

Behold the Gardener and His Tomb!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 February 2024

Preacher: Rev Angus Macrae

- [0 : 0 0] I do want, however, to take this opportunity to thank Reverend Angus MacRae for his willingness to come to take the services at this communion time, including this morning, the communion service itself.
- I'd like to thank him on your behalf for his ministry, that ministry which we, I'm sure, all enjoyed and benefited from as he led us so ably through John chapter 19.
- And I think he'll be finishing that off for us this evening. So, Angus, thank you very much indeed for your contribution and for coming to this, what was, as you said, yourself, your home congregation one time.
- We're pleased to have had you and we trust that God will bless you in your own ministry in Inverness, Free North, yourself and Anne, family and everybody associated with your ministry there.
- So, thank you for that. Thank you very much for these very kind words and it has been a pleasure and refreshing to be with you and to be encouraged indeed by seeing many signs of God's love and favour among you.
- [1 : 0 8] And we pray God's blessing on the islands and on all of our nation. We so need to return to God and to his word.
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. And may we all know the love and the goodness and the fear of our Lord.
- Thank you for your prayers and for your warm welcome. Let us worship God as we sing together in the 100th Psalm from the Scottish Psalter. If you have a psalm book in your hand, Psalm 100, the first version on page 362.
- Singing to old 100th, all people that on earth do dwell. Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Let's stand and praise God with the 100th Psalm.
- Amen. All people that on earth do dwell.
- [2 : 1 5] Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him set with mirthless praise for tell.
- Know that the Lord is God in me.
- We are his strong King of the sea. We are his strong King of the sea.
- And for his sheep King of the sea. All entered in his gates with praise.
- And looked with joy his poor son too. charity with honourable voice.
- [3 : 4 1] By God with mercy James saw life. For now Coalition isashillous baby■. In the 100th Psalm■■w. At Northside as barcode his sin, We need to sing that part of the world.
- It isersolous baby■. And for of the 100th Psalm ■■. For now encuentroôt is known. Game of theoyape powiedz. Even though Cage his ruimtes is spent. Our God is good, His mercy is forever true, This truth that all times were pleased to, And shall flourish to each end you.
- Amen, what lovely singing. We turn to God in prayer. Let us pray. Know that the Lord is God indeed.

Gracious Father, we draw near in the name that you love to hear, In the name of your worthy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask that we may worship you as we should, Knowing that the Lord is God, And knowing that the Lord is good, And worthy of praise and thanksgiving.

[5 : 25] We have individual reasons to worship you. You have been good to each one of us. And as a church fellowship and family, Here in this congregation, there are countless reasons to give thanks.

As a community and island, as a nation, And as a church of Jesus Christ across the globe, We find ourselves ever in a place where we have been blessed, Far beyond what we might deserve.

So we come to the gate of God, To the house of God, Into the company of God's people, And we sing with ages past, O enter then his gates with praise, Approach with joy his courts unto.

Give us your Holy Spirit, Who is the means of joy that overcomes fear, And anxiety, And sickness, And all the works of the enemy of our souls, And all our own frailty.

Give us supernatural help and supernatural grace, To grasp in our hearts and minds, What is the length and the height, And the breadth and the depth, Of your great love for us, In Jesus.

[7 : 08] We worship you for the gift of a gospel, To share with one another, And with this community, And with our world. Help us faithfully to receive, And then to pass on, The good news, The gospel of your Son.

You have sent, Your messengers out, And you have sent your church out, Each one of us, To be messengers of your grace, And of your peace.

And you have sent out, Both your Son who came in the flesh, And your Spirit, Who has always been working from the creation, And will continue working, Until there is a new creation.

But especially in this age, Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, The Spirit is poured out, To give life, In a dying world.

Good news, Good news, Of eternal life, Help us then, To come into your kingdom of love, And if we have not come in before, Grant grace to us, To come into that kingdom today, And to know the Lord, And that he is good, And to know Jesus, And that he has given himself for us, Lord, In our need, Show us the face of your Son, And may brightness and radiance shine, From him, Into our souls, As we read your word, And sing your praise, Speak to each one of us, And may none of us go home, Without having the experience, Of God being real to us, And give to us, Faith,

[9 : 13] And trust, And love, And repentance, That we may leave our sorrows, And our sins, And go to Jesus, And find in him, Rest, And hope, For children, And young people, In this gathering, Perhaps listening at home, For all who are part of this church, And for all who are in our prayers, Do us good, And grant to add to your church, In these days, Through conversion, Through new life, Spiritually, Many, Young and old, Men and women, Whatever our past, And whatever we face today, Or in the future, May we lean on you, Lord, If we have questions, Grant your spirit, That we may find answers,

