

## **Wilderness Experience** Psalm 25:1-10 and Mark 1:9-15.

In today's message, we are focusing on the Wilderness experience. The wilderness is not always a comfortable place to be. We want to explore how the wilderness experience can impact us, as we draw inspiration from other people's stories and from scriptures. Wilderness experiences will either push you away from God or draw you closer to God.

There is a story about an ambitious young graduate from **Emory University** who insisted on trekking into the wilds of Alaska on his own. Chris McCandless, was his name . Before he left for the wilderness, Chris donated all of his savings from college to charity and he went into the Alaskan Wilderness in 1992. Chris did not have appropriate equipment for the adventure. He only had a light backpack, a ten-pound bag of rice, a rifle, and a pair of Wellington boots which someone donated to him. He had no compass, no watch and no map with him. Here is a young man in the wild with no phone, no video game, no pets. The diary entry of his 114 days in the wilderness show that life became unbearable for him, citing tragic final moments of starvation and a clear indication of loneliness and fear. That was Chris's experience in the wilderness and he never came out.

**Today we observe the First Sunday of Lent** which is a forty-day season of reflection and repentance. During this time, we remember that Jesus was tempted for forty days by Satan in the Judean wilderness. Our Lord Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Mark presents us with a brief account of the temptation, compared to Matthew and Luke's accounts. Both Matthew and Luke give details of what these temptations were. Mark simply mentions that he spent forty days in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. The vivid pictures of the temptation itself are not mentioned. But the other gospels said that during these forty days, Jesus had nothing to eat or drink. **He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.**

Friends, this was all part of God's plan. **Jesus had gone out into the wilderness by the will of the Father.** We need God's guidance to be able to overcome challenges of the wilderness.

**The Psalmist's** expresses his desire for guidance. In vs 4-5 he writes "Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me,

for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long". The author's confidence is in God- for guidance in his life journey.

**Our wilderness:** When thinking of the 'wilderness experience' what normally comes to mind is a barren place; a place of dryness and solitude. It is a place which presumes God's absence.

Scary place but can be a place of learning: Wilderness experience is a journey of trials you go through in life before you experience triumphs. The wilderness is God's classroom where he begins to teach you his ways. Initially he **breaks and moulds** you so that you **will conform to his image**. It is a placing of learning.

In our trials and temptations, we must endeavour to demonstrate our steadfastness in the Lord. We learn that Jesus demonstrated his faithfulness to the point of death here, and later on by death itself. We too are called to be faithful in this way.

As we journey through this Christian walk, we will have our moments of joy, moments of happiness, moments of sorrow, challenging moments, and even hard-pressing times. We find periods in our lives where we feel : **"Lord, I don't know what I to do"**.

**No one is excluded from experiencing 'times of wilderness.'**

**The question is :** How will you respond? And What will you receive and learn from it?

The Wilderness Experience- should help us to grow stronger in our faith.

a) Growth takes place in tension. Like going to the gym to lift weights and cause growth in our muscles, the wilderness experience can cause tension in our lives and circumstances which can lead to change and growth. **Moses- came out equipped as a leader to deliver the Israelites from bondage.**

b) God allows us to walk through the wilderness

Most of the time, we would rather avoid the wilderness experience. We call on God to remove us. We try everything we can to go around it, avoid it and sometimes even simply ignore it rather than experience it. But the wilderness still remains and must be dealt with. **Elijah fleeing from Jezebel- God fed and strengthened him.**

**PAUL writes:** “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9)

The wilderness can lead us to experience God in a new and different way. Even when we feel alone and that **God is absent**, there is a sense of being “kept” on the journey.

And thus, as painful as the wilderness can be, it can be an immense blessing in our life and a defining moment in our spiritual journey. May we trust God and ask Him to guide us and sustain us as we embark on our Lent journey. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

Creator God, you made us in your image  
to be your people, wherever we go.  
This coming week, whatever we experience,  
wherever we find ourselves,  
help us to know that you are with us –  
guiding, revealing and sustaining – always.  
**Amen.**