AJ Wilk

Trinity Church Big Story

Jesus in the Wilderness

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Welcome and Intro

AJ Wilk – Young Adult and Mobilization pastor

Sent Gathering

Grateful and pray

Give them something they long to be\*\*\*\*\*\* total peace, a person grateful. **\*Give a clear example of wilderness. (Where do you see Jesus in difficult times?)**

**I want to be the kind of person that sees my Perfect Father’s love in difficult times.????**

**\*Trace and paint this kind of life throughout.**

**Grampa Grady and Pat Estes -- How is that possible?? Personal story of watching someone go through hardship (I am without control or ability to help) as a fellow traveler in the wilderness\*\*??**

Matthew 4

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23211a)] by the devil. **2**After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3**The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

**4**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23214b)]”

**5**Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. **6**“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.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23216c)]”

**7**Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23217d)]”

**8**Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **9**“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

**10**Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23220e)]”

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

Today I’m not going to focus as much on the specifics of the three temptations and how they affected Jesus’ life and ministry moving forward. I would encourage you to spend time in Matthew 4:1-11 letting the Spirit speak to you about each temptation Jesus endured..

Instead, I want to focus on The role of wilderness in the Christian life.

**Context** – wilderness back then was vastly different than wilderness now.

Picture on screen please



-What Jesus was doing was very common among the Jews to go to the desert (cleaning pruning, readying as Moses example). John the Baptist lived in the desert and this was his life! It wasn’t a period it was a life – he made 40 days his life.

**Define wilderness**

The wilderness, desert, dry season, season of testing or challenging stretch is most clearly seen as a prolonged period of being without. PAUSE. A season of lack.

All kinds of wildernesses’ exist: relational, food, resources, closeness with God, comfort, safety…. What is the lack in your life right now?? \*\*Share a story?

Elephant in the room and elephant in culture. Being without is not ALL bad. Our culture is the culture of more. More money, more influence, more safety, more healthy, more pleasure, more comfort… While none of that is inherently bad it can lead us to think that being without is the worst thing that can happen. We want to the silver bullet, quick fix!!

What if God used times of being without to lead us to something far more important than having more of what we want? If you look at your next steps card it says – made for more. What if being made for more didn’t mean having more, but being close with the one who made you?

\*\*\*\*Add perspective on family brokenness. Global church perspective. Wilderness for us may look like being without respect, admiration or certain resources. Wilderness for the global church looks a lot more like being without safety and basic human needs as they endure persecution. What Christians in Asia and other parts of the world are enduring look verbatim like Matthew 5:11-12. Blessed are those who are persecuted.

Timothy Keller says this in the book *Faith in the Wilderness,* “every beatitude is a characteristic of a Christian every Christian must be poor in spirit or you are not a Christian; Every Christian must hunger and thirst for righteousness or you are not a Christian. This is the last of the beatitudes, which means Jesus assumes that if you are a Christian, you will be persecuted. If you are living in any way consistently with Christianity, you will experience some kind of loss some pushback some opposition.”

John 16:33 confirms this interpretation of Keller’s. “I told you these things so that you can have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart I have overcome the world.”

For the American dream this is a real bummer of a sermon. It exposes the false promise that technology, medicine, dating apps, and healthy living can lead to flourishing. We are still human. We will still make mistakes, contribute to brokenness, and encounter a lot of trouble.

The wilderness, or a season of being without isn’t optional in the Christian life it’s a guarantee. 🡪 I want to call on the older adults in the room and in our church. The 50+’s. I would encourage you after this sermon to find someone like that in our church and ask them what it’s been like to walk through wilderness. Take them out for a coffee!!

When you have a wilderness or 7 in your rearview mirror you begin to see why it’s not only a guarantee, but the formative role it has in our lives.

STORY ??? of an older believer walking through wilderness

**What is the role of wilderness?**

There’s an upside-down view of prosperity in the kingdom of heaven. Full life and prosperity do not automatically mean having more of the things we want or the things the world sees as successful, but having more of the ONE who will see us through. What would it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose their soul?

Wilderness in the Christian life is a ‘season of being without’ and it calls us back to the ONE we are never without.

Back to the text… Matthew 4 v. 1 the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness. ????God the Father doesn’t say this is my son with whom I’m well pleased one moment and then abandon him to the wilderness waiting on the sidelines to see how he does. He, by the Spirit is guiding him, with him. One of the worst misinterpretations of Scripture in my study is us pitting the Father against the Son… in the dessert or on the cross. They are TRINITY. One Being, 3 persons. The Father doesn’t hate the son or pour out wrath on him????