If we have troubles, May we give them over to you, Remember the pastor, We give thanks, For the ministry, That you have given, To James McKeever, Among the people here, Over these last eight years, And we ask, That you would give strength, And joy, For the days that are ahead, To James, And to Donna, Adding healing, And strength to them, And encouragement, And joy, And we give thanks, For the ministry, Alongside him, Of Calum Murdo, And of the elders, And of all whom they love, And we bless you, And thank you, For faithful, Pastors and teachers, And for those, Who show through, Hospitality, And through the diligence, Of being shepherds, Of your sheep,

A care, For all the flock, For every member, Of the flock, Help us, As your people, To care for one another, And to notice, Those who are straying, Or in difficulties, Or lonely, Or in need of a blessing, Or an encouragement, Help us, Lord, To follow the good shepherd, And his voice, And to listen, To teaching, From those who shepherd, In his name, And to be led, In the way of righteousness, And in the way of peace, The fear of the Lord, Truly is, The beginning of knowledge, And wisdom, So grant us, Love and fear, We pray these things, Through Jesus Christ, To whom be honor, And glory, Amen,

Amen, We're going to praise the Lord, With a psalm, We maybe don't sing quite so often, Psalm 111, This one from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 111, The opening four verses, To the Tunargeal, Psalm 111, Praise ye the Lord, With my whole heart, I will God's praise declare, Where the assemblies of the just, And congregations are, It's on page 391, Psalm 111, To God's praise, I will God's praise, Please be the Lord, With my whole heart, I will God's praise declare, Where the assemblies of the just,

And humph considerness, The full works of the Lord, Our God, Our great honour, Thank you.

[14 : 10] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. John 19. Verse 38. John tells us in chapter 18 about the arrest and the trial of Jesus.

And the outcome of that in chapter 19 is a very unjust verdict. Jesus is led to be crucified. He is nailed to the tree and he dies.

And what comes next? And what does it all mean? So we turn for the last time in this communion weekend to think about the man on the cross.

[16 : 26] Behold the man. And tonight reading about his burial and resurrection. Behold the gardener and his tomb.

John 19. Verse 38. After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

And Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden. And in the garden, a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid.

[17 : 46] So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

And in chapter 20, verse 1, I'll actually read verse 1 and 2. Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

And at verse 11, after these facts had been checked, the men visited the grave and left. But in verse 11, but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

And as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

[19 : 10] They said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.

Having said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping?

Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

And so on. This is God's truth, his inspired and holy word. May he bless it to each one of us. Well, before we consider something of these verses, we're going to sing from Sing Psalms, and from Psalm 9 in Sing Psalms, the version A of Psalm 9, and that is on page 9, I believe.

Psalm 9A on page 9 of the Psalm book, singing the verses 15 to 20 of the Psalm. The tune is Paisley.

[20 : 49] Verse 15, the nations all have fallen down into the pit they made. Their feet are tangled in the net, which they themselves have laid.

And on to the verse marked 20 from verse 15. The nations all have fallen down into the pit they made.

Their feet are tangled in the net, which they themselves have laid.

The Lord is known by righteous heart, His justice always stands.

The wicked are then still in drought, the work of their own hands.

[22 : 14] The wicked will return to pay, the dead have laid on hold.

Where all the heathen nations hold, have tough forgotten God.

The needy will not be ignored, or gotten all their days.

The wolves and longings of the bird will not be crushed away.

Our minds forwardening March like and down.

[23 : 55] It's our prayer that God will give us all a hearing ear to hear his voice in the word of God tonight.

And it may be that someone is praying for you that you will hear his voice in a new and special way. And it may be that you have been prayed for all your life and yet you have not heard the voice of the Lord.

May tonight be the night when God speaks and we hear. Gracious Lord, we need wisdom. Salvation.

Truth. Jesus. Draw near, we pray in his name. Amen. The end of chapter 19 of John's Gospel and the beginning of chapter 20 of John's Gospel.

The story of the gardener and his tomb. Behold, the gardener and his tomb.

[25 : 10] I've lived through some parts of my life that went by in a blink. Lots going on and busy, busy, busy and it just goes by in a moment.

And I guess, like you, I've also lived through days that felt like months. Waiting for a phone to ring.

