

Easter 2022 Finding Life in the Garden

One of the things that I love about this time of year is that Spring is here. Everything is beautiful in its own way. Flowers are blooming. New life seems to be everywhere. The air smells fresh, the birds are singing, the sun brings warmth. There is something very special and Easter seems to launch us into one of my favorite times of the year.

I love Gardens. I don't like going. Wouldn't plan a trip there on my own. But once I get there. I love gardens. There is just something wonderful about a Garden that you can visit and you don't have to work in. Right?

I hate working in gardens...couldn't stand the idea of spending my free time digging in the dirt trying to get things to grow. Why would I create my own garden when there are so many others out there that I can visit.

God summed up my gardening experience in Genesis 3

Genesis 3:17–18 (ESV) — cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

Now I can grow weeds and I can kill flowers. If I had to depend upon what I could grow to eat I would have to be a total carnivore.

But fortunately there are others more gifted than I.

There are some incredibly beautiful gardens around the world.

Tammy and I once went to the Tulip Capital of Amsterdam. Beautiful tulips everywhere.

Look at some of the most beautiful gardens of the world

Garden Photos 1-4

I have performed weddings in a garden. Great place to celebrate new life beginning. Beautiful surroundings that fit such a beautiful moment. Every time I see a bride and groom in a garden I think about Adam, Eve, and God. Establishing God's plan for our Spiritual Oneness with Him first and then with each other.

Weddings just seem to fit in gardens.

What I love about gardens is that they are so full of beauty, serenity, and life.

Gardens can clear away the fog of the noisy, fast, techno world, and the mindless focus on the clutter of trivia..Gardening attunes us to life's struggles for renewal, richness and balance..

Visiting gardens through the seasons keeps us in touch with the cycle of life- we can see plants each day through our seasons that are thriving, dying, seeding, fruiting, healthy and battling with disease.

Through our gardens we have the opportunity to bring spiritual experience into our everyday lives rather than leaving it to church on Sunday

Sitting still, meditating, and being in a garden can heighten your awareness of God. While we often have preferences for special places to sit and meditate, the entire garden is part of the process. Yet often God shows up in unexpected places, at unexpected times. These are special gifts from God that happen when we journey through gardens.

I think visiting gardens help us to connect with God. There is a uniqueness of gardens that slow us down, force us to align with a new time pace and moves us to become more aware of God....God's creation....and God's Plan.

Psalm 23 (ESV) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.'

Notice that the Shepherd has to make us....make us lie down...has to lead us...lead us to quiet waters...None of these things come naturally to us or to sheep

I strongly encourage you to see out gardens when you can. They are an oasis for those in Spiritual deserts. It is there that God often restores our soul.

So as I wrote this my mind goes to moments with God's Word sitting in gardens, near water, and despite visiting some incredible places, I have three favorite gardens.

This week I decided to search the greatest gardens in the world to see how high up my favorite gardens would be.

Top 50 Gardens of All Time...not there....Wikipedia list of Gardens...not even on the list.....Greatest Gardens of the World...nope....Top 10 Gardens in Literature...not there....Greatest Historical Gardens....no mention....Bucket List gardens...nope....

I found Garden of the Gods.....I found Boston Garden....Garden of Cosmic Speculation....

Since I am a huge history buff, my favorite gardens are places of key historical events. I have actually visited two of them....twice. They are important gardens in history.

So I decided to narrow down my search.

Historic Gardens Review: The voice of historic parks and gardens worldwide.

Apparently my view of important gardens in history doesn't align with more enlightened crowds.

Searched Most Important Gardens in All of Human History

History of Gardens a Timeline from Ancient to 1600's...nope not there

This one lists every garden of any historical importance and mine don't make the list.

I guess I have unique tastes.

You may be wondering what Gardens have to do with Easter, or anything church related for that matter.

I am glad that you are wondering.

Because the Easter Story cannot really be told without telling the story of my three favorite gardens...The Garden of Eden, The Garden of Gethsemane, and the Garden Tomb.

The Easter Story really started way back in the Garden of Eden...It crescendos in the Garden of Gethsemane.....and it drops a love bomb at the Garden Tomb.

To me, gardens are all about life. I don't think it is a coincidence that God placed Adam and Eve in a Garden. New Human life belongs in a garden. Gardens are all about new and fresh beginnings, beautiful things, and a celebration of God through His creation.

Let's look at some key Easter Events in our first Garden....The Garden of Eden.

