

I have framed my 2023 Lent on Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. What did He do all that time? He wasn't foraging food, since He fasted. Scripture tells us He fought spiritual battles with the devil. His habit, after He started His ministry, was to retreat to "desolate" places to pray, so we assume He spent much time praying. Forty days alone, that's a long time to pray, especially with Jesus and His heavenly Father being so unified in mind.

Sometimes when I pray, I attempt to sit quietly and listen for the Holy Spirit to speak to my spirit. Before I know what I'm doing, I'm walking into the kitchen to start a load of clothes or reaching for a broom to sweep the porch. I fuss at myself, sit down, then do it all over again, because I don't perceive the Spirit and grow impatient. Maybe Jesus spent time without hearing from the Father? We all experience periods of emptiness when we don't "hear" God speaking, and must rely on faith. Scripture tells us that Jesus experienced life as a human. Perhaps He had to experience that void as part of being human.

The gospels' descriptions of Jesus days in the wilderness don't include the details. I find it odd that we read the account at all, since no one except Jesus and an angel witnessed it. How did it come to be written, except Jesus told someone? Yet, I can't think of any other event about Jesus doing something other than first-hand accounts recorded by disciples or Mary, His mother. In any case, I've been mulling over His wilderness time to guide my Lenten journey and using some imagination.

What do you imagine Jesus doing for forty days and nights? Do you think He kept up a constant dialogue with God? Do you think He roughed out a plan for His ministry: choose disciples, teach in the synagogues, school the masses, perform signs? Do you think He steeled Himself for what lay ahead?

For meditations this week, try hanging out with God with quantity time over quality. In other words, don't run through your quiet time routine, just sit with God for a while. See what He says or where He leads, or simply give Him your time, even if nothing seems to come of it. Separating ourselves from the world for a time elevates God above our agendas.

At the beginning of Lent, we talked about entering the wilderness. Keep returning to the wilderness with dedicated time with God. Maybe He wants to wrestle with you over something He's asking you to do that you'd rather not do. Maybe He wants you to face some fears. Perhaps habitual sin is something He wants to visit with you about. Or maybe, He just wants you, your undivided attention to sit with Him awhile. Maybe He wants you to rest, to be still, and know He is God.

I can't wait to hear about it.