Waiting for news. Uncertain. Unable to sit. Unable to walk. Unable to think. Unable to pray. Unable to do anything.

Unable to pray. Unable to pray. And the minutes tick by so slowly. What kind of day do you think the high Sabbath was at that Passover in Jerusalem?

The preparation day is the way the Jews would talk about getting ready for the weekly Sabbath. And this was a preparation day for an unusually special and significant Sabbath because the great feast of the Passover was being celebrated.

[26 : 30] And the Passover coincided with the Sabbath. So everything had to be done and done well and done properly and there were certain things that you couldn't leave undone.

So the preparation day was very busy for a lot of people in Jerusalem. It was also the day Jesus was nailed to the tree.

The day he said I thirst. The day he said it is finished. And he died for sinners.

It's the day he was taken down from the cross and buried. and then the sun set and the Sabbath began that Friday night.

And the Sabbath went through Friday night through the whole night through Saturday morning through the whole of the daylight hours of Saturday and Sabbath didn't end until the sun set on Saturday.

[27 : 41] and then the woman got their spices together so that early in the morning when it was safe and it was light as soon as they could they could visit their Lord's grave and say goodbye.

that's where we are. What a long slow slow Sabbath that must have been.

What did they talk about? The friends of Jesus. How did they feel? They were in shock. They were sad.

They were confused. I would like us to see two things in this story tonight. And the first is to see a dead body two friends and a garden tomb.

That's the first thing that the text draws our eye to. Joseph of Arimathea who has not been mentioned before. He's new. And another character Nicodemus who has been mentioned before back in chapter 3 of this gospel.

[29 : 04] And what these two men have in common is that they are senior members of the Jewish people, of the council of the 71 elders, the Sanhedrin.

They are respectable and respected men. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night to talk to him about spiritual things.

He was lost. He was spiritually in the dark. He probably didn't know it. And Jesus says to him in chapter 3, you must be born again.

You must have new life from God. If you are to be in the kingdom of God and have eternal life, you must start afresh in a way that only God can achieve.

life. It seems Nicodemus has become a follower of Jesus but secretly.

[30 : 08] And it seems that this other wealthy man, Joseph from Arimathea, who has the money to provide a tomb at short notice for Jesus, he must have become a secret follower, a secret disciple of Jesus as well.

So here's comfort. There's no doubt Jesus is dead. There is a body. But at least he has some friends and two of them are named in the text.

And they go and ask the Roman governor, Pilate, for his body. It's at that point Pilate is quite surprised actually that Jesus has died already and suddenly there is an urgency for the bodies to be removed from the crosses near Jerusalem because it is a high Sabbath, it is the Passover, and it says in the law of the Lord that the land is defiled if a body is left hanging on a tree through the night.

Let me read to you God's word. Deuteronomy 21 verse 22 says, if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.

You shall not defile your land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance. That was God's law and it was going to be followed.

[32 : 11] The land could not afford to be polluted, the high Sabbath could not afford to be polluted, and the man who was under the curse of God, Jesus from Nazareth, he must be cut down from his cross.

Now he was already dead, and that meant they didn't break his legs, they didn't break a bone of his body, he was the perfect blemish-free Passover sacrifice that God had planned for over a thousand years.

Romans were not squeamish about executing their enemies, they were pretty brutal horrible, cruel people. If they were left to their own devices, they would happily leave the bodies of condemned criminals to die slowly for days, and then to rot until the birds were finished with them.

But the Jews, especially near their temple and their holy city, insisted it. The bodies must come down. This is the day of preparation.

They must be taken and buried. And what would normally happen is that an executed criminal was too contaminated, too dirty, too unholy to go into a decent grave with decent people.

[33 : 45] people. And so, the plan was to dispose of these bodies, probably in a common grave for convicted felons, definitely outside the city, out of sight, out of mind, take out the trash.

Well, the dead body of Jesus had friends, and they begged the governor for his body.

No, they weren't going to defile anybody else's remains buried somewhere by putting him into a tomb that had already been used.

He was going to be put into a new grave. And remarkably, almost as if it was planned, there are friends, and near the cross there is a garden, and in the garden there is a new tomb where no body has ever been laid.

And the governor says, yes, you can have his body. This is state property, but if you want it, you can have it. Do with it what you want.

[35 : 10] And these two secret disciples are not secret disciples anymore. They are on the side of their master, even though he's dead.

And they have procured, or they already had, this grave in a garden near the cross. And so, with love, and with as much care as they can manage, and with their spices, and with their linen cloths, they give us decent a burial as they can to Jesus.