The Easter Story begins in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:7-9 (ESV) — 7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Why did God put man in the garden?

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) — 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

The Garden of Eden was a wonderful place...until Adam and Eve chose to reject God's way and make themselves their own gods.

Then this place of wonder, security and life becomes a place of fear and death.

Genesis 3:8-10 (ESV) — 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

God brought forth the punishment for our sins.

Genesis 3:14–15 (ESV) — 14 The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 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.”

Even in the midst of Man's Fall....God was beginning to tell the Easter Story....the Story of one who would come...an offspring of Eve...to destroy Satan and to restore all that was lost.

Gardens are places of life....Yet Adam and Eve brought death into what God had made perfect.

Genesis 3:22–24 (ESV) — 22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Explain significance of Eating from the Tree of Life in our fallen state.

So with death now our destiny...God drives man out of the Garden....East of Eden.

Now move ahead with me to the Garden of Gethsemane. [Garden of Gethsemane Photo 1](#)

My next favorite garden and one I have visited twice.

Do you what this place was? It was a place that Jesus would often go to connect to the Father, to pray and to recharge. This was a familiar place to Jesus and His disciples.

This garden is just at the base of the Mt of Olives [Garden Picture 2](#) and along the path that Jesus used when He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It is less than a half mile walk from the temple.

It is not just any garden though. It is full of olive trees. [Garden Picture 3](#) Olive trees provided oil for everything from anointing, to healing to light the lamps. The oil was put in a press and literally pressed out by a heavy weight. Most of the time the olive is pressed three times.

Don't miss the symbolism. Jesus at the base of olive trees being pressed three times by the Father and three times asking the disciples to pray and three times asking the Father to take away the cup of suffering.

Being pressed brought out in Him a resolve....a resolve full of anointing, healing and to be a light in a dark world.

This is where the Spiritual Struggle of Life and Death....foretold by God in the Garden of Eden....really plays out.

This is essentially Satan's last stand...It one of Jesus' defining moments.

Just as God promised Adam and Eve. That one day His Messiah would crush Satan's Head, it is at the cross that this gets accomplished. Once Satan failed in the Garden of Gethsemane....He was crushed....as Jesus chose to drink from the Cup Of Suffering presented to Him by the Father.

It is in this garden that Jesus soaked in the Father's presence, relied on the Father's strength, and through surrender found the Father's peace.

Then the Story transitions to another garden...**The Garden Tomb....**Now it is interesting that we associate this Garden with the Tomb of Jesus, but did you know that Jesus was crucified in a Garden?

John 19:41–42 (ESV) — 41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Throughout Scripture this story is told of life that began in the Garden of Eden....died....and then resurrected in the Garden Tomb.....A life lead by the Spirit previously lived in the flesh...Then sin came and the Spirit of God left.....and what remained, our flesh, was destined to die.....When Jesus came to earth He brought the Spirit of God back to lead us....but in order for us to accept the Spirit of God....we had to surrender our flesh to die....The price for our flesh was Jesus' taking the punishment for us on the cross.....The Bible is very clear.

We are not here today because we believe a certain philosophy about how to live our lives....we are not here because we believe the Ten Commandments are the key to pleasing God....We are not here to perform our way into the top of God's grading curve....We are not here today because we are special, sinless, or even good people.....We are not here today because we have good moral standards....

We are here today....we call ourselves Christians today....not because we follow a series of religious beliefs....but because of a moment in human history.

On a Friday afternoon....a day in history....just like Pearl Harbor...Just like 9/11....there was a day in history when a very real man who was also a very real God....went to the cross...to take our place....because a Just God had to pour out His wrath for all the sins of the world.....and then on Sunday morning..**TOMB PHOTO**..in this very Garden that Godman walked out of His own tomb....and on that day....death died for those who believe in Him.

We don't perform our way into salvation....we can't. We don't pay our way into salvation....God already has everything....We don't think our way into salvation....it not a matter of intellect or knowledge....it is a matter of the Heart. Instead, we surrender our way into Salvation. Killing our pride along the way.

We are saved from death because we believe from our hearts that Jesus is God....He came to earth...That we are sinners with no hope of saving ourselves from God's punishment for our sins....that on Friday He not only died in our place but He suffered for our sins....He was sinless but He took our place....God punished Him for our sins.....We didn't die.....He died for us....and on Sunday He rose to save us....It is not a religion...it is a fact....a true moment in History...and it changed everything.

