

## Lent 2023, Week 1: Entering the Wilderness Meditations

Below you will find scripture readings followed by questions to ponder this week until next Tuesday's blog. Some scriptures are provided. I also give my observations, but read them after you've come to your own conclusions. At the end I give an explanation why a forty day Lent ends after 46 days! (This will affect your Lent, so please read it.) Here we go!

### Entering the Wilderness

- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your mind and heart in your study (John 16:13, Luke 11:13)
- Read the accounts of Jesus entering the wilderness for 40 days prior to beginning His ministry. Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13 Luke 4:1
- Consider who sent Jesus into the wilderness
- Consider what Jesus did while He was in the wilderness
- Consider definitions of "wilderness" (they're also in the notes below)
- Consider reasons Jesus entered the wilderness, or desolate places, at other times in His ministry: Matt 14:13 Mark 1:35 Mark 6:31 Luke 4:42 Luke 5:16 John 11:54
- Ask the Holy Spirit His reasons for sending you into the wilderness this Lent
- Consider what fast you might choose

### Holy Spirit

#### **Luke 11:11-13**

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

**John 16:13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth,

### Jesus in the desert 40 days

#### **Matt 4:1-11**

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”  
Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of  
the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down  
and worship me.”

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve him only.’”

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

### **Mark 1:12-13**

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty  
days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

### **Luke 4:1**

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the  
wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during  
those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of  
the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has  
been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be  
yours.”

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If  
you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. **10** For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

### **Definitions of Wilderness**

From The Blue Letter Bible website, “wilderness” translated from Greek:  
Solitary, only desolate, uninhabited, deserted by others; deprived of the aid and  
protection of others, especially of friends, acquaintances, kindred; bereft

Used of places: desert, wilderness, deserted places, lonely regions, uncultivated region  
fit for pasturage

Used of persons: deserted by others, deprived of aid & protection of others, especially  
friends, acquaintances, kindred, bereft (flock deserted by shepherd, woman neglected  
by husband)

Strong’s definitions: lonesome, waste, desert, desolate, solitary, wilderness

### My thoughts:

- The Holy Spirit sent or drove Jesus into the desert.
- While in the wilderness,
  - Jesus remained 40 days
  - He fasted
  - He prayed and worshipped God
  - He dealt with temptation
  - He overcame temptation with scripture
- The Holy Spirit sent Jesus there to
  - Be tested,
  - Experience the world as we do
  - Depend on God the Father
  - Be proved obedient,
  - Be victorious over evil
  - Prepare for His ministry
  - Return the wilderness to a garden (When Adam sinned, he was banished from the Garden of Eden to the wilderness. Jesus enters the wilderness to ultimately turn it into the Garden of Eden once again. [Ligonier Ministries](#) describes Jesus' purposes in the wilderness.
- Other reasons Jesus retired to the wilderness aside from the 40 day season (some conjecture!)
  - Matt 14:13 This came on the heels of hearing about his cousin, John the Baptist's, beheading. I imagine He **prayed**, hashing out John's death. He may have thanked God for John, talked to God of Jesus' own upcoming martyrdom, and grieved the hardness of hearts and sin that caused John's murder.
  - Mark 1:35 He got up early to be by Himself to **pray**. What did He pray? We don't know for sure but I would imagine praying for God's leadership in His day, for strength, for His teaching, etc. Maybe He talked to God about the wonders of His creatures and the sorrow of sin's effects.
  - Mark 6:31 He called the disciples to come away and **rest**. The time away from other people gave Him opportunity to **listen** to the disciples' tell of their preaching assignment. They needed to **talk** about that, possibly about John's death, and to rest and eat.
  - Luke 4:42 Jesus stole away to be alone with God after healing people all night. He must have been exhausted and affected by the inward and outward suffering of people. He probably **prayed** and **rested** and asked God for strength and wisdom. He came to teach and preach but He was surrounded with pressing physical needs as well as spiritual needs.

- Luke 5:16 He withdrew to be alone to pray. Did He miss being in Heaven with His Father? Did He struggle walking in the thick of humanity who didn't get Him? He experienced our human weariness and other ill effects of sin on his body. He wanted to **commune with the Father and be refreshed**.
- John 11:54 He took His disciples to remote places to **teach** them where He would not be swarmed with people.

Why is God calling you into Lent? Could it be to

- Pray- talk to God and listen to Him?
- Worship God?
- Fast?
- Confront and overcome temptation?
- Use God's Word?
- Rest?
- Be refreshed?
- Prepare for ministry?

Will you fast as Jesus (and many other biblical people) did?  
If so, what kind of fast will you choose?

Why does a Lent of 40 days actually end after 46 days?

We fast and work through 40 days, as Jesus did, but we rest from our fast and the burdens of Lent on Sundays, because Sundays are sabbaths to the Lord.

The sabbath reminds us that God has already forgiven and made us righteous through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We do not earn these things by keeping Lent. Only Jesus can give us right standing with God, and we receive it in faith and celebrate it on Sundays.

Exodus 31:13

"You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that **I, the Lord, sanctify you.**'"