

From *Garden* to *Glory*  
**The Garden of Proclamation**  
Lenten Midweek 2

Mark 4:26-29

Dear Friends in Christ,

From Garden to Glory - Today, The Garden of Proclamation

In our sermon series this Lenten Season you are hearing about some real gardens. The Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden Tomb, these were real gardens that really existed. Our garden for today, the Garden of Proclamation, is more of a metaphorical garden. Using the image of God's saving Word as seed planted in the ground, we will see how God's kingdom grows and flourishes.

Last Wednesday we witnessed God planting the very first seed of our salvation. We heard him utter the very first gospel promise in the Garden of Eden. It was the promise to give us a Savior—a rescuer—from sin, death, and condemnation. Jesus Christ IS that Savior. Jesus Christ is our Savior. By his sufferings and death on the cross, he has saved us from everything that would keep us out of heaven.

But how does God bring salvation from Jesus to you? How does he give you rescue from death and condemnation and make it yours? That's what we will focus on today in the Garden of Proclamation.

God proclaims to us his promise of salvation through faith in Jesus. That means he *tells* us. When he tells us, he is at the same time *giving* it to us. How does God tell us? God doesn't promise to speak it to us in our hearts. Only sin resides there by nature. He doesn't ask us to wait for some inner feeling or experience to make salvation real to us. God arranged something outside of us. God had his saving message written down for us on the pages of the Bible. His holy Word.

God also instituted the public ministry and appointed certain individuals in the church to speak to us for God. God even backs up any parent or teacher or friend, any believer at all who transmits the saving message. Whenever any believer speaks the truth of God's Word from the Bible, it is the same as God himself proclaiming it and God himself giving it to that person. Jesus told us to proclaim his message. He said, "*Go . . . and preach the good news to all creation*" (Mk 16:15). "*He who listens to you listens to me*" (Lk 10:16). The apostle Paul wrote, "*How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*" (Ro 10:14).

Whenever God speaks to us through his representatives who speak his Word, he is planting the seed of salvation in us. We, who were created from the dust of the earth, are his soil. And when God plants his Word in us, new life emerges—never-ending life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus uses the image of a sower and his seed in our text from Mark chapter 4:

*"This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the*

*stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come” (verses 26-29).*

Christ’s words in this parable remind us of what Martin Luther wrote in his Small Catechism: “How does God’s kingdom come? God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.”

God proclaims. He plants the Word in us, and it becomes a garden of life and salvation. So long ago, maybe through your pastor when you were 12 years old in confirmation class, he planted a single seed in you. It was such a small seed. You thought nothing of it at the time. That seed seemed like it was lying dormant in you for so long—until the Holy Spirit warmed it and it immediately sprang into full bloom when you were 20 years old and your significant other said, “Let’s move in together. We love each other. We’re getting married anyway. It’s cheaper, more practical to live together this way.” From out of nowhere, you recall something your pastor said so long ago, and you respond, “That’s just not right. I can’t betray my Savior that way.”

***THE GARDEN OF PROCLAMATION BLOSSOMS.***

A small mission outpost is organized in a store front in the heart of a very large city. The nucleus of believers may be only a couple dozen souls, souls committed to spreading the message of Christ. After a decade there are still only a couple dozen souls. But in that time those souls have been generous with the gospel. The message of Christ has reached tens of thousands through pamphlets handed out in the subway and fliers distributed door-to-door and community events held in the store front church. ***THE GARDEN OF PROCLAMATION SPREADS LIKE IVY.***

A busy mom deposits her three children in one of our Vacation Bible Schools so she can have some time free from the kids. And she thinks a dose of religion will be good for her children, but any religion will do. After all, don’t all religions have the same message? “Live by the Golden Rule” and “Do good things in this life and you’ll get your reward in heaven when you die.” That’s what she’s taught her children over the years. But all through the week, her children come home and tell her something different. The little one keeps singing, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” And the two older ones tell her how Jesus died for our sins and how, through faith in Jesus, we have forgiveness now and the certainty of heaven when we die. At first the mother doesn’t “get it.” But her children persist. ***THE GARDEN OF PROCLAMATION GROWS AND RESISTS BEING TRIMMED BACK.***

You are a teenager who went to church this morning. You didn’t think you heard anything relevant to your life in the service. You go with your friend to the mall in the afternoon. She’s very upset about her parents. She talks about committing suicide. Something from the morning service jumps into your thoughts, something about the peace of God guarding your hearts and minds. You want her to have that peace. Maybe she’ll talk to your youth pastor or your church counselor. ***THE GARDEN OF PROCLAMATION REACHES FOR NEW SOIL.***

Or maybe in the privacy of your pastor’s office you unload to him what you’ve been hiding for so long. You wouldn’t dare tell another soul. You’re half afraid that the pastor will think badly of you. To your great surprise he smiles and responds with assurance. He reminds you that you are baptized and says, “Your sins are forgiven.” Your guilt is lifted away. You are restored. Your emotions start to settle. Your stomach no longer feels queasy with guilt. ***THE GARDEN OF PROCLAMATION IS WATERED AND NOURISHED.***

You are “80-some” years old, and you’re so frustrated. You just can’t seem to get your thoughts together. When you talk, it makes sense to you most of the time, but not to anybody else. You feel like a stranger in a foreign land. But when your pastor visits and begins reciting the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed, you feel like you are in the comfort of home again. He’s talking your language. You can say every word with him clearly.

***THE GARDEN OF PROCLAMATION IS EVERGREEN.***

You didn't see that car speeding through the intersection. Who are these uniforms all around you, talking and working so frantically? Their voices fade. You can't feel a thing. Everything goes dark. And then you hear a voice: "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.*" **THE GARDEN OF PROCLAMATION IS HARVESTED.** Amen.