

# WHERE ARE YOUR GARDENS?

by Paula Leanues

*“And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.”*

- Isaiah 1:28-30

Where are your gardens? Are they at the movie theaters? Are they in the shopping malls? Where do you sow your time? In the living room, where the TV is? On the adult pages of the internet? In the clubs where the music is so loud you drink so you can stand it?

From what and where you sow, from that will you 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.” (Galatians 6:8)

I’m not writing to non-Christians and those who have rejected Christ. I’m writing to Christians. I’m writing to a generation of so-called saints, so far away from the plans and purposes of the God they claim to serve, they are inches away from hell and telling themselves they’re on their way to heaven. If you want to keep believing the lie, keep believing it. If you want truth, ponder HOLINESS and look in the mirror. Is holiness, the essence of Christ, staring back at you?

Jesus said the harvest is great, but the laborers are few. And the laborers remaining don’t labor much at all. They hang out with the wicked in the clubs and other places of entertainment justifying their presence with, “But I can be a witness.”

You aren’t witnessing. You’re fraternizing with devils, and you think God is all right with that.

Don’t presume upon God’s willingness to forgive. Revelation 3:16 tells us He spits the lukewarm out of His mouth. Repentant hearts He responds to. He owes your presumptions nothing.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer

therein?” (Romans 6:1,2)

Still looking? Is holiness in your reflection?

Sowing into fleshly gardens reaps corruption. Sowing into the Spirit reaps a harvest that flourishes in the Kingdom of God, which is within you if you have Jesus. You can enjoy the abundant life *today*, the *right* way, by the blessings of God, if you quit trying to make your own fun based on the world's value system.

I know people who “gave their hearts” to Christ years ago who are so addicted to sitcoms and Hollywood, they make Jesus look like an advocate of our society when they call themselves by His name. This couldn't be farther than the truth. As David Brainerd wrote, “Think of the life of Christ; and when you can find that he was pleased with jesting and vain merriment, then you may indulge in it yourself.”

When you watch filthy programs, you make the One you invited into your heart watch them with you. To every party you go that serves alcohol, you bring Jesus along to view the drunken lunacy. Do you think Jesus' ears are blocked every time you laugh at or make a dirty joke?

Does God forgive us our fleshly entertainments, worldly addictions, bad habits and pet sins? Of course. When we take a 180-degree turn in forsaking them. Are we ready to do that?

Jack Coe said that the Church was going to the “hell holes and honkytonks” and bringing the “hell holes and honkytonks” right into church with them. That was 50 years ago. Where is the Church going today? Can you tell a rejecter of Christ from a real Christian anymore?

To believe “once saved, always saved” and to presume upon that puts you on thin ice. Hebrews 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

The more the world entices you into its web to do the things you did *before* you were saved, the further away from heaven you walk, willingly.

In Romans 1:26, we are told that God gave depraved men and women up “unto vile affections.” You get what you choose. If you who are called by the name of Christ involve yourselves in the world's entertainment, there is a point of no return and you are “given up” just like the heathen. And you are even more accountable at this point for your actions. James 4:17: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

There is always that Holy Spirit tug at the heart, the witness within

that convicts us we go where we should not. Do we heed that tug? How often we ignore it indicates the state of our complacent hearts.

How's that reflection? Is holiness showing through? Or is it shame?

A Christian friend of mine went to a bachelor party not too long ago. He thought I'd be proud of him because he only stayed for half the strip show and wasn't crawling like an animal with the rest of his friends.

Proud? My question was, "What were you doing there in the first place?" Drinking, partying, strippers, sowing and reaping fleshly corruption, sin, sin, sin.

He said he had to show up because he didn't want to offend his friend who was getting married.

So offending God was acceptable. But let's not offend our worldly "friends" we'd be better off without anyway.

Does anyone heed the scripture "Be in the world but not of it"? The Church is more "of the world" in our present society than it ever has been.

Then I thought of the poor foolish girl who'd be marrying the heathen whose friends threw him a drunken circus so he could spend his last days as a bachelor, a puppet on demonic strings, gawking at some whore getting paid to take her clothes off.

The sad thing is, because our society permits this, and the Church, instead of coming against such things, is *involving* themselves in it, this wife-to-be just accepts this is how things are. It's OK. It's acceptable behavior.

Not in God's view.

Why aren't we having revival in this land? Why is the fresh fire of God not coming to renew us in the Spirit, to enjoy a dose of heaven? Two reasons: BECAUSE THE CHURCH REFUSES TO CALL SIN, SIN. AND THE CHURCH WANTS ITS WORLDLY ENTERTAINMENTS MORE THAN IT WANTS GOD AND REVIVAL.

We are either walking towards God or away from Him. There is no fence sitting. We make decisions every day, that either bring us closer to God or closer to hell.

Holiness – is it staring you back when you look in the mirror? If not, then the first word of the Gospel is for you: REPENT.

Are you getting from your prayers what you believe you ought? Or do you often say the "heavens are brass"? Are you discontent, even annoyed with God, wondering why He doesn't seem to answer?

