

POST #5 - IN A WORLD WITH THORNS

A HEART PIERCED BY THORNS
MEDITATIONS BY A DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER OF SORROWS



5. *In a World with Thorns*

A. *Scripture reading:*

Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17; 3:6, 8-19 –

2 ⁸The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . . ¹⁵The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it. ¹⁶The LORD God gave the man this order: You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden ¹⁷except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat; when you eat from it you shall die.

3 ⁶The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. . . . ⁸When they heard the sound of the LORD God walking about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹The LORD God then called to the man and asked him: Where are you? ¹⁰He answered, “I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid.” ¹¹Then God asked: Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat? ¹²The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it.” ¹³The LORD God then asked the woman: What is this you have done? The woman answered, “The snake tricked me, so I ate it.” ¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the snake: Because you have done this, cursed are you among all the animals, tame or wild; On your belly you shall crawl, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel.

¹⁶To the woman he said: I will intensify your toil in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

¹⁷To the man he said: Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, You shall not eat from it, Cursed is the ground because of you! In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life. ¹⁸Thorns and thistles it shall bear for you, and you shall eat the grass of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

B. *Meditation:*

Set aside, for the time being, all the scholarly debates about the first few chapters of *Genesis*. For now, just take the words as they stand, and let yourself imagine that prelapsarian world. Look around and marvel at the serenity and the natural perfection. Feel, smell, taste, listen: all is in balance; all is in order. If there are by chance any thistles or thorns, they are not rampant and uncontrolled. Just enjoy the beauty, the tranquility . . . and then put your imagination on fast-forward, and see briars shoot up and send out their runners. Watch the thistles grow ever larger and more menacing. Unrestrained, more and more thorns and brambles and thistles and nettles spread across the fields, over-taking and choking the flowers and the grain-bearing grasses.

Continue to watch as the flowers change form and become hearts, human hearts. The dream is now a nightmare, and you find that you can name the advancing briars: violence . . . impurity . . . greed . . . lust . . . pride . . . arrogance . . . injustice. The field has become a field of thorns, with briars creeping across the hearts, working their way in and taking root, and then shooting forth again with thorns even more vile, more vicious. The violence, the arrogance, the lust, the injustice: all are spreading. The crackling of their growth sounds like a scream of blasphemy, and the anguished hearts cry out in rage and bitter despair.

As you stand there, aghast at the horror, you realize that you are not alone. You hear weeping, and through the weeping, you hear a voice pleading: “Return . . . come back! ‘*I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful . . . I will not be angry for ever.*’ Only confess your guilt . . . your rebellion. You did not obey My voice, and now see what has come upon you. Oh, return, My children . . . repent and come back! . . . ‘*And I will appoint for you shepherds after my own heart.*’ . . .”¹

You turn towards the voice and see before you the face of Jesus, streaming with tears . . . and He is holding out to you His heart, wrapped with thorns. You look at Him and follow His eyes as He gazes again across the field. And you see that the hearts have become children—three year-olds, four year-olds, infants, toddlers. Each is struggling, bleeding, torn by the piercing thorns that have entrapped them. And Jesus steps forward, into the field of thistles and briars . . . but even as the thorns begin to snatch at His robe and pierce His feet, He turns to look at you and once again holds out His heart.

C. Reflection:

Alone with our Lord, ask Him to show you His heart. Think of that very familiar image of the Most Sacred Heart—crowned by a cross, flaming with love, gashed on one side, and begirt with thorns. Focus especially on that twist of thorns: they are the same as those you saw in the field. But here, though they pierce, their poison is powerless; for that holy heart, the Sacred Heart, is enflamed with love—with pure and perfect divine and human love.

Then ask yourself this: why, in the power of such love, do the flames not destroy even the thorns? And consider the answer: the thorns encircle our Savior’s heart not *in spite of* but *because of* the love that burns there. For the sake of that love, God became a man, with a human heart, living among us, as one of us, in the midst of our briars and thorns. Because of a fervent and all-compassionate love for us, Christ chose to bear in His *own* heart our griefs . . . to take on Himself the pain of our sorrows . . . to allow Himself to be wounded both *by* and *for* our sins, our transgressions.²

Let yourself again see Jesus striding through that field where children writhe in anguish, ensnared by the briars. Remember: in the eyes of God, we all are little children, no matter what our age might be or how we might see ourselves. Every human being, of every nation and lineage—no matter how old or young, no matter how innocent or depraved, no matter how strong or vulnerable—*everyone, each* one, is a child made in the image of God, a child with an immortal soul.

Once more, Jesus turns towards you and holds out His heart. What is He asking of you? . . . What will you ask of Him? Will you dare to ask Him to enflame your heart with love like His, even though it means accepting the thorns? And if He is asking you to go with Him, into that field, to free and feed the children, will you dare to say *yes*, in spite of the thorns? . . . and even though it will mean having compassion (*true* compassion!) for *every* child—no matter how old or young, no matter what language or lineage, no matter how

¹ See *Jeremiah* 3:12-15.

² See *Isaiah* 53:4-5a.

innocent or depraved? Before you answer, take time in prayer and gaze for a while on the face of God, streaming with tears.