

That the World May Know: With All Your Heart – Session 6: A Well-Watered Garden

The Olive Tree

The olive tree was essential to life in the ancient world, so it is not surprising that it is a significant biblical metaphor. People used olive oil for lighting, medicine, cosmetics, cooking, anointing, and as a cash crop. Olive wood, which is extremely hard and has a beautiful grain, was used in furniture and other construction. Since the biblical writers used the image of a well-watered garden to portray God's blessings and his relationship with his people, it is not surprising that they also used the plants of a gan, including the olive tree, to illustrate God's truth.

1. David compared God's people to an olive tree. What is the significance of where the tree was located and why it was flourishing?
Psalm 52:1 – 9

Would you expect an olive tree to flourish there?
2. What happens when God's people turn away from righteousness?
Jeremiah 11:14 – 17
3. What does the fruit of the olive tree tell the farmer about the tree? How does the farmer respond?
Matthew 3:1 – 11
Matthew 7:15 – 20
4. Hosea portrays what God will do for his people after they repent of their wayward ways. What picture does Hosea present of God's faithfulness in loving and caring for his people and their role in displaying God's goodness to other people?
Hosea 14:4 - 8

The Vine

Few cultivated crops are as dependent on the skilled work of the farmer and the proper rhythm of the seasons and rainfall as the vine. Because God's people experienced the hard labor of creating and caring for vineyards, the vine (like the well-watered garden, the olive, and the fig), was an excellent metaphor to describe the relationship between God and his people. The nature of the vine—the fact that its only value is in the fruit it bears—also helps to emphasize how important it is for God's people to “remain” in the vine so that they will bear fruit.

1. Refresh your overall picture of God's vineyard and its fruitfulness (or lack thereof) in relationship to God.
Psalm 80:7 – 19
2. Who is symbolized as God's vine? How deeply did God, as the farmer of the gan, express care for his vine?
Isaiah 5:1 – 7
Isaiah 27:1 – 6
Jeremiah 2:1 – 8
3. What did God do, or allow others to do, as a consequence?
Isaiah 16:8 – 10
Isaiah 32:9 – 14
Amos 5:11
4. If the vine that had ceased producing fruit returned to him in repentance and obedience, what promise of restoration did God make?
Jeremiah 31:1 – 13
Hosea 14:1 - 7

The Fig Tree

The fig tree was among the most favored trees in the world of the Bible. Fig trees grew in the Garden of Eden and can still be found in the terraced farms of the Judah Mountains. The mature tree produces succulent, sweet fruit that ripens gradually and can be picked during a period of several months. Its broad, spreading branches and large leaves provide cooling shade. The ability to sit under one's own fig tree and vines symbolized the hope of God's people for the restoration of God's shalom.

1. During Old Testament times, what images of peace, security, and God's blessing did the fig tree represent?
1 Kings 4:25

2 Kings 20:7

Joel 2:21 – 22

Micah 4:4

Zechariah 3:10
2. To what did God compare his people, and what does this reveal about the depth of God's love for them?
Jeremiah 24:2 – 7
Hosea 9:10
3. The beautiful images of shalom portrayed by the fig tree also led to the use of the tree as a warning and symbol of God's coming judgment if his people did not remain faithful to him. What did the fig tree symbolize in the following passages?
Isaiah 9:8 – 10, Jeremiah 5:17,
Jeremiah 8:13, Hosea 1:6 – 15,
Amos 4:9

**God's Community:
Tending the Soil of a Fertile Hillside**

When the Hebrews arrived in the Promised Land, God gave each family in each tribe a small plot of land as an eternal inheritance. The Hebrews were to care for their inheritance as the part of God's world for which they were responsible. They were not to sell their land, nor were they to take land from anyone else. It was both a family and community responsibility to preserve for future generations the land God had provided.

1. What responsibility did God give to Adam in the Garden of Eden?
Genesis 2:15

How was this like the Hebrew's responsibility to prepare and preserve the soil of their inheritance, the soil of their gan?

2. Who alone is responsible (and able) to make trees and vines grow and produce fruit?
Deuteronomy 11:11 – 14
Isaiah 55:10 – 11

Why is it so important for God's people to tend the soil?

How much difference does the soil really make at harvest time?
Mark 4:1 - 8

**God's Community:
Repairers of Broken Walls**

In the gamin, each garden's fruitfulness—in fact, its survival—depends on the walls of the gardens above it. If one farmer neglects his wall, a heavy rainfall could wash out his garden (wall, topsoil, and crops) and the gardens below. The farmers of Israel's terraced hillsides learned to work together as a community to serve one another. Even today, farmers care for their hillside terraces as a community. After a heavy rainfall, many of them will go to the gamin to inspect the walls and repair any weaknesses—not only in their own gardens but in the gardens of everyone else.

1. Those who follow Jesus Christ and desire to live fruitful lives that honor God need to view ourselves as repairers of broken walls. We must be alert to the needs of people around us and diligently work together to rebuild what is broken. What needs did the prophet Isaiah identify that, if ignored, would tear down and destroy a community?
Isaiah 58:6 – 12
2. What specific things does God want his people to do that would help to repair the walls and bring shalom to a broken community?
Deuteronomy 15:11
Psalm 82:3 – 4
Proverbs 31:8 – 9
Isaiah 56:1
Jeremiah 9:23 – 24
Hebrews 13:1 – 5
James 1:27

Genesis 2
Genesis 48
Exodus 33
Deuteronomy 6
Deuteronomy 10
Deuteronomy 15
1 Samuel 10
1 Samuel 25
1 Kings 4
1 Chronicles 12
Psalm 45
Psalm 52
Psalm 82
Psalm 119
Proverbs 27
Isaiah 5
Isaiah 27
Isaiah 11
Isaiah 55
Isaiah 61
Jeremiah 5
Jeremiah 9
Jeremiah 17
Jeremiah 24
Jeremiah 33
Hosea 2
Hosea 10
Joel 1
Micah 4
Amos 4
Nahum 3
Zechariah 6
Matthew 5
Matthew 21
Matthew 28
Mark 11
Mark 16
Luke 4
Luke 13
John 8
John 15
John 17

Genesis 13
Exodus 29
Leviticus 8
Deuteronomy 8
Deuteronomy 11
Deuteronomy 22
1 Samuel 16
2 Samuel 16
2 Kings 20
1 Chronicles 16
Psalm 46
Psalm 80
Psalm 103
Proverbs 22
Proverbs 31
Isaiah 9
Isaiah 28
Isaiah 53
Isaiah 58
Jeremiah 2
Jeremiah 8
Jeremiah 11
Jeremiah 23
Jeremiah 31
Jeremiah 40
Hosea 9
Hosea 14
Joel 2
Micah 7
Amos 5
Zechariah 3
Matthew 3
Matthew 7
Matthew 22
Mark 4
Mark 14
Luke 3
Luke 12
John 1
John 14
John 16
Acts 4

Acts 24
Romans 11
Romans 15
1 Corinthians 3
1 Corinthians 13
2 Corinthians 9
Ephesians 5
Colossians 3
Philemon 2
Hebrews 3
Hebrews 12
James 1
James 3
1 Peter 3
1 John 2

Romans 8
Romans 12
1 Corinthians 1
1 Corinthians 9
2 Corinthians 1
Ephesians 1
Philippians 2
1 Thessalonians 5
Philemon 4
Hebrews 10
Hebrews 13
James 2
James 5
1 John 1
1 John 3