We started in a Garden....Jesus surrendered in a Garden...He was crucified in a Garden.....and He was resurrected in a Garden....an by the way we will celebrate His return in a garden....

Revelation 22:1–2 (ESV) — 1 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 2 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.

Gardens bring new life.....new hope.....new peace.....what was dead becomes full of life and beauty....What better place to host the greatest story of life and hope and peace.

So it is not surprising....that when Jesus resurrected...full of Life....celebrating what God had done...it was in a Garden...

John 20:1 (ESV) — 1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Mary Magdalene

We know little about this woman other than that her name indicates that she was from Magdala in Galilee. Somewhere in Galilee she met Jesus, who cast seven demons out of her. She then joined the band of disciples and followed Jesus wherever he went

Luke 8:1–3 (ESV) — 1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

On Friday Jesus was left on the burial preparation bench in the receiving room of the tomb chamber. No doubt the women thought they could return following the Sabbath, roll back the stone, and complete the burial, sliding Jesus' body into one of the tomb's burial niches

Rolling stone tombs were meant to be opened and closed. The wheel-shaped stone door rolled on a stone track for access as other family members might be buried over the years. The Synoptics record the women's anxiety about who will assist them in moving the heavy stone

It is Mary who first comes to the tomb. Love is all she has to bring. She had sinned much and Jesus had done for her what no one else could do. He had forgiven and cleansed her. So she comes in the darkness sometime after 3:00 a.m., only to discover that something has happened. The stone has been removed.

The reference to "they" ("they have taken the Lord") likely refers to the temple authorities Jesus' opponents who now (possibly) have done something further to him. Mary's use of the plural for herself ("and we don't know where they have put him")

suggests that she is not alone but accompanied by other women. A woman would rarely venture out alone outside the city walls in the dark under such circumstances.

Mary's discovery that the tomb door has been rolled to one side suggested immediately to her that someone has entered the tomb. Perhaps someone came that night—or was in the tomb at that moment.

John 20:1–3 (ESV) — 1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

John says that she was the first among these women to discover the empty tomb, the first to report to the disciples, and the first to see the risen Christ as she lingered by the tomb after all the others had left.

Other gospels tell she was not the only woman to come to the tomb that morning. At least three other women accompanied her. But Mary was the one who ran back and told the disciples about the empty tomb.

So with breathless urgency she runs to share this disturbing news with Peter, still the leader in spite of his weakness, and “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”

John 20:1–3 (ESV) — 3 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. 4 Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. .” 3 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.

The quick response of Peter and the other disciple shows that the disciples were not responsible for removing the body. Had they been aware of an official removal, or had some of their own number been involved in a conspiracy, they would not have been so concerned.

Note the detail. Here. John got to the tomb first....he looked in but did not go in. He stooped in to look and saw the linen. But he didn't enter, probably because he was afraid and the youngest.

John 20:6–10 (ESV) — 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

The scene, then, is not chaotic or confused. Rather, something purposeful has transpired here. If someone had simply stolen Jesus' body, surely the clothes would be missing, or at least strewn about the floor. But here is a scene in which the body is missing but the clothes appear undisturbed. Jesus' body has simply left them behind.

John 20:11–13 (ESV) — 11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain,

one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

Incredible symbolism here....Jesus was crucified between two criminals and now He has resurrected between two angels. A testimony to God's liberating action.

This is one of the few places in the Bible where someone encounters angels and they are not stricken with fear. It shows that Mary was so grieved at the loss of Jesus that she was unaffected even by an appearance of angels.

No description is given of the angels. When angels appear in the Bible, they are usually recognized by their powers rather than by any significant difference from human form. Mary did not respond to them in any unusual way, possibly because her eyes were clouded with tears, or because she was preoccupied with the loss of Jesus' body.

Mary is frustrated...She just wanted to pay her last respects to the body of Jesus. They have killed her Savior...she had been a witness to that horrible event....

Mary was sure that the body had been violated as well. Leaders often did this to punish other presumed kings. They parade their body in the streets....hang them from the town square...put their heads on a post.....She is imagining that the worst event ever may be actually getting worse....And being Jewish she was particularly concerned....Proper burial was regarded by the Jews as an inherent part of their faith

The thought of Resurrection never crossed her mind. No big surprise there. No one had ever resurrected before. This day would change everything.

