



Come to the Table

Food, Fellowship, and a Celebration of God's Bounty

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I Heard Your Voice in the Garden

[Genesis 3:10]

Parties, Picnics, and Lunch in a Basket

Come now, please join us in the garden, your ancestral home! As you embrace a daily routine of celebration, let your heart become one of a pilgrim, a sacred life traveler. Be aware, however, that no pilgrimage would be complete without a few unexpected turns.

Throughout history, in many traditions of faith, the moment of revelation or epiphany has come against a backdrop of the natural world. How then can we experience this nature, more specifically, the garden, differently? We anticipate that after perusing this chapter you will see these spaces as consecrated and will eagerly make a commitment to take as many meals there as possible.

In both the Old and New Testaments, gardens served a myriad of functions. They were places where food was both grown [Genesis 2:9; Jeremiah 29:5; Amos 9:14] and eaten [Esther 1:5; Song of Solomon 2:4]. They provided quiet retreat [Esther 7:7] and a place for meeting friends [John 18:1]. They afforded physical protection [Song of Solomon 1:17] and cool relief from the heat of the day [Genesis 3:8]. In addition to these pragmatic functions, the garden was used by Old and New Testaments writers as a tool of imagery. In Genesis, it represented beauty perfected [2:9]; in Isaiah, joy and gladness [51:3]. For Jeremiah, the garden signified a commitment [29:5] and in Ezekiel, it symbolized restoration [36:35]. Yet none of these representations are as powerful or as important as the central role played by the garden as the setting for man's reconciliation with God. We were meant to live in a garden, specifically, Eden. Within that paradise, mankind separated himself from his Creator and was forced into exile. Yet at that very moment, a forgiving Lord clothed his children [Genesis 3:21] and began planning their redemption. How poignant it is to remember that it was to another garden, Gethsemane, that Christ retreated to wage, and ultimately win, the battle for all humanity. It was in this garden that Jesus surrendered to the will of our Father. Was it not totally appropriate that the earthly body of the Savior was laid to rest for three days in the new tomb of a third garden, that belonging to Joseph of Arimathea? We experience the garden, not only as a place of magnificent creation and constant renewal, but also as a source of divine resurrection and ultimate redemption. It is our hope that the following pages will, in some small way, enable you to hear the "voice in the garden."



*Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection
not in words alone, but in every leaf in springtime.*

[Martin Luther, 1483–1546]