

For God So **LOVED**

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT **MARCH 10, 2019**

Sermon Outline

Scripture: Luke 4:1–13

INTRODUCTION

There seem to be two types of people in the world: those who love the wilderness, who camp, hike, hunt, and fish; and those who don't, who prefer a Hilton with an indoor pool over a tent by a mountain stream. Some view the untamed wild as an opportunity for adventure, challenge, and exploration. Others view it as a beautiful sight to be viewed from the window of a chalet, where you don't need to wear bug spray or worry about bears. When we approach this text about wilderness, we tend to bring along our preconceived notions and preferences about wilderness too: either it's a vast and beautiful wonder, or it's a challenging and desolate landscape to be viewed from afar.

Wilderness for the Jews, however, would conjure up a very different image. The image wouldn't be of camping, as much as one of journeying. It wouldn't be of picture windows in mountain lodges, but of years looking out of tent flaps. For them, the idea of wilderness would bring up images of Moses and the exodus.

Moses was led into the wilderness after killing the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. The wilderness for Moses became a place of refuge, until the day he saw a burning bush. Suddenly the wilderness became a place of calling, a place where God spoke, and he had the choice to answer. Out of the place of calling, the wilderness became once again a place of refuge, not just for Moses this time but also for the Hebrew people, who fled the oppression of the Egyptians.

In that same wilderness that God spoke again, through the Ten Commandments, calling his people to be a people of covenant relationship with him and with one another. The wilderness also became a place of provision, where the children of Israel were fed manna and quail, where water poured from rocks. This

wild and untamed wilderness, however, was not just a place of refuge, of calling, and of provision. It was also a place of great temptation.

Around every corner the children of Israel were tempted to forsake the God who was performing miracles before them. They erected statues to worship, they grumbled about the food, they complained about the water. Ultimately, when they were told to take the promised land, they fell into the temptation of not trusting God, and they were forced to wander the wilderness for forty years.

These forty years of temptation and trial, of hope and promise, are what we see reflected in these forty days of Jesus's wilderness journey. It is a time when he too finds refuge, calling, temptation, and provision in the midst of the wild.

BODY

1. Wilderness Refuge

- a. Context: Chapter 3 talks of John the Baptist, who is described as a wild man who lives in the wilderness and talks about one coming to prepare the way. The image is of crooked paths being made straight.
 - i. Wilderness, then, is not something to be avoided but, rather, is something that Christ enters into.
 - ii. Wilderness is not just a place of barrenness; it is also a place of promise.
- b. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads Jesus into the wilderness.
 - i. Jesus enters into the wilderness in the company of the Trinity. He never enters it alone.
 - ii. Jesus fasts for forty days while in the wilderness. Moses fasted for forty days and nights (Deuteronomy 9:9) as he prepared for the revelation of God on the stone tablets.
 1. Fasting in the Old Testament was often preparation for divine revelation.
 2. The fasting of Moses and Jesus parallel each other in such a way that it is clear that this is a time of preparation for a divine revelation.
- c. We too can find refuge in the wilderness.
 - i. We are led into wild places of our lives. While we often resist these places, they can be times of refuge and formation.
 - ii. As we lean into Lent, these forty days are days of refuge and reformation for us. A time to remove ourselves from the chaos of the world and prepare ourselves for divine revelation in our lives.

2. Wilderness Calling

- a. Within the context of the entire chapter, it is apparent that Jesus is being led into public ministry through this time in the wilderness.

- i. After he comes out of the wilderness, he declares that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him to preach.
- b. In the midst of the temptations, who Jesus is, is being reconfirmed.
 - i. Jesus never denies that he is the Son of God; rather, he reiterates that he is a humble servant devoted to the worship and service of God.
- c. We can find our call in the wilderness.
 - i. We are brought back to images of Moses being called to free the children of Israel as we see Jesus called into the desert by the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. In this season of Lent, we also prepare ourselves to hear the call of God in our lives. During these forty days, God might be calling you to speak freedom to others or to trust the Holy Spirit. Though it might not be through a burning bush, or days of temptation, be open to where calling might happen in the midst of these days.

3. Wilderness Temptation

- a. Jesus is tempted in the wilderness.
 - i. This might be the most obvious role of the wilderness. Jesus is there to be tempted.
- b. He is tempted to meet immediate felt needs on his own and in his own way, by turning stones to bread.
 - i. He understands that there is more to life than just food.
- c. He is tempted to succumb to celebrity and authority.
 - i. He understands that God alone is the one owed all glory and honor.
- d. He is tempted to succumb to power.
 - i. He understands that we should not test God but instead should trust in the power of God, instead of depending on our power.
- e. We too will face temptation in the wilderness.
 - i. Lent is a season of facing things that tempt us. This has been done through fasting from things we enjoy in order to draw closer to God. Things like sweets or coffee help us understand our propensity to fall to temptation instead of trusting God.
 - ii. We can learn to stand firm against temptation through the power of Christ.
 - 1. One of the ways we do that is through knowledge of Scripture, just like Jesus knew the scriptures to stand against temptation.

4. Wilderness Provision

- a. In the parallel Gospel of Matthew, it says that the angels attended him after the devil left.
 - i. In the midst of the wilderness, Jesus's needs were met.

- ii. This compares to the needs of the children of Israel in the wilderness; they did not need to leave the wilderness to be cared for. God cared for them even in the midst of the wilderness.
- b. Jesus was given strength and words in the midst of his temptations.
 - i. The Holy Spirit continued to be present with Jesus, providing for him even in the midst of the hardest temptations.
- c. We too can find provision in the wilderness.
 - i. We often think of the wilderness as a wasteland, but we are reminded through this text that God does not abandon us even in the midst of the wilderness.
 - ii. When we are faithful to seek after God, we might discover during this season of Lent that God provides for us in ways we don't always recognize in our day to day.
 - iii. What ways is God providing for you in the midst of your wilderness?

Conclusion

The wilderness cannot be avoided, as much as we might try. We will find ourselves in the midst of the wild and untamed expanses of life at one time or another. The temptation is to avoid them, or to view them as places where nothing good can happen, but the wilderness can be a place of growth. It can be a place where we are restored, challenged, and called, and it can even be a time to see the provisions of God in the midst of scarcity. As a people, let's walk into this time of Lenten wilderness with the expectation that God is going to walk with us through it all.