Mary wasn't wishing for a resurrection, and then hopefully imagined it. She had no thought of resurrection yet, and believed the corpse has been stolen.

So Mary is freaking out....and the angels ask her what seems to her to be a stupid question...."Woman Why are you crying?"

They don't address the missing body...they try to suggest to Mary that sorrow is not what the present moment requires.

Mary was so messed up that she missed the significance of angles being present in the tomb....She missed something obvious..Angels don't hang out with thieves.....This tomb was no longer in the hands of humans.....this was now holy ground.

The tomb was no longer in the hands of humans; it was at that stage enveloped in the mystery of God!

John 20:14–15 (ESV) — 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you

seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

"Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" he asks her. At the very beginning, death had come to the human race in a garden, the Garden of Eden, where Adam and his wife disobeyed God. Now, life is coming back in another garden. And, of course, Jesus is indeed the Gardener.

There is that question....Why are you weeping???!!!! Why am I weeping!!! What is the matter with you guys....they have taken the body of my Savior away! Friday they tortured and killed Him now they want to humiliate Him.

Then as always Jesus moves to a deeper question.... a question that cuts to the essence of the moment. "Who is it you are looking for?"

Jesus asks then, "Whom are you seeking?"—not what, but "whom?" And, assuming that this "stranger" may have been involved in moving Jesus' body to a permanent grave, Mary asks if she may have the body to care for it. This is a small way in which she can show her love.

Mary's response to both the angels and the so-called gardener are substantially the same with one exception. In the first case she gives the visitors her reason for weeping: she does not know where "they" have put the stolen body. In the second case she pleads with the "gardener" that if he has taken the body, she would take care of it if he would only tell her where it was laid.

Her mind remains on the problem of the tomb, while Jesus is trying to lift her to something else. Jesus is calling her to a much deeper experience and understanding.

Jesus and the Angels are trying to help Mary understand that the entire world has changed....Where His body is....is no longer important....No one would ever again seek to find Jesus in His human body.

No one from this moment on...will seek Jesus as they knew Him in the flesh....He would now present Himself to Mary and to every other person in the Spirit. The movement of God on earth is now a spiritual movement. Again, this day changed everything.

Jesus' question points her in another direction. The reality of meeting him is more important than the riddle of the tomb.

From this point on, understanding everything is not the most important thing. The main focus is the relationship. It doesn't matter how or what happened to Jesus' body....He wants Mary to connect with her heart. To recognize Him from her heart. And that is soon to happen.

Notice the mistaken identity....or is it?

"Supposing Him to be the gardener...." Do you remember all the times I have shared with you that nothing in the Bible is there by accident?

The Story of God started in a Garden and God Himself was the gardener.....

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Who was the caretaker....the gardener of Eden?

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) — 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

The First Adam....Adam...after God breathed life into him.....was given the assignment of caring and nurturing God's Garden....until of course he sinned.

Now the Second Adam....Jesus....God has breathed Spiritual life into....and given Him the assignment of caring for and nurturing God's Garden.....His new family of believers.

God says of the exiles from Judah, "I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up." Furthermore, Jesus's parable from casts God as a vinedresser.

Jesus is the gardener of the new Eden, doing what Adam could not do. His resurrection broke ground in this garden, marking the beginning of a massive restoration project.

Jesus "plants" us and grows us. He gets his hands dirty in the soil of our hearts, bringing us to life and cultivating us with care so that we flourish.

Supposing Him to be a gardener....Why?

Because He is

John 20:15–16 (ESV) —16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

It is then the risen Christ speaks her name—tenderly, but with all the authority of one who has conquered death, It is the Shepherd calling one of His sheep, and Mary knows the voice.

Only one thing was necessary to establish Jesus' identity—his uttering her name. One of the strange commonplaces of life is that the most penetrating utterance one can understand, no matter by whom spoken, is his personal name. Furthermore, the way it is spoken often identifies the speaker. No gardener would ever know her name, and no one else would pronounce it the way Jesus did

Then she "turned" to Him; Not that she changes directions. But what really turns is Mary's heart. It is the movement from grief to joy, from death to life. From despair to wonder. And in adoration and wonder, she falls at His feet and utters, "Rabboni!" This is the title one gives to Jesus at the beginning of faith.

What Mary experiences here is the first post resurrection gospel presentation. Jesus reveals Himself to her heart and she must decide how to respond. The same thing has happened to every believer since this moment in History.