In the Apostles' Creed, which probably dates back to probably the second century in one form or another, a very ancient form of words of Christian belief, it highlights not just that Jesus was God and man, and that he died, and that he was raised.

The fact that Jesus had a body that needed to be buried is in the Creed. you maybe know the words.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

[36 : 46] He descended to the dead, and so on. and so on. There was a day in Scotland when if you wanted to be baptized, or if you wanted to baptize your children, the minister would say to you, do you understand the Christian faith?

And if you knew the truths of the Apostles' Creed, you had demonstrated that you understood the basics of the Christian faith. And if you were making a profession of faith, there was content to it, there was truth to it.

Can you say the belief? Part of what the church has believed for centuries is that Jesus died, was buried.

He was in the same place of death and weakness as everyone else who has ever died. died. That's part of our faith.

Is it gospel? Is it good news? I think it is. And I think it should be comforting and helpful to you and me and to the people we share our hope with.

[38 : 05] Because no other religion, no other philosophy says we follow someone who has tasted death and whose body has been cold in the grave and he has an answer for death.

He has defeated tears and sorrow. When John writes his gospel, it is always so that people would believe.

That's the purpose for it all. And he gives you facts so that you will believe that Jesus is good news for a dying world.

Fact number one that we can believe. Your Lord had a funeral. He tasted death.

And if you think you'll ever go to another funeral, you need a Lord who understands funerals. And if you think that one day you will have a funeral for yourself, then you need a Lord who knows the last enemy and who is greater and stronger than death, the last enemy.

[39 : 31] Part of the gospel, part of the good news is that our Lord Jesus had a funeral. Fact number two, your Lord's grave was pristine, unoccupied, on Friday morning, unused, and it was unoccupied again on Sunday morning.

The Lord only needed his tomb for a little part of three days, a little part of Friday, and then the Saturday Sabbath into Sunday morning.

that's all. He'll never need it again. He'll never be buried again. Death cannot challenge him or humiliate him, and nothing can.

We get weak, we get sick, not him. His grave was unoccupied when he went into it.

he was not a dead body, lost among a heap of dead bodies, misfiled and forgotten in Jerusalem. He died, and on the third day he was raised, and many saw him.

[41 : 01] That is fact. Number two, your Lord had a funeral, your Lord's grave was unoccupied on Friday morning, and unoccupied again on Sunday morning.

Fact number three, and this is important to John, your Lord's grave was located in a garden.

People sometimes call the gospel of John the gospel of the signs. There are many signs. At the end of the gospel, the writer says that Jesus did many other things that are not written in this book.

These are written that you might believe, and he specifically mentions the signs. Jesus did many signs. He did many things, but what's recorded is recorded to invite us and to compel us to believe and trust in Jesus.

Jesus. So why does it matter that John tells us near the cross was a garden and in the garden was a tomb?

[42 : 27] No sign in this gospel is without significance. the signs all point to something.

What does the garden tomb point to? Well, I think that's something we can try and unpack tonight, but it's important.

The garden is mentioned twice in verse 41. There was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb. And in chapter 20 at verse 15, when Mary of Magdala is upset because the grave is empty, and she doesn't know what's happened to the body of her Lord, she sees a man, it is Jesus, raised from the dead, but she doesn't immediately recognize him, and the text says she supposed he was the gardener, because gardens have gardeners.

well, it turns out, although she didn't recognize Jesus fully, she was bang on, she was correct. He was the gardener in his guard.

I hope I can explain that in a way that will make sense. Well, our first thought tonight has been to just look at the end of chapter 19, a dead body, true friends, and a garden tomb.

[44 : 06] Now, thinking about that gardener and his resurrection, my second thought for you tonight is this. Secondly, we have no dead body, just a gardener, no dead body anymore.

more. He's not dead, but alive. The secret disciples, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, they love Jesus, but their faith is not fully formed.

they want to follow Jesus. They'll no doubt pay a high price for asking for his body and giving him this honorable burial, when many in Jerusalem just want to dishonor Jesus and forget him, but they don't yet believe he is risen from the dead.

They're procuring a grave for Jesus. They're preparing a body that is going to decay. They need more good news, more growth, more maturity.

They need someone to disciple them with the Easter gospel. They'll get that. The most loyal friends of Jesus include many women who followed him.

