

Stepping Into...

The Wilderness



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1 Timothy 6:6-10

⁶ 'Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, and *it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows'.



Stepping Into...

Exodus 7:16 (JPS – MT).

'Let my people go that they
may worship Me in the
wilderness'

1 Corinthians 10:11 (Mounce)

'Now these events happened to them as examples, but were written down as warnings for us, on whom the end of the ages has come.'

Exodus

Ex 12:51 'And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.'

Ex 13:21 'And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.'

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1 Kings 19:8 NKJV

'So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.'

Luke 4:14 NKJV

'Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry'

'The spiritual desert wilderness is harsh, wild, and uncontrollable. Barely inhabitable and yet breathtakingly beautiful. Inarguably dangerous and possibly deadly but also transformational and even miraculous. Solitary and unfamiliar but full of grace and spiritual activity. The desert is a blessing disguised as a curse—a study in contrasts.'

Marlena Graves

Brian Greenaway Sermon Notes: Stepping into.....The Wilderness

Starting with 3 pictures from the Wilderness in Israel

Our sometimes shallow view of the wilderness means that we always think about getting out of it and into the Promised Land

We sing songs about it.

People write books about it.

Our natural thought is that such experiences are bad and we need to pray for them to end.

But that's not what the Bible says.

In difficult situations the default prayer is always – end this.

Have we ever asked God why we are there?

Our wilderness parallels today can be seen by the Greek word that is used: deserted, remote, solitary; as a noun, desert, uninhabited wilderness, or grasslands, implying in some contexts to be a forsaken, desolate place

We can think lack of finance is a bad thing – a wilderness , but is it really?

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Our culture is materialistic and so we focus very much on outward things.

Wilderness =

No food, drink, or warmth. Dangerous animals, bandits, sun, exposure, mental strain.

wilderness experience can come in many ways.

Can we embrace that experience and see Gods purpose.

3 examples:

Moses, Elijah and Jesus.

All had literal wilderness experiences.

It is Passover soon

For most important event in Jewish history.

It was a hard lesson and the vast majority did not make it to the Promised Land. But the Promised Land was not the most important thing.

The lesson was obedience and relationship.

When they did reach the Promised Land it wasn't long before things went wrong again.

They defeated their enemies, and have a period of stability but did not learn the lesson of obedience they were eventually exiled.

But the covenant promise of God brought their descendants back.

And that's the most important lesson of the wilderness – obedience.

Did you know that worship often leads to wilderness:

'Let my people go that they may worship Me in the wilderness' Exodus 7:16 (JPS – MT).

Leviticus 1:1 it says that the Lord spoke to Moses from out of the tabernacle of meeting

Numbers 1:2 it says that the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness.

Progression:

move from the tabernacle, where we worship the Lord, and: go into the wilderness where we serve the Lord.

As priests we worship in the sanctuary – our hearts.

As Levites we work in the world bearing witness to Jesus.

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Numbers records trials and tribulations of the people's wilderness life. Not about external enemies (which Joshua is about) but internal enemies – murmuring, unbelief and disobedience.

We cannot possibly defeat the enemies that will come against us, if we do not first learn to master the enemies within.

We cannot enjoy our Joshua victories, without first dealing with our Numbers frailties.

1 Corinthians 10:11

Our wilderness experiences make us, the grace of God does not fail, our resources are found in Him.

The real lesson for them and us is this:
The inner person.

Wilderness = uncharted territory – a place where you can meet God.
God is in the wilderness.

It was God who led all these three people into the wilderness:

Moses led the people there under God's direction –

If you have ever led a party of people to a place you do not know, you feel the responsibility.

Do you think that thought crossed Moses' mind?

Ex 12:51, Ex 13:21.

Yet Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land. ?

Numbers 20

Lack of water at Kadesh – Wilderness of Zin

Instruction – take the Rod and speak to the rock.

Action – hit the rock twice.

Ex 17 The rod was the instrument for striking the Egyptian gods.

What went wrong?

There needs to be punishment for the sin of complaining.

1 Corinthians 10:4

'all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ'

When Moses struck the rock in Ex 17 he was striking Christ. The judgement of God that had fallen upon Egypt and which now the children of Israel deserved for their sin, was in fact taken by Jesus – He was struck and took the punishment for their sin. So they received the blessing of provision whilst He received the punishment.

On this second occasion there was no need for a strike at all, particularly not twice. In Numbers 20 it should have been intercession. It was in effect Jesus being struck or crucified again – which cannot happen.

God was present with them in the wilderness in the form of Jesus – the second person of the Trinity – sometimes called the Angel of the Lord. When Moses struck the rock, he was striking God Himself.

Moses had not learnt that complete obedience was necessary. He had lost His way, lost his temper and lost out altogether. This is not a salvation analogy – He knew God, and yet lost out on the blessing

Second example:

Elijah had defeated the prophets of Baal and ran away at the threats of Jezebel.

As he slept he is awakened by an Angel. Who provided a cake baked on coals and a jar of water. 1 Kings 19:8

Elijah led deep into the wilderness by God.

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To Mount Horeb where Moses saw the burning bush and first struck the rock to receive the water for the people

John the Baptist who spent his whole ministry in the wilderness, between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, Elijah heard the low whisper of God – it follows that John did too.

The ministry is never advertised as a wilderness experience.

When its quiet – you can hear things you don't normally hear. You can hear the small still voice.

To be effective we need wilderness training.

Lesson from Elijah: Speaking God's pronouncement of judgement did not come from nowhere.

Deuteronomy 28 is a foundational teaching in the OT. Disobedience leads to: 'The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed'. Deut 28:24

He was just pronouncing the truth. But discouragement caused him to flee. After the small still voice experience he is a different man. His ministry becomes so powerful that he no longer has to hide but kings and their generals come to enquire of him in fear.

Third example: **Jesus**

He needed to go through a wilderness experience. Holy Spirit drove Him there
Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1:2
After being baptised

For Jesus it was a testing time, a time of preparation for ministry.

It was God's will for His son to be in the wilderness, for Him to face an extended period of fasting in a lonely environment. And when He was weakest physically to face temptation. And we know that with the possibility immense power to remain completely submitted to God's way in this.

What is your wilderness?

Loneliness, health, (mental or physical), relationship problems/family issues, disappointment or discouragement.

Failed plans?

The world and national economic situation.

Not many will be in a literal wilderness – but we may have wilderness experiences.

The wilderness is where we can lose our way, where we can feel like giving up, saying I deserve better than this. I am a child of God.

We can also indulge in activity which is not right as a believer, that was the lesson of Jesus. He was severely tempted and yet remained obedient.

For Elijah – after his experience at Carmel maybe he was looking for God in signs and wonders, the wind and the earthquake. But he had to learn to listen carefully

For Moses it was a loss of temper..

If Jesus had to endure the wilderness. Why should we escape it?

Wilderness times are opportunities. Its not because we have done something wrong.

Use your wilderness experience to experience God in a different way.

Embrace your experiences, praise Him, worship Him, be faithful and obedient?

Moses forget that lesson of obedience.

Stepping Into...

The children of Israel had incredible experiences

1 Corinthians 10, v5 'But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.'

Because of disobedience they spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness and all along that route are long forgotten graves of that faithless generation.

The wilderness brings the opportunity of depth, wisdom, perseverance, perspective, maturity and the knowledge of Him.

Don't despise the wilderness, don't long to go back but press in forward. The wilderness has so much to offer. Don't shout at it, don't bind and loose it, or declare it over.

Job 2:10

'Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?



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