

Church of Our Saviour
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

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The First Sunday in Lent
February 21, 2021

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Text: Mark 1:9-15

Title: "Sent into the Wilderness"

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In the Name of (+) Jesus our Lord. Amen

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Have you ever been in a wilderness? Have you been led there by a force, called, the Spirit, as Jesus was? Alone? Wild animals all around? Has that ever happened to you?

It hasn't happened to me!

Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan River by John! There the heavens opened up! The Spirit of the Lord like a dove descended! A voice was heard, "You are my son, Jesus! My Beloved! And, I am well pleased with you!" And, then he was driven into the wilderness! The Spirit did that! He was there in the wilderness for forty days! Angels waited on him! And, he was tempted! Tempted by Satan!

Have you ever been in the wilderness?

May I say it?

We are in a wilderness now! Everybody seems to be feeling it! The wilderness of COVID! The wilderness of weather we have never experienced before! The wilderness of morality! What is right? What is wrong? The wilderness within the human family! Black! Brown! White! Will we ever get together?

The list goes on! The wilderness of not wanting to get along! The, wilderness of religion! What should be a reconciling force, isn't! My religion, too many say, is the only right one!

Our son, Matthew, has spent many hours in the wilderness! He was a dog musher for seventeen years! He ran dogs in the wilderness of Canada and Minnesota and Wisconsin! During the day! Into the night! And the wilderness never fazed him!

Our kids don't tell us everything especially when what they are doing is dangerous! Matthew tells us now of the running dogs in the wilderness of Hudson Bay! The weather was fierce! Ice particles blew in to face with terrific force! They stung! And he saw what he calls strange phenomena in the darkness! He was in the wilderness!

Wilderness is an interesting idea in the Bible! Moses tended sheep in the wilderness! It's a Biblical story worth following! He tended sheep in the wilderness because he was on the run! He was wanted for murder back in Egypt! He beat an Egyptian guard to death because the guard was beating up as fellow Israelite!

The wilderness was his refuge and hiding place! But God got to Moses! In the wilderness! Especially there! There! In thre

wilderness God blind-sided Moses! Go back to Egypt, God said! And Moses made a wilderness decision to do just that! He went back! A serious crime hanging over his head! And there, in the wilderness, he decided to go back to Egypt to lead the Israelite people out of there!

Wilderness can be a location! A wild place! A place of trees and underbrush and wild animals! Wilderness can be a place of confusion, too! Which way is north? Which way is south? Wilderness can be a place of indecision! But for some it is a place where decisions are made! Moses shows us!

We can get lost in the wilderness! The stories of lostness are long! Sometimes the wilderness is a place where direction for living is found, where faith is made strong!

Many years ago, like some forty plus years ago, a young son of the congregation we served in the San Fernando Valley, went for a hike in the wilderness! He got lost! He couldn't find his way out! His family waited! They were worried sick!

I spent the better of a day with that family in their home! Rescue personnel and police were called! They went to work! And, they found him! Brought him home! And the joy was so great!

Today that son operates a rough water rafting company in Arizona! Did being lost in the wilderness shape what he wanted to do with his life? Would be an interesting discussion!

In the wilderness Jesus was tempted! That's' what happened to Jesus while he was in the wilderness! He knew what he was meant to do on this earth, but think, I cannot be

sure, but I think his wilderness experience firmed it up for him! Jesus needed to be in the wilderness! And, maybe we do too! It all depends what we make of the times when we are lost, maybe confused and thinking deep thoughts about life and faith, and how life and faith come together!

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness! It must have been the Spirit who understood Jesus needed time alone, in the wilderness, to think about his role as Saviour and Redeemer of you and me and all the world!

Too often we want to live and believe in a religion that too unreal! We want to live in a never-never land of faith! We want things simple! We want things black and white and no in between! We want good and evil to be obvious! We want right and wrong to be clear! We want our faith to give peace, peace, peace!

Without warning we find ourselves unemployed! And we are in the wilderness! A doctor's report comes to us and it contains language we did not expect! And we are in the wilderness! A family member dies! A long-time friend dies! And we are in the wilderness! Without warning the life we once knew changes! We hardly know it anymore! And we are in the wilderness! What we once believed to be right and good is right and good no more! And we are in the wilderness! Our lifelong religion, the religion we grew up with, starts to shake and it does not seem quite as certain as it once did! And we are in the wilderness! Things that used to mean so much, now hold little meaning! And we are the wilderness!

It's been said, "The wilderness, the desert, is a dangerous place, and no one goes there unless they have to!" Jesus had to go there! And, we have to go there, too! Probably more times than we want!

Jesus went there! Jesus went into the wilderness! The Spirit led him there! But, I believe, he chose to be there! He knows the wilderness that fear-filled place, but Jesus goes there anyway! He knows what's in the wilderness! The test! The wild beasts! Even, Satan! But he goes there anyway! And, we go with him, unafraid!

AMEN