

Embracing the Wilderness: Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Prepared by Abi Trevathan

Readings

Genesis 1:1-5 (MSG)

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!"
And light appeared.
God saw that light was good
and separated light from dark.
God named the light Day,
he named the dark Night.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day One.

Matthew 4:1-11 (NLT)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. **2** For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, **6** and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He will order his angels to protect you.
And they will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'"

Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'"

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say,

'You must worship the LORD your God
and serve only him.'"

Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

Psalm 107:1-9 (NLT)

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.
Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out!
Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies.
For he has gathered the exiles from many lands,
from east and west,
from north and south.

Some wandered in the wilderness,
lost and homeless.
Hungry and thirsty,
they nearly died.
"LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he rescued them from their distress.
He led them straight to safety,
to a city where they could live.

Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done for them.
For he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.

Isaiah 43:19-21 (NIV)

See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.
The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness

and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,
the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of a time when you found yourself in the “wilderness” - what did that feel like? How did you feel when you finally emerged from it?
2. Brene Brown says that the wilderness is “as dangerous as it is breathtaking and as sought after as it is feared”. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
3. Think back to your own wilderness experience - when you look back can you identify the moment or moments when God showed up? What did that look like to you? Was it expected or unexpected?

Prayer

Take a moment to pray for someone you know who may be experiencing the wilderness right now.

Lord, grant that we may
always allow ourselves to be guided by you,
always follow Your plans,
And perfectly accomplish your Holy will.

May your will be done
In time and in eternity
By us, in us
And through us.

(Adapted from a prayer of St Teresa of Avila)

Optional Homework!

This week, read and reflect on the story of Hagar (Genesis 16 and 21). As you do, take note of what stands out or seems significant to you.

Ask yourself - why does it stand out? What is God inviting me to?