

Pictures of the People of God

Seeing ourselves through God's Eyes.

Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Sunday, June 5th

REFLECTION: We've been discussing some of the ways God "pictures" or describes His people.

Precious pictures (Treasure/Pearl from Mt. 13); *Progressive Pictures* (Sheep, Pottery Ps 23; Is. 64);

Personal Pictures (Family, Bride Eph. 2; 5, Rev. 19) and *Practical Pictures* (Body of Christ 1 Cor 12).

DIRECTION: Another picture God often uses illustrates the Precious, Progressive, Personal, and Practical nature of our relationship with Him is **that of a Garden!** *This theme was among Jesus' favorites.*

He used in in the parables of the Sower and Seed (Mt 13:1-23); Wheat and Tares (Mt 13:24-30);

Vineyard (Mt 21:33-41); Fruitless Fig tree (Lk 13:6-9); and the Vine and Branches (John 15:1-16)

Mt 7:20 "By their fruits Ye shall know them." This theme transcends both Testaments.

Hosea 10:12 "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

1 Cor 3:9 "We are laborers together with God. Ye are God's husbandry!" (geōr'gion: farm)

Consider your life and key relationships in the context of a back yard garden.

If you knew that your daily diet would come out of your garden: What priority would you place on it?

What would you plant? What steps would you take to ensure a good harvest?

Gal 6:7-8 "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Since so much depends on what we sow into the soil of our souls, I'd like to examine this biblical analogy of a garden and consider why God repeatedly uses it to describe the process, problems and progress of our relationships. Many of the principles (*and processes*) of cultivating a successful (*fruitful*) garden apply to growing healthy relationships with God and each other.

Cultivating a Healthy Garden requires:

1. Planning Pr. 29:18 *"Where there is no vision, (hāzôn: perception, contemplation) the people perish"*

Failing to plan is planning to fail!

2. Preparing Hosea 10:12 *"Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord..."*

In the Parable of the sower (Mt 13); What made the "good ground" Good? What was the result?

3. Planting Mt 13:3 *"a sower went forth to sow."*

Gal. 6:9 "be not deceived... whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

4. Protecting Mt 21:33 *"planted a vineyard and hedged it round about"*

Isaiah 5:1-2 "My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vine..."

5. Pruning Jn 15:2 *"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."*

6. Picking (Harvesting) Matthew 3:12 *“he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* See also Mt 13:30

7. Preserving Mt 13:41-43 *“they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend... 42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Conclusion:

How committed are you to the Planning, Preparing, Planting Protecting, Pruning, Picking and Preserving of the Garden of your soul? *You can tell by what’s growing there!*

You can’t fake fruit!

Mt 12:33-36 *“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; (kalos: virtuous) or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt (sapos: rotten) for the tree is known by his fruit. for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof...”*

Gal 5:19-23 *“the works of the flesh are manifest, ... Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*

Most gardens just seem to “grow up” with little planning and even less preparation. Since “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 Jn 5:19) then some worldly seeds will inevitably drift into our souls. The longer we neglect them, the stronger they will grow! (Mk 4:19)

Application: Harvest time is coming!

Since We have a limited “season” to cultivate the soil of our souls.

(Ps. 90:12; Jer. 8:20; Eph. 5:15-18)

Will you prayerfully join me on this journey as we cooperate with the Shepherd (1 Pt 2:25) and “Husbandman” (Jn 15:1) to “restore our soul”. (Ps. 23:3)

