison and presented to the Holy Son of God.

**Comparison #7: In the Garden of Eden, men hid from the face of God. In the Garden of Gethsemane, God hid His face from the Son of Man.**

You remember Adam and Eve hiding, and God said, “Where are you, Adam?” I’m saying this experientially and metaphorically, not ultimately. God the Father never took His eyes off the Son, but here behind a frowning providence, God’s smiling face was hidden (from *God Moves in a Mysterious Way* by William Cowper, 1774). The Son could not feel God’s favor at that moment.

William Lane, a New Testament scholar, said, “Jesus came to be with the Father for an interlude before His betrayal but found hell rather than heaven opened before Him and he staggered.”<sup>v</sup>

He said in verse 42, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me.” We should not think that Christ wished that He could be released from the Covenant of Redemption or that He was not willing to die for His people. No! He had no regrets in coming to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10); to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). His will was not opposed to the will of His Father. He would have rather suffered a hundred or even a thousand times more than to disobey His Father’s will. He knew He had to suffer and did so willingly, but in His humanity He was horrified at the prospect of enduring His Father’s holy wrath.

If it were possible that sin could be atoned by less suffering, if it were possible that He would not need to die in such darkness and desolation, with such a crushing sense of His Father’s anger, if the will of the Lord could still be done with some decrease in the anguish of His sufferings, He prays that the cup will pass from Him. The Father did not provide another way. There was no alternative.

The Father did not abandon His Son but kept His finger on the pulse of His Son. When He sensed that the Son’s heart was filling with anguish, the Father sent an angel from heaven to strengthen Him (verse 43). The Creator of all things was being strengthened by a creature.

Notice, however, that the angel did not come to release or even to relieve Jesus but to strengthen Him with endurance to fulfill the mission for which He came into the world. The presence of this angel did not reduce the agony Jesus was in. Rather, in verse 45, we get the sense that the agony intensified as the angel had come and given Jesus the strength He needed to drink the bitter cup down to its very dregs and die in the place of sinners.

That brings us to point number eight.

**Comparison #8: Since the Garden of Eden, men have toiled by the sweat of their brow to eat bread. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ agonized in sweat drops of blood so that we could eat the Bread of Life.**

Painful, toilsome labor was part of the curse. Sweat. Difficulty. But in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ's agony resulted in sweat drops of blood so that we could eat the Bread of Life—the Bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. In verse 44, we read, *“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”*

It's possible, medical experts say, for a person to experience such intense shock and horror that the very capillaries open up and blood comes out with the sweat. John tells us that this night was so cold they had to light a fire to warm themselves. Jesus was in that garden sweating great drops of blood which fell to the ground.

**Comparison #9: In the Garden of Eden, man said, "My will be done." In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Son of Man said, "Not My will but Yours be done."**

This is, perhaps, the most penetrating in terms of application to us. We've been saying, "My will be done," ever since the Garden of Eden. We say, "I'll do it my way," not heeding God's Word or depending on His strength. Man said, "My will be done," in the Garden of Eden, but in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Son of Man said (and we will praise Him forever for this), "Not My will but Yours be done."

He stared into that bitter cup. He contemplated its horror. He knew exactly what it would cost Him to save us—we who were still His enemies, mocking Him, denying Him, betraying Him, abandoning Him, scourging Him, spitting on Him and crucifying Him. He looked at all of that and said, "Father, Your will be done!"

Jesus wasn't just passively saying, "Okay, Father, have it Your way." No, He was actively saying, "Father, let Your will be done in and through Me. Strengthen Me so that I might actively pour out My life in the place of sinners. Let Me not shrink from the doing of Your will. Lord, *“behold I have come. In the scroll of the Book, it is written of Me: ‘I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.’”* (Psalm 40:7-8).

That's what Jesus said. Love for the loveless. He died for the ungodly. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Romans 5:10). Amazing love, how can it be?

Philip Ryken says, “The wonder of the love of Christ for His people is not that He faced death without fear, but that for [our] sake He faced it, terrified. Terrified by what He knew and terrified by what He did not know, He took damnation [and he took it] lovingly.”<sup>vi</sup>

Amazing love! And because He said to the Father, “Your will be done” in the Garden of Gethsemane, the last two chapters in the Bible tell us a new Garden City is being prepared for those who trust in Jesus and love God. Revelation 22:1-2 says:

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

We get the beautiful prospect of paradise regained—Eden renewed and restored forever—a new Garden City.

D.A. Carson said,

“May your will be done” mirrors one of the petitions of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples (Matthew 6:10). As Jesus learned obedience (Hebrews 5:7-9), so He became the supreme model for His own teaching. In the first garden “Not your will but mine” changed Paradise to desert and brought man from Eden to Gethsemane. Now “Not my will but Yours” brings anguish to the Man Who prays it but transforms the desert into the Kingdom and brings man from Gethsemane to the gates of glory [a new Jerusalem, the Garden City].”<sup>vii</sup>

All of humanity was ruined by Adam’s fall in the Garden of Eden; but a new humanity is being ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven and rescued through Jesus. It is all because He said, “Not My will, but Yours be done.”

What does that mean for us? C.S. Lewis said, “There are only two kinds of people in the end. Those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘Thy will be done.’”<sup>viii</sup>

“Have it your way. You want life apart from Me? You’ll have it for all eternity. Misery.”

We’ve all said, “My will be done,” and failed. But Jesus said, “Thy will be done.” Where we failed, He performed flawlessly. He drank the poison of our curse down to the dregs and emerged victorious over all our failure so that we can become a new humanity united by faith to Him. We can be destined for the Garden City that is full of light and life, where righteousness is right at home.

The question is, Who are you going to follow? We’ve all followed Adam. We’ve seen where that takes us. We’ve all gotten lost and entangled in the weeds of Eden’s disobedience. However, a Second Adam came to the fight and He rescues us from the bondage of sin.

Will you turn and follow the Savior, King Jesus? Will you let Him lead you in a new way of life—a way of life that is dominated by a new purpose statement: “Not My will but Yours be done. For Yours is the Kingdom. Yours is the power. Yours is the glory forever and ever.”

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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<sup>i</sup> Frederick S. Leahy, *The Cross He Bore*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>ii</sup> Darryl Dash, “Tested,” preached at Liberty Grace Church, Toronto, and posted online on March 25, 2012 at <http://dashhouse.com/sermons/2012/3/25/tested-luke-2239-46.html>. The content of point four was significantly influenced by Pastor Dash, and used with his permission.

<sup>iii</sup> This idea was influenced by James Philip’s Bible Readings on Luke, which can be found at [www.thethron.org/resources/jpbible](http://www.thethron.org/resources/jpbible).

<sup>iv</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “Christ’s Agony,” <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.agony.html>.

<sup>v</sup> Quoted in numerous places, including the Darryl Dash sermon cited above.

<sup>vi</sup> Quoted in Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, vol. 2: Reformed Expository Commentary, p. 505.

<sup>vii</sup> Quoted in numerous places, including here: <https://2cherish2commend.wordpress.com/2011/06/23/is-there-any-significance-to-jesus-praying-in-a-garden/>

<sup>viii</sup> From C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/16309-there-are-only-two-kinds-of-people-in-the-end>.