The heavens aren't brass. Your sin has turned off your hearing.

There are two types of people God sees when He looks on earth – those who have the stamp of Christ, and those who do not. Those who have

accepted His Son, and those who have REJECTED Him.

Do you listen to the people who reject Him? Are they among your “peeps”? When people reject a gift of this magnitude (total redemption and eternal life), it shows their state of heart. Keep walking with them, and God will sadly have no choice but to spit you out of His holy mouth too.

You can't ride on the declaration, “I'm saved – I accepted Christ” and turn around living like the devil. This self-righteous declaration passes by the Kingdom as shame if you aren't producing fruit in your life that proves the holiness in your heart, the Christ reigning.

Our choices in life, when not according to God's purpose and plans for us, add to our tab and the bill eventually comes due. Is Jesus truly your Lord, your King, your Savior, or have you made the opinions of men your god, dictating to you what is acceptable and what is not?

“Holy” is not just a word to describe the Sovereign God. It is a word that is supposed to describe His saints, those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior. But are you holy? Do you own up to the word? With your lips you honor Him, but in your deeds, you reject Him.

If you aren't getting answers to your prayers, it isn't that the promises of God are for everyone else and not you. God's promises are for all. Are you insulting Him with your compromises, are you soft on sin, are you presumptuous when it comes to His forgiveness? Get your head out of the immoral clouds of our society's corrupt values and get on your face in repentance.

Not only do we as individuals reap corruption by some of our choices, but congregations, cities, towns and nations reap the wrath of God in other ways.

There has been one disaster after another in this country, and around the globe, this past year. Just as Jesus foretold, natural disasters, earthquakes, wars, “all hell” would break loose, and it has. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for lesser reasons than He is sparing us.

As sin increases, so must His grace increase. How pitiful we are as a generation of earth dwellers. The question is not will He spare us for a righteous few, but *are there* a righteous few?

Jesus' coming to earth and dying for our sins was so that we would become righteous and holy as He is holy, as a result of accepting Him. His grace is free, and we busily and selfishly run around in our lives mocking every step He took to the cross.

Take a look at the hurricanes in 2005. Is this not the wrath of God?

Before New Orleans and casino-ridden Biloxi were waterlogged, they were sin-soaked.

This is not to say anything against humanitarian aid or clean-up efforts or helping the people in that land in any way. This should be a wake-up call to anyone that what happened in these areas are sure to hit other areas of this country. If not hurricanes, then tornadoes. If not tornadoes, then terrorism.

Something is coming upon this land that the unsuspecting sleepers of it have never even imagined.

New Orleans is a city of pagan worship, rampant homosexuality, a party mentality, gambling, alcohol and drugs. There are many more like it in this once-blessed country that has all but officially forsaken its God. Residents of Las Vegas may want to take a look if they want their redemption to draw nigh.

What is Mardi Gras but a street carnival where “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” parade drunkenly in pagan masks and wrap themselves in revelry, thinking nothing of insulting the God of creation who only seeks to redeem mankind from its choices of filth?

The land where homosexuals are free to parade around in spikes and dog chains is a land once free that is now chained to its sin. A day after hurricane Katrina hit, in New Orleans the homosexuals in drag, determined to insult God, paraded around as planned the day before. Their parade had been canceled because of the hurricane, but devils that drive the sin in humankind are relentless, as these entranced lunatics proved. While people’s homes and lives were being washed away, they were, dressed like harlots and clowns, wheeling one another down the street in shopping carts.

Depraved!/? It bears repeating: When God looks over the earth, He sees two types of people – those who have the stamp of Christ, and those who REJECTED Him.

If His eyes roam over the earth, and He sees you associating with those who have rejected Him, what does He think? To witness to them is one thing. To associate with them and call yourself the friend of them is dangerous territory.

The same kinds of judgements that befall the wicked are reserved for those who have accepted Him but ignore His continuous call. More so – Christians, possessing truth, have more accountability.

There is always a penalty to pay for bad choices. Either individually, or as a nation, there is never an escape from penalties except through repentance.

We, as a country, backed the removal of Jews from their rightful homes in Gaza. We, as a country, will pay because of this mistake and any other that refuses to back the wishes of God. New Orleans and Biloxi were

the beginning.

While God looks for a few faithful to sound this warning, the would-be few faithful are out playing in the street after dark.

I saw a news report that Foxwoods Casino, the largest employer in all of Connecticut, is planning a \$700 million addition to their establishments. More gambling. More mindless entertainment. More wickedness in the eyes of God.

I know Christians who think nothing of going to casinos. Fun, that's all. Do you?

Did anyone see the floating casinos, beyond repair, in Biloxi damaged and drifting aimlessly in the sea? Was that not a direct warning from God of the way we choose to live in our society?

The mentality of making money the "easy" way is not just a thing of lotteries and casinos. It's commonplace in business. I read an article after the death of Peter F. Drucker, referred to as "the father of modern management," and one thing he said impressed upon me. His view of the business world and day stock traders was this: "...too disgusting a spectacle. Pigs gorging themselves at the trough are always a disgusting spectacle, and you know it won't last long."

