

First Sunday in Lent

Use some or all of this reflection to help guide your personal journey through this week of Lent.

Reflect

We do not have to be out in a desert to be in the wilderness. There are so many experiences that speak to us of this word. And it can be everything from a daily slog, to terrifying weather events, or despairing world news. How does God 'fit' into our experiences of wilderness. Does it help to know Jesus lived those experiences in his own wilderness.

James Findlay suggests:

'God is the presence that spares us from nothing, even as God unexplainably sustains us in all things.' (1)

(1) James Findlay, "[*The mystical Foundations of Nonviolence*](#)," *Oneing* 10 no 2, *Nonviolence* (Fall22), Centre for Action and Contemplation

Read

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.'

Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'

Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'

Then the devil led him to Jerusalem and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."'

Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' (Deuteronomy 6:16)

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time. Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region."

Luke 4:1-14 (NRSVUE)

Ponder

- What are (or have been) some wilderness experiences for you?
- How did or do you handle the wilderness?

- Where are you tempted to control or find comfort that is perhaps not life giving? (think about binge TV watching, phone scrolling, using food or other physical comforts, working longer hours, becoming angry or defensive...the options for avoidance are endless and vary on a given day and between individual humans!)
- Have you ever been in a wilderness experience and found a different way of facing it that has given you strength, courage, love -or spirit?

Do

This week as you continue on the journey with Jesus, can you notice your own wilderness experiences, and perhaps ponder where God's sustaining might come from.

Also can you watch out for someone who is going through a wilderness experience and offer them support -reminding them of sustaining love (a phone call, or visit, a hug, a coffee, a card or even a prayer said alone in your room)?

Prayer

Jesus, you went into the wilderness and faced so much that is our own experience in life. As we walk this journey with you can you help us to see the sustaining certain love of the one who held you through that time, give us the courage and love to respond as you would.

We too want to walk in the power of the Spirit. Amen

Listen

Here are two songs you might like to listen to. Both are available on YouTube.

[Forty days and forty nights](#)

This old hymn sung by Morgantown Methodist in lovely harmony that focuses on Jesus' time in the desert

[Saint Ephram](#)

Prairie House Hymns

A Lenten hymn from a prayer of Saint Ephrem the Syrian, a prominent hymnographer of Eastern Christianity from the 4th century.

O Lord and Master of my life
Keep me from indifference
Keep me from discouragement
Lust of power and idle chatter

Will you grant to me your servant
The spirit of wholeness of being
Humblemindedness
Patience and love

O Lord and King of my life
Grant me grace to be aware
Of my sins and not to judge
My brother and my sister

For you are blessed
Now and forever
For you are blessed
Now and forever