[45 : 48] and it's not a surprise that one of them is first to the tomb. When the Jewish Sabbath is over, now on the first day of the week, what we call Sunday, what becomes our Lord's Day, becomes our Christian Sabbath, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark.

God. I don't know this for certain, but looking at the other gospels and comparing them all, the impression I get is that there were a group of women, female disciples of Jesus, who were ready to wash his body, anoint his body, and do maybe a better job than Joseph and Nicodemus would have done, as the Friday sun was setting.

And you would expect them to go together to the tomb, but somehow Mary from Magdala is detached from the other woman, and she gets there first, and it's still dark.

It's early, early, early on Sunday morning, and in John's Gospel, when people come and go in the dark, we are supposed, I think, to understand that spiritually they're in the dark.

Nicodemus came in chapter 3 at night. People go out into the night in this Gospel when they're confused.

[47 : 27] It's still dark, and there's no Jesus, and the grave has been disturbed, the stone is rolled away.

Where's his body? She's not seeing clearly yet. Now that's good news for you and me, because we don't always understand everything right away, and we don't always understand everything in our teens or in our twenties.

Sometimes faith is a slow growing thing, and sometimes there are seasons where our fears and our doubts and the busyness of life, they're like a cloud that comes between us and the sun.

if you have lost touch with the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom, that cloud needs to be blown away, and it is the truth of the death and resurrection and the grace and mercy and love of God in Christ that will be that strong wind that will clear those clouds of confusion away.

Later, Mary of Magdala would be joined by Joanna, wife of Chusa, and Salome, mother of James and John, and Mary, mother of James and Joseph, and some other woman.

[49 : 10] What a group of remarkable godly women they were, but they are not yet maybe fully formed in their faith. They need the good news of the gardener.

They need to meet the one who calls himself in this gospel in another place, the resurrection and the life. He's already told them again and again, that he's going to die and on the third day he's going to be raised.

And it doesn't seem to have been understood or accepted or penetrate or to believe. It's afterwards that this light begins to dawn.

No, there is no dead body in the tomb. There is no dead Jesus in Jerusalem. There's just weeping, confused disciples. Mary runs to find Peter and John whom Jesus loved and they run and they run and they run to the tomb and Simon Peter can't run quite as fast as John but John hesitates at the tomb.

Both of them were running together. The other disciple outran Peter. Peter got there first. John waits. John got there first.

[50 : 50] Peter is the first to go in so and to look. But John outruns Peter in dawning faith, dawning realization.

yes, my Lord is not dead. He's not here. But they still need to grow.

They still need further understanding. Verse 9 tells us as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. What did they think? Did they think God had maybe taken his body a bit like he took Elijah to glory that God had taken his son to glory?

I don't know what they believed but they weren't fully on the page yet with a mature understanding to take the Apostles Creed the woman and the male disciples.

I don't think they could say the belief quite yet. I don't think they could quite say I believe in God the Father Almighty and I believe in Jesus Christ the Son and I believe in his death and I believe in his burial and I believe in his resurrection and I believe in his church his Holy Spirit his second coming.

[52 : 14] They're moving towards it but I don't think they're quite there yet. so what will get them where they need to be? The gardener standing in his garden.

Sometimes there is a theme that runs through the Bible and it pops up in a few places and it is helpful to make a connection.

And I think this is one of those places where we have the text of scripture repeatedly drawing our eye to the fact that the place where Jesus was buried was in a garden and that one of those women who loved him and followed him thought he was the gardener.

She knew him as her Lord when he spoke her name Mary and she calls him her rabbi, her master.

It's very lovely but use your imagination, use your knowledge of the scripture. where does the scripture tell us about gardens and gardeners?

[53 : 52] Well the most obvious place is at the beginning of the scripture in the story of creation and fall where the first Adam Adam and Eve, our parents, on behalf of the whole human race, are in a garden where they meet with God.

They are to tend that garden, they are to work that garden. Adam is a gardener and he is on friendly terms with his creator.

And the garden is wonderful and God makes provision and the garden is spoiled by sin and corrupted and the world is corrupted and death gets in and the death penalty comes on Adam and Eve and the children of Adam and Eve because in that first garden, the first gardener is a spiritual failure.

John in his gospel is showing us another Adam, a second and last Adam because we'll never need a third Adam because the second and last Adam is not going to fail the spiritual tests that he undergoes.

He is going to obey and drink the cup the father gives to him. In the Genesis garden and gardener there is the tragedy of sin and death.

