

# 3.19.23 Sermon

## Cosmic Gardeners | John 17

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

word, god, planted, gardener, world, jesus, praying, disciples, pleadingjohn, holy spirit, living, creation, cosmic, breathed, followers

### GUEST SPEAKER

Rev. Dr. Deborah Tanksley-Brown

I have been excitedly anticipating this day as we continue to journey through the good news that John shares. All roads lead to the words that God has planted for such a time as this. Will you pray with me?

Holy Spirit we are pleading for your leading to stem the tide of creations bleeding. Holy Spirit we are pleading for your teachings, reaching open hearts with open hands to tend and men as our mission commands. Holy Spirit we are pleading for anointing terrain on us and rain in us for unity in community. In the name of Jesus Christ who prays for his followers to become one.

Part of my morning devotions are words of affirmation and confirmation, I'm gonna share a few with you. I choose to believe there is no value in telling myself that I can't do. But there is a significant value in believing in myself because at least if nothing else, I will try.

Richard Rohr writes, this moment or this place is as perfect as it can be. Learning how to live in the naked now. I choose to believe that God's Spirit flows in and through me therefore I am capable, and worthy because God is with me. So, I trust God, and in trusting God, I trust myself. The only way you will ever live into your desired path and your desired outcome in the life you want for yourself is simply to step out and try even in the presence of doubts and fears and anxiety. The successful person steps out and tries even when they are afraid.

The Holy Spirit never ceases to awe me with her illuminating power, which inspires fresh insight into the familiar word. Recently, Pastor Tracy spoke passionately about the Christ-centered community's call to love, administer, serve one another, and extend kindness to the world. As she spoke, relaying the community's call to outpouring love, I had an "aha" moment. I felt compelled to write down the words that came to me.

During this community call, the light was turned on to John 17, verses 18 to 20. These verses talk about Jesus Christ as the consummate supreme gardener, Emmanuel, God with us, Anointed One, beloved son, and Logos word. He prayed for humankind to Father God in the heavenly realms, saying, "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. I'm not praying only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their word."

These words brought me back to the importance of Jesus Christ's message and how it applies to our lives today. As believers, we are called to continue His mission of spreading love and kindness to the world. It is our duty to serve one another and extend compassion to those around us. We are all called to be ambassadors of Christ, spreading His message and love to the world.

Now, for some of you, I have shared another thing about me: I am a Trekkie. And I tell you from way back, sister Diana, knows what I'm talking about because we fellow Trekkies, and so I was being back to the first part of the charm.

These words, the first words, were father Richard Rohr refers to as the first incarnation. When the family of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the great three and one, with an outpouring of love, giving relationship breathed out author is in a diverse and inclusive palette of creation.

The Gospel of John clearly plants Jesus in the cosmos, in the beginning, a cosmic ancestry. John 1:14 states, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning and everything came into being through the Word. And without the word, nothing came into being. What came into being through the world was life, and the life was the life all people."

Father Richard refers to this as the second incarnation, as the living logos, word of God, wrapped in flesh, living an intimate up-close and personal relationship with his diverse and inclusive, male and female disciple followers. The fruit of his labor-intensive love, Jesus Christ, prays, "I'm not praying only for them," meaning the disciples' followers.

In his now time and place, he prays breeze for the future few fruits of the word seeds planted and nurtured and grown. He's referring to the disciple followers of those who will believe in me him because of their words. Jesus is praying for us and about us.

It's ironic how millions of us access ancestry.com and how Dr. Henry Louis Gates links hundreds to finding their roots. We have a need to know where we come from and to whom we belong. In his prayer, Jesus planted our roots in the cosmic realm. He prayed, "I gave your word to them, and the world hated them because they don't belong to this world." See, we were intended to be in this world, but we're not of this world.

Jesus didn't ask God to take us out of this world, but to keep us safe from the evil one. That's why we have to be mindful of the words that the world wants to plant in us. Words of fear and anxiety bring about divisiveness instead of unity. We start wanting to lift ourselves up as if we're always in need of something more. We're not enough in and of ourselves, and what God has created is not good enough.

But God cannot create anything less than what God is. We speak about the goodness of God, and the Pharisees were all shook up because the disciples were about washing their hands. "How can your disciples go about eating and picking and working on the Sabbath?" they asked.

Jesus replied, "Why are you worried about what's going into your body? How can what goes into your body, which God makes, be defiled? When God said, 'Let us go,' we ate and asked the Word of God spoke right and created all that there is,

including the fruit in the garden. How can that be?" Jesus wanted us to focus on what comes out of us rather than what goes into us.

What comes out of you now are the words that you plant in yourself and that do major damage to my creation. The creation that I say is good, boundless, and we want to wrap God up in a box. They don't belong to this world.

Just as I don't belong to this world, in this context, "world" conveys the universal Cosmos. We are cosmic universe connected gardeners equipped with the world that can bring new and abundant life in this earthly realm that we walk in. We are intended to grow in the world and spread the word seeds in the world. We are cosmic connected gardener spirits, connected to infinite and eternal transformative power. Does it not blow your mind just to consider the inordinate possibilities if we centered our hearts, minds, and souls on this facet of our family tree?

