

Easter Day 2026 – The Garden



Artwork by Sarah Lea West, sarahleawest.art

We began our Lenten journey with images of dust and desert – dry, dangerous, inhospitable to life.

Today, we wake to dawn in God's Easter garden. Instead of the shrivelled trees of the desert landscape, there is a flourishing tree resplendent in the centre of the garden. Instead of sand and parched landscape and a deranged sky, there is a flowing river, and all kinds of flowers and shrubs blooming on its banks. Animals, rather than rushing or hiding, rest comfortably in this garden, sharing its bounty.

What has happened to create this garden?

A seed has been blown by the unpredictable winds of God's breath and has fallen into the earth and broken apart. The living water has come to nourish the soil and flow through the land. The cave has ceased to be a grave – the tomb has become the womb of new life, and the stench of death has become the perfumed fragrance of the new creation – oil that anoints each one of us with joy.

The faithful one has walked the path of loneliness and suffering. In our tears, he appears as the Gardener, but when we hear his voice say our name we hear the sound of the one who called creation into being. The morning star has risen, and we are risen with him.

Our human story begins in a garden where we are deceived into taking what does not belong to us. Not content with the good gifts of creation, and with being creatures of the earth, we reach for ways to play God, mistaking intelligence for wisdom. *Our* ways of being god-like, though, are violent. We create war and fracture, we lay waste to our earth home and each other. We turn forests into desert, and have to dig for water, parching our own souls and driving our fellow creatures to extinction.

We become so alienated from the divine breath and image in us, that when the presence of God comes among us wrapped in our own skin, healing and lifting up the broken, we are so threatened we destroy him, hanging him on a tree of shame.

God created light. We create darkness over all the earth.

But even in death, God is working to heal:

*And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall
Of our pollutions, draw our injured air
To cleanse it and renew. (Malcolm Guite)*

The worst that we can do cannot kill God's love. Nor can our deserts of hate quench the living water of God's Spirit, which God will give to all who thirst:

*He blesses every love that weeps and grieves,
And makes our grief the pangs of a new birth.
The love that's poured in silence at old graves,
Renewing flowers, tending the bare earth,
Is never lost. In him all love is found
And sown with him, a seed in the rich ground.* (Malcolm Guite)

God shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more death. Neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. (Revelation 21)

*The Tree of Life has bloomed
and poured forth the scent of salvation.
It bears the fruit of wisdom in its season;
its seeds are planted in our hearts.* (Mike Reeves-McMillan)

Just as the seed in the earth transforms into a fruiting tree or a beautiful flower, so the risen life of Christ, planted in us in the waters of baptism transforms us into the new humanity, the beloved community, the people of God.

The fruit of this new way of being is for all.
We have not been given this new life to hoard or hide, but to share.

What was once God's call to a pilgrim people returning from exile is now the call of the church to all who are lonely, hungry, and thirsty, wandering and lost in the weary deserts we have made for ourselves and each other:

*Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come...and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.* (Isaiah 55)

If evil had things all its own way, the noise of the machine would drown out that voice of invitation to the gifts of the garden that cost nothing but love.

That's why the church is called to be a living icon, an embodied parable of God's renewed creation.

We find our life here in the garden, in the shade of the branches of the tree of life, refreshed by the living water and nourished at God's table.

But the kind of community that finds its life in the garden must also step onto the Way, faithfully walking with the lost and the lame, the hungry and the unhoused, knowing that the tree of shame is also and forever the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the world.

Grief does not end in the garden, but is transformed into hope – for ourselves and for all the brokenness of our world.

Christ is risen, and we are risen with him. Alleluia! Amen.

The Rev'd Brenda Rockell
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