

**I. GOD'S STORY**

- A. In the scriptures, there are several metaphors that describe the Church. We see that God has characterized the church in a figurative sense as a family, army, bride, body, garden, priesthood, temple, and a society.
- B. God's story began in a garden and finishes in the garden of the New Jerusalem. I am using the metaphor of a garden on several levels: personal, corporate, city/nation, and global.
- C. The First Man, Adam and Eve failed in their mandate to tend the garden on the earth, but the Second Adam – Jesus Christ was successful in his work.
- D. In Jesus' first coming, as the Second Adam (Rom. 5:12,14; 1Cor.15: 22, 45), he himself identified with God's Garden (humanity). He kept his personal garden before his Father through these 4 heart standards.

***For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. Isa. 53:2***

***"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. John 15:1***

- E. Jesus also as the Second Adam, tended to the corporate garden of Israel; and through his disciples, the garden of the earth.

***<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. <sup>36</sup> But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. <sup>38</sup> Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Matt. 9: 35-38***

***And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup> In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. <sup>4</sup> They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Rev. 22:1-5***

- F. Jesus as a gardener is tending the soil of his garden, making sure the vital nutrients of joy, attachment, identity, and healthy correction are present.
- G. In Matt. 9, Jesus sets out three common targets for his ministry as he tended the garden of Israel. The record of Matthew 9 is full of many events that can be summarized into three common focal points which I want us as a congregation to carry in our hearts, and set as agendas for our planning and ministry.

1. Focal points:
  - a. Next generation
    - (1) healing the paralytic – vs. 1-8
    - (2) calling of Matthew – vs. 9
    - (3) healing of ruler's daughter – vs. 18-19, 23-26
  - b. Leadership
    - (1) Constantly contending with religious leaders of his day. Vs. 3, 10-11, 34
    - (2) Calling to next generation to take their place of leadership.
    - (3) Established the power of his leadership
  - c. Mission
    - (1) Jesus sees the condition of the people and calls for prayer. Vs. – 35-38
    - (2) Jesus commissions his disciples (Mt. 10) after having established the authority of his name (Mt. 9)
- H. As we accept and carry these values, and focus on our targets several things will happen:
  1. These values and these focuses will:
    - a. Help us choose our leaders.
    - b. Help us focus and establish ministries
    - c. Show us how to spend our money
    - d. How to give of our resources
    - e. Teach us how to win the lost
    - f. Bring an increase of Holy Spirit and His gifts
- I. I want to put before us some simple practical beginnings as we respond and step forward.
  1. Are you tending your garden? Will you take these values and begin to own them and tend your garden with them?
    - a. We cannot engage the work of our calling without daily input and loving intimate relationship with God. This includes loving obedience to his leadership without human compromise or softening our stand for the sake of not wanting to be religious.

2. Tending the garden of this city. I am calling CFG to praying for and having one (1) meaningful conversation about Jesus per month. That you would pray for that and look for that. That's 12 per year, and if those who presently attend CFG so about 300 people did that, then by the end of March 2023, 3,600 meaningful conversations about Jesus will have taken place. It would be hard for me to believe that several salvations and life transplants into our garden would not take place.
  3. That you would invest your money (tithes, offerings) into the work of this garden to see it grow. That you would see every \$\$ as representing the souls of people.
  4. That you would adopt, get to know, 3-5 people from the next generation this year. You would take interest in their garden (life), tend it with them if they are willing.
  5. That you would adopt, get to know, 2-3 people from the previous generation that you see walking in these heart values and go ask them how they have managed to do it for so many years?
  6. That you would add two (2) prayer meetings to your schedule per week and one (1) day of fasting in some particular way per week.
- J. In the scriptures, there are several metaphors that describe the Church. We see that God has characterized the church in a figurative sense as a family, army, bride, body, garden, priesthood, temple, and a society.
- K. I have used the metaphor of a garden but we are so much more. And, our family needs attention. We need to unify and come together. I am calling CFG to gather around the person of Jesus Christ as our primary preoccupation. That we would take on these heart standards as our desire and free will living standards.
1. That we would be:
    - a. People of presence
    - b. People of prayer
    - c. People Spirit filled and Spirit led
    - d. People of joyful, happy holiness
    - e. People of generous spirit.