

In The Wilderness; Luke 4:1

I. The Wilderness

- A. We all experience wilderness times
- B. We might cry out to God, “why am I here?”, “what did I do?”, “help get me through this!”
- C. The wilderness can be understood as a place where we contact God
- D. Hosea 2:14–15 (ESV); ¹⁴ “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵ And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.
- E. I can also be understood as a place where deliverance occurs
- F. There are some things about the wilderness that we need to understand

II. God Leads Us

- A. Luke 4:1–2 (ESV); ¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.
- B. “The conflict was not initiated by the devil but by the Spirit. Thus Jesus was not portrayed as passively being dragged out by the Evil One to endure temptation, for the initiator of this event was not the devil but God. The picture is that of the Anointed of the Lord on the offensive and led by the Spirit to confront the devil.” ¹
- C. God led Israel into the wilderness
 1. Exodus 13:20–22 (ESV); ²⁰ And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²² The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.
 2. There were many time Israel wondered why they were there — they wondered what they did to deserve to die in the desert — they pleaded with Moses to return to Egypt (get me through this quick)
- D. If God is leading us into the wilderness then there is something there for us
- E. If God is leading us into the wilderness then He will not leave us there alone

III. God is With Us

- A. Elijah had his own wilderness, both figuratively and literally
 1. He had just had a great victory over the priests of Baal (450)
 2. Jezebel swore to kill him
 3. Elijah knew that Jezebel was the one to do it — that is why he ran
 4. In the midst of his wilderness Elijah says that he is the only one left who has not bowed down to Baal
 - a) He was battling Satan who had made him think that he was the only one left
 - b) “Why not just bow down to me, I’ve defeated everyone else so I’m certainly going to get you”
 5. God was with Elijah in the wilderness
 - a) Fed him under the broom tree
 - b) Met him in the cave
 6. In the wilderness Elijah came to understand that he was not the only one
 7. 1 Kings 19:18 (ESV); Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”
- B. Egypt
 1. Israel was rescued from Egypt by God

¹ Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 145.

2. Could you imagine watching the greatest nation in the known world get absolutely crushed because they had enslaved you?
 3. God turned Egypt from a thriving nation into poor and undefended (the plagues and the exodus)
 4. God turned Israel from slavery to a rich and prosperous nation — and then led them into the wilderness
 5. He never left them
 6. 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 (ESV); ¹ For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.
 7. God sustained them and went before them as a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day
- C. I don't think God ever left Jesus — in the wilderness or any other time
1. Sure, Jesus had to face Satan, but I don't think that God abandoned him
 2. I don't think God abandoned Jesus at the cross
 - a) Sure, Jesus carrying the sins of the world necessitated a change in their relationship
 - b) But God did not turn his back on Jesus
 - c) The picture I think of comes from Acts 7
 - d) Acts 7:55–56 (ESV); ⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”
 - e) I envision God standing up (as Jesus was standing for Steven) giving His approval of Jesus' sacrifice
- D. The wilderness is not something we should avoid, but something we should embrace
- IV. God Has A Purpose
- A. When in the wilderness I would pray, “God, please help me to learn whatever lesson you are trying to teach me.”
- B. I know that if I did not learn this lesson God would bring the same wilderness back around to help me learn
- C. 1 Peter 1:6–7 (ESV); ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- D. Our suffering is likened to the process of refining gold
1. The gold is heated until it is in a liquid state
 2. In this state the impurities are lighter than the gold and rise to the surface
 3. The impurities are then skimmed off of the surface
 4. The gold is removed from the heat and left to harden
 5. This process is repeated numerous times (it is how we get the different carats — 10, 14, 18 carat gold)
 6. With each cycle the gold becomes more and more pure
 7. We are refined in the same way
 8. But in order to become more pure we must recognize our impurities and remove them — If we don't then that is just one more time we need to enter the wilderness (the wilderness is always about us and what we need to learn)
- E. We all need to be self-aware
1. When we look at ourselves we should not have any lenses on
 2. We need to know how we will react when confronted with sin
 3. We need to know what our weaknesses are so we can combat them
 4. We may not like what we see when we initially look at ourselves (and that is okay)

- F. There are two eternal purposes of God
 - 1. That all men come to know Him
 - 2. That those who know Him become more like his son
- V. In The Wilderness
 - A. God leads us into the wilderness
 - B. God is with us in the wilderness
 - C. God has a purpose for our wilderness