

## February 22 Worship

### 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent

Reader- Dan, Cassie, Maddie Hopkins

#### Announcements/Joys

**Time Of Quiet Meditation-** *“A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”* Isaiah 40:3

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**Opening Scripture-** Psalm 32(page 480-481)

**Opening Chorus-** 544- Seek Ye First

#### Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: As darkness gives way to light and winter sleep to fresh beginnings,

**People: We come today to be reminded of God's love for us.**

Leader: Like the green shoots of renewed life, stirring beneath the soil,

**People: We welcome an awakening of God's word in our lives.**

Leader: In this time of reflection and repentance,

**People: We affirm our identity, we claim our security, as children of God.**

**Hymn of Praise-** 14- O Worship The King

**Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer-** Almighty God, your Son fasted in the wilderness, and faced human temptations. Give us courage to face and name our own temptations, and to direct our lives in obedience to your Spirit. You know us better than we know ourselves; may we know you and grow closer to the vision you have for us, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, He who taught us to pray, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

*“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”*

**Gloria Patri-** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.  
Amen, Amen.

**Old Testament Scripture-** Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7(page 2-3)

## **Special Music-**

**Gospel Scripture-** Matthew 4:1-11(page 837)

**Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace**

**Hymn-** 368- God Will Take Care Of You

**New Testament Scripture-** Romans 5:12-19(page 980-981)

### **Message**

*“What Does Your Wilderness Look Like?”*

In the gospel reading this morning we learn about Jesus going into the wilderness for 40 days and night after being baptized by John in the River Jordan. When we read these verses we must understand that the gospel writer is not talking about some symbolic “wilderness,” they are speaking about Jesus walking off into a desert wilderness where there is no food or water, no villages or other people to be found for miles. The area where Jesus went is called the Judean Desert, located east of Jerusalem and bordered on the east by the Dead Sea. It is quite barren and not a place where people can sustain life. Why did Jesus go there in the first place? The idea that Jesus was intentionally directed by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil is a theologically challenging concept. Yet that is precisely what the Gospels indicate: “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1) We must wonder why, or even if, God decided that Jesus needed to be tempted in such a way.

Was Jesus attempting to prove something to us or was He trying to prove to Himself that He could accomplish the task that was before Him? It doesn't take long in the Christian walk to discover that temptations frequently come. We might wonder, does God deliberately orchestrate such tests, or was the wilderness temptation of Jesus an exclusive experience only for the Jesus the man? As we consider these questions, we'll see that God allows His followers to be tested for a good purpose. Christ's experience in the wilderness serves as an example for Christian disciples. But as we study the account, an even deeper meaning is revealed. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted because God wanted His Son and His followers to understand the Lord's messianic mission clearly, that Christ had not come to earth as Israel's Conquering King but as her Suffering Servant. Temptation itself is not a sin. Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15) The Lord was not tested to see if He would

fail. Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted to demonstrate to us how we can resist the temptation to sin, and how, through Christ's power, we, too, can overcome.

Many Bible scholars suggest that the specific temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness represent three main categories of all human temptation. The apostle John labeled these as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). With the first test, Jesus was tempted to depend on His own independent provision of food rather than rely on God. After forty days of fasting, Christ was hungry, so Satan tried to persuade Him to turn desert rocks into bread. But Jesus was determined to do His Father's will alone. The second temptation involved performing a miracle that would show off Christ's supernatural power and draw attention to Himself. It was the temptation to abuse His power for His own benefit. In the third test, Jesus was tempted to secure an earthly crown and bypass the suffering and sacrifice He would endure on the cross. Satan offered "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor." It's important to understand that God does not tempt anyone to sin, but He does allow us to be tested and evaluated. God tested our Savior's character through adversity in the wilderness, and He applies the same initiative in our lives today. Through trials and temptations, we grow in faith and understanding of our mission as servants of His kingdom.

How about us as we grow in faith? Do we need to go into the wilderness in order to prove ourselves? What does our wilderness look like? Our personal wilderness will not be the wilderness that Jesus went into. Our wilderness will probably be a spiritual wilderness not a geographical one. There are going to be times in our lives when we become spiritually deprived. We lose some of or, perhaps much of, our ability or desire to believe. Things happen that make us doubt God and make us wonder why we are not experiencing God's grace as we think we should. Are we required to undergo these trials of life? I don't think we are required to experience these things but I do believe that they just happen as a part of living. In our own "wilderness experience," a believer may struggle simply to survive from day to day. Financial, material, physical, or emotional burdens may press on us. The flesh cries out for relief. The believer is forced to wait on the Lord, find God's peace and joy in the midst of trouble, and through it all mature in his walk with Christ.

Remember, it is not God who tempts us, it is Satan. God may test us from time to time but as we pray in the Lord's Prayer; "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Being tempted is not a sin, succumbing to temptation is. God has provided for us the power to resist temptation by sending Jesus, His Son, to take on our sin and pay the price. There will be those moments in our lives that we must confront temptation and use our faith to overcome.

The idea of going into the wilderness is not necessarily a bad one. When Jesus

went into the wilderness, he was not forced, he was led by the Spirit. Taking some time to be alone and work on our own spiritual journey is something we all should think about once in a while. A wilderness is not a place of devastation or ugliness, it can be, and usually is, a place of beauty. Look up pictures of the Judean desert on your computer and you will be amazed at what you see. Actually, most wilderness areas are glorious but not compatible with easy living. Look at what Jesus had to deal with; no water, no food, no shelter from the weather, and no human companionship among everything else. He did not go there for comfort.

If we take some time to go into our own wilderness, even if it is right where we live, there are things we can do, or do without, to make our wilderness help us to revive our spirits. Try going without things that we think we must have. Spend time fasting. Give up your cell phone or computer for a day or even more. No TV or time on face book or whatever media you use. Remove yourself from outside distractions such as listening to the news. Spend a day talking to God and God alone. Pray, lose yourself in the scriptures, anything that changes your routine and forces you to go without things you feel you can't do without. Sacrificing our pleasures and changing our attitude will do wonders.

In this season of Lent, we are called to learn about sacrifice, the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Jesus was sent to us to teach us about what it is that God wants of us. We can learn so much but we need to let go of things of this world and pay attention to His Word. I know that we all are busy and have so much to do. Taking some time and growing our faith will have consequences and benefits that will last us for eternity. Go and find your wilderness, Praise Be to God. Amen.

**Prayers of the People-** Loving Lord, at the beginning of this Lenten season, we are met with the challenge of handing over every bit of our lives that do not come from You. To rid ourselves of what clutters our lives, and all that distracts us from the simple truth of Your love for us. Your prophets have called us to change the way we worship, to make internal sacrifices instead of external ones. To seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with You each and every one of our days. If we don't give anything up for Lent, then let us at least give up this: that we might cease living in ways that disconnect us from You, for every one of our steps is like a circle around Your temple. Perhaps this Lent, we can give up our way and give ourselves to Your way for us. So, lead and guide us on this Lenten way. May we walk with Jesus toward the hill just outside of Jerusalem. May we like Him take up our cross and follow, spending each moment of our lives living responsively to You, just as Christ Himself did. For that is the faithful way. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

## **Closing Hymn- 13- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**

**Benediction-** It was never promised that you will not be tempted, nor thrown into turmoil, nor stumble or fall, but that by grace you will be saved, through trusting God. Grace is a free gift of God. For me. For you. You have a destiny to inherit, over which the angels in heaven marvel. The quiet strength of Christ, the humble power of God, and the pervasive light of the Ho;y Spirit, is yours today and always. Thanks be to God.