Jesus said if you had faith of a mustard seed, you would speak and the mountains would move. But yet, we want to confine ourselves to little stuff. We want to focus on the small stuff, make the small stuff in power, the stuff that God does not deem important because we continue to repeat the evilness of this world.

We don't look back; we don't reflect on where we've been or what we've gone through. Instead, we want to talk about the "good old days." However, let me tell you, for many people, those days were not good. While they might have been good for some, they were not good for the individuals who were trapped in ships during the Middle Passage. Can I get an amen? They were not good for those who were held in internment camps or for those who walked the Trail of Tears, which was a purposeful genocide that decimated millions of people. Sadly, we don't learn from these events. We don't even look back at our family history to learn about the dysfunction and sometimes evilness that existed.

And Jesus is praying for his students, his student followers, his friends to be one as God is one. When we focus on the infinite, eternal possibilities that were planted in us in the first God, we only use 10% of the capacity of our brains

because we can focus in centered one listener. What if we focused on that spirit that way? Else in us that spirit that is connected to the infinite realms where there is no and repurposes world without end.

Amen. Amen. I know, I want to be mindful pastor Tracy. We went over some things on the call, right? And I want to be mindful, right? That I'm invited. I'm the guest in the house, and there are certain rules in the house. I will, I want to be a good steward of time. I don't know if March Madness has started yet, but you know, there are other things because I can stand up here, and I can do this all day. Right? That's one of the routes that come from Amen.

You know, we went to church for my mom, Nellie. And we went there for breakfast. We were expecting to be there for dinner, so I've been I'm gonna be mindful of my time because I would like to come back. This one awesome thing about the living word, and that is that God looks beyond our proclivities for power for prestige and privilege, like James and John. He looks beyond our doubts and our fears and our insecurities like Thomas, like the stormy sea trip and Peter taking his eyes off Jesus. He looks beyond our perceptions and out of insufficiency, inadequacies, and powerlessness, like when the 12 told Jesus we don't have enough bread here it is bread of heaven, and they don't have enough bread, right?

Jesus Christ, human and divine, looks beyond and sees the divine imprint on our hearts and the potential that is possible because he is the author and finisher that brings new and abundant like I did something at this something I want you all to watch one shot to know that her story has been done today because I've stepped into this house in my sneakers, and I was 69 and three-quarter years of going into church, and I know my mom Nellie is having a chat with mom. She stepped into church today in her sneakers, and you want to know which speak about this is because we can do a new thing.

You think that this is small stuff, but see that's the thing that we got to be mindful of. Right? Because the lowest did that too. When God was calling them out of Sodom and Gomorrah, told them to like run for the hills and what was the word to don't look back.

We want to, we want to look back, we think that what was back might have been better. Instead of believing that God has a new thing in store, every day when we open up our eyes when we take our first breath, when that blood starts flowing in our veins again, and our feet get planted on solid ground again, there is new possibility that can come each and every day. Why? Because we are living and breathing gardeners. We are living and breathing gardens, when we allow the Word of God to be planted in us to see the new and abundant life that God wants for us if we would get out of the way.

And so, what does this mean, to you get to this place? What does this mean? It means that each and every day, we have as garden and gardeners we have the ability to help change somebody's life without words. Somebody who might have been decimated because somebody told them that they weren't good enough, but your smile and your acts of kindness can lift their day. Your words of kindness might be the only word that they may need to shine a new light on what was a dark day and a dark night. Your words of affirmation, your words of assurance that they are not alone.

We are the living embodiment of the living word. My mom used to always say, you don't have to open up your mouth because everything you were thinking is written right on your face. I could never play poker because I have tails all over the place. But the same goes may be the only word that somebody reads. And what is written on our page.

Alright, so my brothers and my sisters are going to end. I'm going to bring this to a close and I'm going to find my place, but it's all good, but I'm coming to a close because all those things must come to an end. And I hope that a word was planted in you that can carry you through your times that God has seated for you.

And so how do we leave here? We leave here hopefully bed and fueled for the times to come. For we don't know what is going to be coming. But we do know who is in all those times. We do know who will carry us.

I used to read that saying about footprints, the unknown saying that there was a time when I read up then I thought the footprints that were in the sand were mine, ego-centered kind of that until all of a sudden, I heard that there was a "ding dong" moment to happen again. When really the end of that came to light, it's funny how we can miss stuff until we read it over and over again right? And then it gets shut on it and the verses.

But I carried you in your last lonely, fearful, drowning times it was either character and so as we are being carried we have the opportunity to carry somebody else. Lean on me when I'm not strong, Johnny I promise I'm not gonna soon, yeah. Lean on me when, when, when you're not strong and I'll be your friend. I'll help you carry on. And so, my friends, I want to thank you for how you have extended your hospitality of time and presence, and focused attention, and it is my prayer that we will be as one.

Amen, to God be the glory.