

## Minister's Message – August 2008

### The Garden

How does your garden grow? Is your lawn neatly manicured and the flowerbeds free of weeds? Or have things got a bit out of hand lately? Some gardens are very beautiful. Trees of all shapes and sizes give pleasant shade in the summer. Bright coloured flowers in a multiplicity of colours can brighten our mood. A beautiful garden is a very relaxing place to be.

But some gardens are not at all beautiful. They are all overgrown and full of weeds. Keeping out the weeds takes a lot of work. Keeping the bugs off the flowers and the fruit is a constant battle. People who have beautiful gardens spend a lot of effort keeping them that way.

When God made Adam he put him in a garden, a beautiful garden called Eden. There were lots of trees in this garden; flowering trees and fruiting trees – and also the tree of life. A river watered the garden. God made all sorts of birds and animals to live in this garden. It was beautiful place. There were no weeds in that garden.

We don't read much about this garden after Genesis 3. Why is this? Because Adam was thrown out of Eden when he disobeyed God's command. God *placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden and a flaming sword* to prevent Adam from eating of the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). Adam was thrown out with a curse on his head and on the whole of creation. Weeds grew in the ground that was cursed because of Adam's sin. He had to start cultivating the soil, and with much toil and sweat grow food to eat. We know what it is like to live outside the garden because we are still outside.

But this is not the end of the story. God sent his Son, Jesus, into this world, this world outside of Eden. He sent him to deal with the sin of Adam, the sin that led to him being thrown out of the garden. Jesus came to reverse the curse, and reopen the garden as it were, as an even more beautiful and glorious place.

In the Book of Revelation (chapter 22) the tree of life appears again. Growing by a crystal clear river it yields lots of fruit and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. The curse has gone. The people of God, descendants of Adam who have been forgiven of their sin through the death of Jesus on the Cross, are back in the garden. They are there in the presence of God, much as Adam was in the beginning.

What we read in Revelation is actually a vision of heaven that was given to John by God. Heaven is pictured as a beautiful garden producing lots of fruit. It is a place of peace, a place where there is no more pain, no more crying, and no more sorrow, all because there is no more sin. But remember that heaven is also pictured as a city, the New Jerusalem. It is also pictured as a temple where God is worshipped. No single place on this earth can adequately portray heaven, not even the most beautiful garden in the world. Heaven is after all a place that is out of this world.

*Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon DD*