If we believe that interpretation of Scripture, it leads us to believe that God abandons us to our own seasons of being without and defeats the entire purpose of a wilderness in our life.

The Spirit lead him.

Now I will say this, Jesus being perfect didn’t create a wilderness season by his own sin or wrongdoing. We can create our own wildernesses.

Did the Spirit lead you?

OR Did you put yourself in this desert, did someone else help create this dessert?

What is God inviting you into during the wilderness season.

If you created your own desert sometimes it’s as clear as repent, apologize to a person and God’s path for you is the own your own sin or mistake. If someone else contributed to a season on lack you may need to have a conversation with them, forgive them, and be open to reconcilllation.

The truth is the same: if God is leading and inviting you into wilderness OR even if you/someone else did something to put you in it. His purpose for this in your life remains the same…

He is the God of creation and redemption.

Three things God works out and clarifies in the wilderness:

1. Identity
2. Calling
3. Closeness with God (Himself) (Jesus as the pursuer)

\*\*\*The wilderness doesn’t create but rather reveals…

“I know how this should turn out, and force my way out of it.”

He is trustworthy!! He knows your identity (he gave it to you)

CLING TO what is true. Jesus is on the throne, the Word of God is true, and God is for you.

**Identity**

Are you God’s son or daughter in which he is well pleased? The timing of Jesus desert is so striking in regards to identity.

**Calling**

What is your purpose in the next stage of life? The wilderness has ALWAYS been a place of preparation.

Jesus was as human as us. He is not emphasizing the spaces between – Jesus was actually doing something in the wilderness. As Jesus was growing into the understanding of his calling, the wilderness was integral in preparation. And he never stopped seeking God his Father from that point forward… it wasn’t a one-time thing but a readying for the life he would live.

Role of someone going to the desert. You come out with clarity, guidance, grit tenacity, deeper trust HOW MUCH OF JESUS MINISTRY WAS FORMED AND GUIDED by the wilderness.

**God Himself**

-“The Christians hope lies in this we are not stronger or purer than others. Instead, rather than believing in ourselves, we believe in Jesus, who upholds us when we fall, who comforts us when we give up, who strengthens us when our strength is drained, who loves us when we are in pain, who does not give us up even when we are hopeless about ourselves.”

-Faith in the Wilderness

Even if we stumbled or sinned ourselves into this – God is pursuing and wants to redeem for our good.

How do we come into a wilderness season? A non-believer with no faith would be so anxious. Believers come willingly into the desert because it’s closeness with God and for your good.

Do you trust the God of the desert is the God of thriving?

**Where is Jesus in it? Where is Jesus in your desert?**

Response: God invites us to **embrace** the wilderness season not for our demise and downfall, but for our good and flourishing!

**Jesus is in my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**I will look to him.**

Marriage, sickness, financial hardship, my kid walking away,

Finish strong… by faith I will !!

NOTES: Don’t include.

FEEDBACK –

Encouragment:

-The role of wilderness is a great new take – need to emphasize

-Clarity and direction is easy to understand

-Strong didactic communication of Scripture

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Work on:

-Breakup the pace

-Need to grab the heart more

Faith in the Wilderness Book Quotes

-the Christians hope lies in this we are not stronger or purer than others. Instead, rather than believing in ourselves, we believe in Jesus, who upholds us when we fall, who comforts us when we give up, who strengthens us when our strength is drained, who loves us when we are in pain, who does not give us up even when we are hopeless about ourselves.

-I hope that in such a despair you will begin to lose hope and humanity and begin to have hope in God, in this Jesus who can save us. Rise up and pray to him.

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Rodney Stark – The Triumph of Christianity

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We see the wilderness as a waste of time. You are pulling me away from the things I love, success, relationships, productivity…… why go to a place of slowness, isolation,

-should the wilderness be a natural rhythm for the Christian life? Disciplines help us as distracted, wandering people.

-explore wilderness in the Christian life

-demystify the wilderness as not simply trials, but God’s **work in preparing his people.** Moses, Elijah….

-relocated in terms of wilderness\*\*\*

Jesus sets aside intentional time to get away with God and reset. Not everyone “prompted by the Holy Spirit”