This is the norm in business and stock trading today.

Any Christian involved in worldly dealings of any sort with the wrong heart and mindset will not be spared in the day of judgement.

Where are your gardens? What are you sowing your time into? The flesh, to corruption? Or the Spirit, to love, peace and Truth? What are you growing? Are you concerned about having the "biggest oak tree on the block"? Or is your greatest joy in knowing your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:10) Our society has taken a turn where money is the god of the age. After all, it does pay for our lavish vacations and other entertainment. But it's not just non-Christians getting in on the action. It's Christians also who don't quite understand that money is a lent tool from God.

This is in part due to the so-called "prosperity doctrine" that circulates by some well-known preachers. I'm not going to pick on Christians with a weakened grasp of holiness without mentioning their leaders. Jeremiah 50:6: "My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace." When we should be

content and resting in Jesus, we are instead listening to too many preachers, each with separate interpretations of scripture and confusing us regarding basic doctrines.

In taking a few scriptures, mainly on the blessings of God and Jesus' profession that He came to give us the abundant life (John 10:10), which He *did*, some preachers have been able to prey upon congregations and radio/TV listeners.

If we are truly His, and His holiness reigns in us, and we keep the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), we understand the "abundant life." It is success in life based on the individual's calling. My calling is not your calling. Your calling is not the calling of your neighbor. But we all have something given to us by God to do. The abundant life is succeeding in this perfect plan of His; loving what we do because it is worthwhile and sows good into other people's lives; having enough money to pay for necessities and enjoyment within reason, and having enough left over to help others who have less. It is the power of the Kingdom of God, victory over the devil and sin, and the spiritual riches, in connection to Christ, that we have while here on earth before we pass into eternal glory.

This is the "abundant life." It is true that in this life, there is no lack. But it is not intended to indulge us to the point of poisoning our moral character.

Not only is the abundant life *not* the trivial pleasures offered by the world, but it cannot be bought with money. It is *sought* first by dedicating one's self to Jesus, and further by prayer.

Woe to the preachers who twist the very real law of sowing and reaping to benefit their own kingdoms (ministries). In Joel 2:13, we are told, "Rend your heart..." If some preachers truly love Jesus as they say they do, then it's time to stop misguiding the public into believing that holiness results in million dollar houses, Bentleys, and fat bank accounts. Leonard Ravenhill remarked once of the hypocrisy of preachers who wear \$1,000 suits in honor of the One who wore a peasant's robe. He said of a prominent preacher in the mid-1980s who had eighty \$1,000 suits, "I wouldn't want to be him on judgement day. He's going to wish he had worn rags."

Not just prominent national preachers, but local pastors are living in private sin. I know of one church where the pastor was having an affair with three women in the congregation. As all things in secret, it was eventually brought into the light and he had to leave the church. Call it an outrage, but this is a speck compared to what else pastors are doing that we just don't hear about.

David Wilkerson of Times Square Church often receives letters from

wives asking for prayer for their unrepentant husbands, *some pastors*, addicted to the fantasy of internet pornography.

Pornography is a destroyer. It degrades the home, scars children and ruins families. Why? Men of already lacking character allow themselves to be sucked in by it. Sooner or later, like a drug, they can't get enough—because they are not heeding the Holy Spirit's call to HOLINESS!

Take heed, Christian or not: The two realms the devil gets men the most: power and sexual lust. It's easy territory for the enemy of God.

“Vanity, vanity, all is vanity.”

If the Church is going astray and compromising on the morality Jesus came to reinstate, in part it is due to the preachers who can't get their own perspective on holiness to match with the truth.

But this excuses no one. We are all accountable to God, and more so once giving our lives to Christ.

It would do anyone good to study the lives of Smith Wigglesworth, John G. Lake, or George Muller to name a few. The Gospel was number one and their own personal desires weren't ever a priority. They obeyed the voice of God, and each one lived the abundant life handed to him individually by God. They were sold out to holiness.

Keep looking in the mirror, delve into your soul, ask God to search your heart. See Psalm 139:23: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.” If anything unclean is found, clean it up before destruction comes upon you. How do you reap holiness and the abundant life? Not by forsaking the Kingdom of God, sowing into mindlessly entertaining times and running with those who have rejected Christ.

God does not play games. Many see the invoice in the form of conviction. If the day comes to pay it, you're going to wish you had chosen an alternate path. Christ can wipe it away if you REPENT NOW. You owe it to God and yourself, and to those you may lead astray if you don't.

It is sad that the Church has put God in a position where He constantly has to clean up after us with a heavenly dust brush and vacuum cleaner. Wasn't the gift of Jesus enough? What keeps us so entertained that we cannot honor the Redeemer of mankind by living right? We'll take His salvation, or presume upon it, but sneak into alleys with those who reject it.

In Philippians 2:12 Paul gives a good word of advice: “...Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Sooner or later your gardens do grow, and for all to see.