

God's Garden  
April 26, 2009  
Isaiah 41: 17-20  
Romans 7: 4-7

Easter season is time to make and enjoy the risen life.

The miracle of resurrection is not something we made. God has brought new life. But we still have to make it happen in order to enjoy it. Why do we have to do anything? Why doesn't God just give me a strong spirit? It's like something else we are doing this spring. Making a garden. God has made the miracle that makes plants grow, but we still have to help. God makes a garden, only with our participation.

A man was traveling across the Arizona desert, he saw a beautiful splash of green on the distant horizon. He knew it had to be a mirage. Nothing that green could exist in such a barren desert. When he had traveled closer to the beautiful green spot, he saw it was a lush garden. Colorful flowers bloomed and birds sang from the limbs of trees covered with fruit. Tomatoes, green peppers, squash, and melons spread in neat bountiful rows. At the back of the garden stood a small house. Full of wonder, he ran up and knocked loudly on the door. It was opened by a small studious looking man with glasses perched on his nose. The man exclaimed loudly, "I just want to tell you what a fabulous blessing the Lord has given you! Here in this barren desert, he has created a small piece of paradise, for you." The man smiled and replied, "I understand and I agree. Without the good Lord's sunshine and the miracle of seeds none of this could be here. But, you should have seen this place when the Lord had it all to himself."

A spirit is like a garden.

What do you do to make a garden?

First, it must be planned. You don't just throw some seeds out and expect a healthy garden without planning what is going where.

1. Break up the ground. Seeds won't grow in hard soil. If you put your seed on hard soil,, if it doesn't get buried, what will happen? The seed will dry up and die, or the birds will eat it

What do you do to make a healthy spirit?

### 1. Break up the ground

Confession is breaking up the hard soil of our pride. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Confession breaks up the hardness of spirit that keeps love from growing.

### 2. What else do you do to make a garden?

Till the soil

2. Meditate on God’s word Bible study keeps in mind the basics of faith

3. Plant seeds You can’t keep the seeds. They must be given up and buried. The seed has to die in order to give life. You have to have faith that God’s miracles of germination and photosynthesis will work by letting the seeds go. Some of them don’t grow. There’s no guarantee. They stay dead. But you’ve got to have faith that some do.

Ask people when is the right time to plant. Too soon for corn, frost still could kill it. Pansys can be planted now, but petunias have to wait.

Daffodills are early, lilacs are early, lilies are late. Onions can be planted earlier than beans. When potatoes, tomatoes, peppers? Each is different. Hyacinths you plant in the fall and they bloom in the spring.

A spirit needs to give in order to be healthy. “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.” Give money, give time, give attention, give good deeds, give your stuff that taking up room. Pay it forward. Swap. Give. It has to die to you in order to make new life for someone, in order to benefit you again. It’s planting the seeds of a healthy spirit.

What else has to be done to grow a garden?

4 Water. Do you like this weather? How did your yard sale go yesterday in the rain? How did you like running the half marathon race yesterday? Rain interrupts plans. But plants need water. It was a great day for them in the rain. Rain is one of God’s miracles. But sometime God needs you to help get the water when the weather is too dry. You irrigate. You move the hose. Not because God is not doing the job, but because God needs you as a partner. Get the water to the plants.

4. A spirit needs refreshment too. Paul says “Do not get drunk with wine but be filled iwtht eh Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, and hymns

and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.” (Eph. 5:18,19). You came to church to praise and sing and water your spirit. If you don’t, it will dry up and wither away. Jesus said “whoever drinks of the water I give will never thirst.

5. Fertilize. Compost, manure, fertilizer. We live in some of the richest soil in the state. The dirt is black and rich and fertile. But we still have to add nutrients to some of our crops. The garden still needs your banana peels and potato skins. Fertilize.

5. A spirit needs food. What’s healthy food for the spirit?

Prayer, Bible Study, worship and service. Study to show yourself approved. Study to learn fresh insight to life’s problems. Stay in constant touch with God through prayer. A spirit without food gets weak, just like a body without food gets weak, just like a garden without food produces puny plants.

Sun Plants need heat and light from the source of energy.

A spirit needs to get light and energy from the Son of God. Last night we heard Becky Foster speak at a program here. She runs a radio show on QFM, Christian radio in Green Bay. She runs an internet chat room online, called HopeNet where youth call in for conversations with her and the other youth who log on. They get hope from the Lord that they will get answers to their questions, they will get past the pains they are having with family and friends, they will find hope that their troubles will end, and they will find God’s love even when they feel no one else cares. It’s sunshine for darkened spirits.

6. Protect the plants. Weed. Worthless plants will kill the valuable plants unless you take them out. If you want a healthy garden, you don’t reserve a place for the weeds, because they’ll take over the rest. You get them out. If you leave them there too long, they’ll be so intertwined with the good plants you won’t be able to get them out later, without taking out the good plants too.

6. Get the weeds out of the spirit, too. Greed is a weed. If only I’d win the lottery, my problems would be solved. Revenge and jealousy and anger are weeds. Reminding myself of the awful things somebody did to me. Instead “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious; if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” “Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” Rom. 12:12

You've got to fence out the rabbits. They want your food and your flowers. If you don't want them to get it first, you've got to keep them out of your garden.

What eats up a healthy spirit? Violent entertainment, making fun of the weak or the different, gossip, criticism instead of encouragement. They are the rabbits. Instead, the Bible says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed." "Avoid Godless chatter, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness and their talk will eat its way like gangrene." John Wesley saw people gambling and drinking and watching shallow entertainment and asked them to stay away from "the taking of such diversions as lead away from God".

7. Harvest You still have to work to gather the crop.

"Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Luke 6:38 Contribute to the needs of the saints. Practice hospitality.

Because you served others, you will receive service.

8 . Plant again

It's true that God makes pollination, oxygenation, germination and photosynthesis and sun and water. Psalm 107 (33-37) said "He turns rivers to deserts and turns deserts to pools of water." But if we want a healthy garden, we've got to help. The gardener provides the sweat and the knowledge. We have to put God's miracles together.

It's true that God brought Jesus from the dead. We didn't. God makes resurrection. God makes new life. But if we want to live it, to enjoy it, to share it, we've got to help. We've got to put God's miracles together.

We've got to put ourselves and our world into position for the miracles to work. When we do, then the promise comes true "Your heart shall rejoice and your bones flourish like the grass." (Isaiah 66:14)

We are gardeners in God's garden.

Sing Garden Song