



Wilderness Series

A Time to Learn

Forest park Church

February 12th 2023

By Jason Corder

Mark 1:12&13

1

*The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. **13** And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.*

Jesus' wilderness time "immediately" followed his baptism and the powerful affirmation of who he was: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

- The Gospels say that the Spirit who descended on him at his baptism.
- Then led him out into the bleak, lonely, and dry Judean wilderness for forty days of testing

Jesus Was certainly not alone in this pattern:

1. In **Genesis 7:2** Noah endured 40 days and nights of Rain.
2. In **Exodus 24:18** Moses spends 40 days and nights on the mountain with the Lord.
3. In **1 Kings 19:8** Elijah traveled 40 days and nights to reach Horab.

Wilderness time is a part of our lives as well.

We cannot live and love and engage life in meaningful ways without sometimes ending up in the wilderness.

Wilderness times are those times when we feel we are tested to our limits

We describe those times in wilderness terms:

- dry,
- desolate,
- lonely,
- trying,
- difficult,
- agonizing.

We speak of hunger, thirst, and longing in the wilderness.

We first recognize that wilderness time is a time for learning.

On one of those facebook posts that made it's rounds a few years ago children shared things they had learned about life.

- "You can't trust dogs to watch your food for you."
- "Don't sneeze when somebody is cutting your hair."
- "You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk."
- "When your mom is mad at your dad, don't let her brush your hair."
- "No matter how hard you try you cannot baptize a cat."

These are those kinds of accelerated learning experiences we call "learning the hard way." But the smarter way to learn is to learn from others!

2 1. We Learn the Schemes of the Enemy

It is clear that Jesus believed in and the Bible teaches the reality of a personal evil spirit called Satan ("adversary") or the devil ("slanderer" or "accuser").

- Evil is not just an impersonal force.
- The devil and the demons are angelic beings who rebelled against God and now are behind the evil in this world.
- While the devil is a powerful and intelligent being, he is not omnipotent, omniscient, nor omnipresent.

- While his final doom is secure, for the present he is a powerful and cunning adversary of the saints.
- We must not be ignorant of his schemes (2 Cor. 2:11). Here we learn ...

3 A. SATAN HITS AT THE PERFECT MOMENT.

After His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. The Greek grammar of verse 2 would indicate that Jesus was tempted over the duration of the 40 days, but the three temptations described may have occurred at the culmination of the period when His hunger became intense.

Luke 4:2

4 *And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."*

- It was precisely when Jesus became hungry that the devil appeared with his temptation to turn the stone to bread.
- Satan hit Jesus with this temptation at the precise moment that Jesus was hungry.
- He always works like that—he hits you when you're down.
- He bides his time until you are vulnerable, and then he moves in with his subtle suggestion of evil.

Be alert as to when you are vulnerable. That's when the enemy will hit!

5 B. SATAN MIXES TRUTH AND LIES TO DECEIVE.

In Luke's second temptation, Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

Luke 4:5

6 *And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 6 and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."*

- Satan proceeds to offer all this domain and its glory to Jesus,
- Claiming that “it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.”
- All he asks is that Jesus bow in worship before him.

Satan’s offer was a mixed bag of truth and error.

- Jesus later calls Satan “the ruler of this world” (**John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11**).
- Paul calls him “the god of this world” (**2 Cor. 4:4**).
- But the Bible is also clear, and Satan cleverly alludes to it even here, that God alone sets up kings and grants authority to whomever He wills (**Dan. 4:17, 25**). Satan’s authority is at best delegated and temporary.

The Bible is clear, as Jesus answers, that God alone is to be worshiped and served. But Satan distorts the level of his and how he got it.

This is why we always have to be on guard against false teachers.

- Invariably they present something that is true, but they mix it up with that which is false and unbiblical.
- Satan baits his hook with truth so that we swallow the whole thing.

7 C. SATAN PROMISES PLEASURE, BUT DOESN’T MENTION THE PAIN.

Luke 4:7

If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

Like a clever salesman, Satan sets out his wares without mentioning the price tag. He always shows the pleasures of sin (which are real), but he doesn’t mention the stiff consequences that inevitably follow.

“Worship me and I’ll give you dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth.”

Sounds good! But he fails to mention that

- Jesus will then be the servant of Satan, not of the Father,
- that the holy union between Father and Son will be forever broken
- that Jesus’ mission as Savior will be ruined.