[55 : 41] Where are the other gardens in the Bible? Well how about the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested and where Jesus wept and sweat so much that he sweat blood.

The gospels are very interested in that garden. And the gardener in that garden of tears is sowing prayers and sowing in his agony the determination not to do his own will but the father's will so that the church would be saved and the failure of the first Adam would be undone.

and now this garden a garden with a tomb in it and a man maybe supposes to be the gardener.

He's in a resurrection body but his people are still weeping he wants them to have joy and hope.

the time for tears is passing. They are confused and he wants to instruct them so that their confusion will be replaced with comfort joy and confidence to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel.

[57 : 21] When Mary wants to hold on to Jesus physically he says to her in words that are a little puzzling you can't hang on to me just now I have to ascend to my father and to your father because Jesus the gardener of the resurrection is going to tend his church his vine his branches from the father's right hand in glory I am the vine you are the branches my father is the gardener Jesus is a gardener but so is the father and the father wants Jesus at his side and the spirit representing God here on the earth tending the vine that is growing and spreading which is the life giving church the fruit bearing church are you part of it and do you want to be part of it there is one other place in the bible where you find a gardener and a gardener and that is surely in the last two chapters of the bible where the imagery and the language echoes the story of eden and creation and there is no more death and satan is defeated and he is no more and where there is no more sighing and sorrow where there is a garden city with a tree of life growing in it and with all manner of trees with fruit for the healing of the nations with the precious things that were in eden the precious metals and precious stones and the precious people of God not needing a temple because the

Lord God and the Lamb are there they are the gardener in the garden city New Jerusalem banqueting feasting in the presence of God serving achieving working in the presence of God God who did Mary see she saw her Lord her gardener her hope for you and for me we have not a dead saviour not a dead memory but a gardener who has been dead but who now tends his church and wishes it to be fruitful in John 12 24 Jesus says truly truly

I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone he's talking about himself on his cross but if it dies it bears much fruit well I'm finished and our communion again is finished one question do you have hope do you have hope in your life is the future and is your eternity good I'm a chaplain in a high school in Inverness and we don't get many opportunities to share very much of God's truth there it's quite limited but some of the chaplains go in every week on a Thursday at the lunch hour and put on a hot chocolate club and at least we can chat and if people are there and if they want to talk then we can talk and on

Thursday just passed a couple of days ago three of us three of the chaplains were in lots of hot chocolate was consumed and everyone was invited to answer a question where do you find hope one person said in music I quite like that answer if you listen to good music maybe it will give you hope a few people said in my family and my friends they give me hope one honest person said what most people in this generation seem to believe I find hope in myself but it's a bad answer because I will let you down and I will let myself down and you will let yourself down and this generation that tells us to look within for our hope and our answers is telling us a lie do you know what the most popular answer was among the pupils of

Milburn Academy who came on Thursday where they find hope in a pet in a dog I've got nothing against pets nothing against dogs but if that's the source of hope and comfort it will die the gardener will never die do you have hope because you know the voice of Jesus and you follow his voice that's that's the source of hope that even overcomes death in my father's house are many mansions if it were not so would I not have told you

[63 : 58] I go to prepare a place for you and if I go I will come again that you may be there with me Lord Jesus you are the one who went to the garden tomb for us and stood in the garden as the resurrection tend our souls and make us fruitful and give us faith give us joy love give us salvation give us hope for we ask it in your name amen we're going to conclude with words from a resurrection psalm psalm 16 in sing psalm psalm 16 in sing psalm psalm psalm psalm 17 of the book the verses 7 to 11 of sing psalm 16 to Selma the land allotted me is in a pleasant sight and surely my inheritance to me is a delight we'll stand and sing

I hope you can stay for the fellowship and may the Lord bless you in the days to come I praise the Lord my God whose whose counsel guides my choice and me live in the night my heart because my world The Lord alone, because He is at my right hand, and not He overthrew.

Therefore my heart is glad, my tongue with joy will sing, my body to the rest of the earth in hope and way of being.

For you will not allow my soul in depth to stay, nor will He be, dear Holy One, to see that tomb's decay.

It hath been known to me the path of my divine.

[67 : 35] Let us pray.

Remember us with tender love. Bless those gathering for the fellowship later, and bless the good things, the food, and so on, that we share in there and our fellowship in Jesus Christ.

And we commit and commend one another to God's grace and keeping for this day and for all of our days. May the grace of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us and with all whom we love evermore.

Amen. Amen. Do I get out of here? Yes, thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you.

[68 : 54] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.