
The sermon text for today is based on the
Gospel, Matthew Chapter 4, verses 1 to 11.

The wilderness. Yes it is nice to get away camping or hiking or just being in nature. A recent study from Scandinavia suggested that after 30 mins in nature a person has 10% less stress in their being. Why do we not be out in nature more then? Yes we are busy, too busy perhaps to take that time to be in the wilderness.

So what happens when we are thrown into the wilderness? We look up and find ourselves often what feels like alone, we might be overwhelmed, anxious or even angry and frustrated simply because we haven't planned this camping trip. This one is from God.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Our society likes to encourage people to have it all together. It promotes those who have and those who do not have. Those who have a positive happy life with yes all the things you can hope for and even believe you can have it all, family, money, career, status and so on.

Our society doesn't like to even deal with those negative things like sickness, brokenness, sin or being in a place where you don't feel you have any direction. In fact much of society doesn't want to even think of it at all. It was once said you can determine the health of a civilization by the way it treats its very young and its very old people.

We are pushed and feel the pressure in life of always having to do something don't we? We are told we should have it together, have a

plan and know exactly what that plan is and how long it will take to achieve. Now planning is good but as we plan do we forget the words, if God is willing I will be here working or living in 5 years. We like to be in control and when we are not sure what to do we get frustrated, angry and even disillusioned. So what do you do when you find yourself in the wilderness? You know that place that you never planned to be because that is something you never imagined in life when you were younger was it?

People don't usually get married for the purpose of divorcing do they? People don't usually wake up in the morning seeking a wilderness experience and not the camping by the lake one. So what do you do when you find yourself lead into the wilderness? Remember Jesus was not being punished to serve out time in the wilderness nor was He lost. He was led by the Holy Spirit. Do you take any comfort from this? When you are in the wilderness you are not being punished nor are you lost – rather you are right where God has placed you - to be shaped for His purpose, to learn to lean not just lean but hide in God's grace and love and mercy. God always has a purpose for you and today friends where you find yourself in life, this is where you are to be.

After fasting for forty days and forty nights, Jesus was hungry. Throughout the scriptures the wilderness is important. It is seen as a place of not isolation and angst, nor frustration and despondency but rather a place of preparation. The wilderness is where waiting happens for God to then show His next part of the plan. The stories of the bible highlight so much about waiting for the Lord after all what better place to wait. For in the wilderness of God's people we are never alone, rather Jesus is with us always. So we never wait alone but take comfort in waiting in the one who knows the depths of pain, suffering, temptation and the wilderness.

Forty days and forty nights Jesus waits, just as Noah and his family faced forty days and nights of rain, Elijah and Moses fasted forty days and nights, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years and we now begin our 40 days of Lent to the foot of the cross.

How is the Lord preparing you this Lenten season to be the blessing you are called to be in your station and vocation? What about us a church a congregation? What are we being prepared to do?

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 set him 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 splendour. '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."'

Now as Jesus is physically weakened after forty days and nights of fasting the devil attacks. Do you ever find that? It seems when you are tired or busy that the devil seems to come and tell us that Jesus word is not important we are doing pretty good anyway. The temptation of course aimed at Jesus was to take Him away from His purpose that God has sent Him to do. To eat oh how nice would that have been, to show a bit of look how close I am to this powerful God for He won't let you get hurt. Or the last one take all this worldly political power – how much do we

see that abused in our modern world? Each time Jesus responds with the truth the word of God – for it is written.

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

Sisters and brothers as we find ourselves in very different places to each other how do we live? Do we rely on God? Do we trust that He is working in us to shape and mould us for His purpose?

In our world how many social pressures do we all face? This is like the temptation with the devil Jesus encountered. We know Jesus will provide all we need. We know that He has been tempted and tested just as we are and He walks with us. When we fall, when we give ourselves over to temptation we know we can run to Jesus for forgiveness and strength.

So in your place in life if you find yourself in the wilderness know you are being prepared for God's work, learn to trust in Him and as you are tempted to conform to the world stand firm in Jesus.

Resist the devil and he will flee, we resist him in Jesus, simply at the name of Jesus the devil runs. We have Jesus the living word, we can respond to the devil and the world and our own flesh – it is written. But know above all it is written God says you are mine. Amen.