Satan still works that way

8 D. SATAN TRIES TO GET US TO MEET LEGITIMATE NEEDS IN ILLEGITIMATE WAYS.

- Hunger is a legitimate need, but for Jesus to use His power independently of the Father to meet His need would have been wrong.
- Being Lord of all the kingdoms of this earth was a legitimate goal for Jesus as the Son of God, but bowing before Satan to achieve that goal was wrong.
- Throwing Himself off the pinnacle of the temple and trusting God to spare Him from injury sounds like a great display of faith, which is a good thing. But actually it would have been presumption, which is sin.

Satan's goal in all three temptations was to get Jesus to act independently of the Fathers will rather than to submit to the will of God, which included the cross.

- It would have been a tempting shortcut to gain the glory of ruling all the kingdoms of this world without the agony of the cross.
- But the Bible is clear that anything we do apart from faith and obedience is sin ([Rom. 14:23](#)).
- This means that we have to be careful not only to pursue godly goals, but also to use biblical means of attaining those goals.

For example, church growth is a good goal, but if the church adopts worldly marketing and sales techniques or waters down the message to bring people into the church, we've fallen into the devil's trap.

- We need to be careful to follow biblical methods as well as goals.
- We should learn from our Lord Jesus how to be wise to Satan's schemes.

In the Wilderness we Learn what:

9 2. Loving God Really Means.

John 14:15

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

At Jesus’ baptism, the Father proclaimed, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” Our text shows why Jesus was well-pleasing to the Father.

- He always lived to do the Father’s will (John 5:19, 30).
- We also see Jesus living in total dependence on the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1), who had descended on Him at His baptism.
- Jesus lived as the perfect man in perfect obedience to the Father as He depended totally upon the Holy Spirit.

10 A: Love is always a Choice.

Luke organizes his genealogy of Jesus backward, so that it ends with “Adam, the son of God”

(3:38) - *the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

- Then, just three verses later we encounter Satan telling Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”
- There is no doubt in Satan’s challenge. He acknowledges Jesus to be the Son of God.
- **It seems Luke wants us to see a contrast between Adam, who as man was supposed to reflect the image of God, but failed; and, Jesus, the true Son of God who was victorious over Satan’s temptations.**
- Where the first Adam was defeated by Satan, the second Adam triumphed.

11 B: Obedience isn't about condition but conviction.

There is a contrast between the settings of the two incidents.

- Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit in a garden where they had plenty.
- Jesus resisted turning the stone into bread in a barren wilderness where He was very hungry.

12 C: The Wilderness Reveals If we are led by the Spirit or by the Flesh.

There is also a parallel and contrast between Israel in the wilderness for 40 years and Jesus, the Messiah of Israel in the wilderness for 40 days.

- God provided Israel all the manna they needed, and yet they grumbled and tested God by asking for meat.
- Jesus had no food in the wilderness, but He was satisfied with the food of doing the Father's will.
- Jesus was physically empty but full of the Spirit.

How often our experience is the reverse! Luke wants us to see that Jesus triumphed where we often fail.

The wilderness can be a time of accelerated learning about priorities or what really matters in our lives.

It's like that trip to the grocery store on an empty stomach without a shopping list.

- Nearly everything looks delicious and you wander through the aisles without a plan, loading up the shopping cart with goodies.
- After the shock of the bill at checkout, there is the shock of your spouse when you arrive home with sacks of snacks and food for only three real meals in the whole bunch!

Life presents us with many options—a ton of ways to use our resources, time, abilities, and influence.

- **Without a clear sense of what is most important, we can spend it all and at the end of the day find that we have not taken care of what matters most.**

Jesus' time in the wilderness—coming just before he was to begin his public ministry—was a time for sorting out what mattered most and to get clear about God's will for his life.

The longer accounts in Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus was tempted by wealth, fame, and power to deviate from his mission.

Wilderness time can be an important time of testing our values, looking at what is most important, and making decisions about our life's priorities.

Several years ago a young man went through one of these passages in his battle with an aggressive form of Cancer. Later as he reflected about that time in his life he commented,

"I have learned that what I thought was very important before doesn't seem very important now, and what I took for granted and thought I could put off for another day has risen to the top of my list of priorities."

As painful as wilderness experiences are, they can yield more spiritual growth than the good times.