This is significant....Jesus calls us...He reveals Himself to us
....personally...intimately....we recognize the voice....but we must turn....turn from our heads and to our hearts....turn toward Him...toward His plans for us...His path for us....We must respond when Jesus calls our name....We must turn from our pride and our plans and surrender to His love and His plans for us.

From this day forward everyone must choose what to do when Jesus calls their name.

John 20:17 (ESV) — 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”

Why didn't Jesus want Mary to touch Him? Remember this is the Feast of Firstfruits and Jesus must present Himself first to the Father. This is the first fruit of the Human Harvest. Mary was holding on to Jesus and did not want to let Him go.

But Mary is doing something that He wants her to realize will soon change. He would be present in human form for 5=40 more days, but after that moment.... she could never again embrace Jesus as human. Everyone's relationship with Him would soon become spiritual

And she tries to cling to Jesus, Mary is trying to grasp Jesus as He was before the Crucifixion, living as a human in the flesh with all the human limitations...But Jesus is beginning to reveal to her that everything has changed.

In His Resurrection Jesus has not only broken the bonds of sin and death, but also the limitation of space and time and the weaknesses of living as a human. By the power of God He has wrought a new creation, a new order.

When He told Mary to stop clinging to Him....He was saying so much more than just don't touch....

He was telling her and us...that we can't hold on to Jesus in the flesh any more than we can continue to hold on to ourselves in the flesh.

The World has completely changed...The Spirit of God lost in the Garden is now restored in the this Garden. It is the Spirit of God that we must surrender to and follow.

Everyone was about to understand how this new relationship would work...as Jesus comes to all of us Spiritually....

Flesh is dying and the Spirit is bringing new life.

Mary is now to go to the “brothers,”

It placed the disciples on a new plane of relationship with himself. Now that the sin issue has been taken care of....there is a new relationship...for those who believe. Brothers and Sisters In Christ....part of God's Family.

Jesus' gives Mary an assignment....You can't stay here and cling to me.....you have to go tell others what you have seen....what you have experienced....

From this moment forward Jesus would say the same thing to every new believer.....Don't just cling to me...Go and tell others that you know Me.

The first evangelist in the Bible is a woman....Mary Magdalene.

As you know, I love foreshadowing in the Bible.....do you recognize this story? The woman the the well....another woman who had a very checkered past....meets Jesus with her heart and runs to tell others that she has found the Messiah.

John 4:28–29 (ESV) 28 So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?”

Like the Samaritan woman.....Mary would have a hard time getting people to trust the testimony of a woman.

John 20:18 (ESV) — 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

Luke notes the tragedy that when the women at the tomb report their experiences to the disciples, the men are incredulous

Luke 24:10–11 (ESV) — 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, 11 but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

Don't miss this....The first evangelist on earth was a woman and the very first people to hear the gospel initially rejected it. The very first time the Gospel was shared with another human....they didn't believe it....and they were His disciples!

Mary is also the very first person to feel the rejection of the greatest news in all of human history.

The fact that Jesus makes a woman the first witness of His resurrection is significant. The law courts of that day would not recognize the testimony of a woman, but Jesus did.

This also argues for the historic truth of this account. If someone fabricated this story, would they make the first witnesses to the resurrection women, who were commonly (if unfairly) regarded as unreliable witnesses?

So we have three gardens.....My favorite gardens. Places where seeds are planted....and new life springs eternal.

1992 years ago....Jesus walked out of the tomb. On that Historic Day...everything changed. Physical life began in a garden and then on that Sunday morning...The Feast of Firstfruits...Easter Sunday....Spiritual life returned to a Garden and the world would never be the same.

The First Evangelist was Mary Magdalene. She was the first to hear the voice of Jesus with her heart.

Every Day....since that moment....millions of people have heard that soft...loving...inviting voice of Jesus. Can you hear Him? He is always there calling you deeper.

We hear Him with our hearts. He calls our name and draws us to respond. Just like He called the disciples....Come and Follow Me.

Sometimes the best place to hear that voice is in the quiet solitude of a garden. Satan has never had a good moment in a garden.

Jesus is calling your name this morning....either to invite you to join Him or to invite you to go deeper. But our name ends with a question mark. Do you trust me? Will you go deeper with me? Will you turn toward me....or keep going away? This could be the day that everything changes...FOR YOU...

26 years ago on an Easter Sunday...I heard the voice and came home. My prayer is that this will be your day. Let's Pray.