- They can be times of learning about ourselves, about God, about what is most important, and about where life is headed.
- Without that time of stocktaking and learning—whether in the wilderness or not—life can just go along without much thought.

Here are some good wilderness questions:

- What is God calling me to do with my life and with all the resources God has given me?
- What important relationships and friendships have I been putting off to some future time?
- What in my life right now do I take for granted?

14 3. Preparing for the Wilderness

Becoming a "Prepper" is a rather popular concept in the world today. We all recognize the importance of preparation in wilderness survival.

Jesus shows us four strategies for wilderness survival.

15 A. BE ALONE WITH GOD.

Not only during these 40 days, but also at other times, Jesus would get away from the crowds and even from the disciples to spend time alone with the Father (5:16). If Jesus needed such times, how much more do we.

- Time alone with God can be a special time of drawing near to Him, but it can also be a time of intense temptation.
- Jesus was alone and fasting when He was tempted.
- Time alone with God does not prevent temptation, but it will strengthen us to overcome it. If you are consistently in God's Word and in prayer, you will be forewarned and forearmed for standing against the schemes of the devil.

16 B. EXPECT TEMPTATION.

ESPECIALLY AFTER A VICTORY.

- Jesus was tempted immediately following His baptism, when the Father affirmed Him from heaven and the Holy Spirit descended on Him as a dove.
- Jerome said, "Baptism does not drown the devil."
- If Jesus' baptism did not prevent His being tempted, neither will ours.
- We must walk with God every day and be especially on guard after a time of spiritual victory.

17 C. BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, and led by the Spirit when He was tempted (4:1).

- **The filling of the Spirit will not insulate you from temptation, but if you walk in the Spirit, you will not carry out the desires of the flesh** (Gal. 5:16).
- It does not say that you will not have such desires, but rather that you will not fulfill them.
- Each day we should yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, and walk in conscious dependence on Him. Again, if Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit, how much more must we!

18 D. BE ARMED WITH SCRIPTURE.

Each time Satan attacked, Jesus answered with Scripture, specifically with quotations from Deuteronomy.

- How many verses from Deuteronomy can you quote?
- To use Scripture as Jesus did, we must commit it to memory.
- We will not always have a Bible and concordance with us when we are tempted. But God will bring to our mind appropriate Scripture to ward off the enemy's attacks.

Satan can also quote the Bible for his own purposes!

LUKE 4:9

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.""

The main rule of biblical interpretation is to compare Scripture with Scripture, letting the Bible interpret itself.

- Be careful to interpret a verse in its context, rather than just subjectively grabbing a verse and saying that it means whatever you feel it means.
- You cannot properly apply Scripture until you properly interpret it.
- This is one good reason to read the whole Bible over and over.
- It gives you balance, so that you don't get carried along with every wind of doctrine that blows.

I recommend that if you struggle with a particular sin, write down all the verses on it you can find and commit them to memory.

1 Conclusion:

There is only one way by which the tempter can be met.

- He laughs at our good resolutions and ridicules the pledges with which we fortify ourselves.
- Satan fears only One, He who in the hour of greatest weakness defeated him and who now has been raised far above all principalities and powers to deliver frail and tempted souls.

Christ conquered the prince of this world in the days of His flesh and is prepared to do as much again with each of us as we seek His aid”.

Alt ending:

What is most important? Where is your life headed? These are good wilderness questions!

A businessman visiting the pier of a coastal village noticed a small boat with just one fisherman pulling up to the dock. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. He complimented the fisherman on the fish and asked how long it took to catch them. “Only a little while,” the fisherman replied.

“Why didn’t you stay out longer and catch more fish?”

“I have enough to support my family’s needs.”

The businessman then asked, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a siesta with my wife, and stroll into the village each evening where I visit and play guitar with my friends. I have a full and busy life.”

The businessman scoffed, “I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats and eventually have a whole fleet of boats. You would cut out the middleman and sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing, and distribution. You would need to leave this small village and move to Mexico City, then Los Angeles, and eventually New York City where you would run your expanding enterprise.”

The fisherman asked, "But, how long will all this take?"

The MBA replied, "Fifteen to twenty years."

"But what then?" the fisherman asked.

The American laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right, you would announce an initial public offering and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich; you would make millions."

"Millions?" the fisherman asked. "Then what?"

The American said, "Then you would retire and move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take a siesta with your wife, and stroll to the village in the evenings where you could visit and play guitar with your friends."