

“COME OUT OF THE WILDERNESS”

Pastor Mike Corwin

TEXT: EXODUS 16:2-15

GOD’S WORD: PSALM 105:1-6, 37-45

I – WILDERNESS:

Have you ever been in the wilderness? I’m not talking about being in the woods in Oregon, or the trout waters of Montana, or the frozen landscape of Alaska. I’m not talking about being surrounded by deer or elk or moose or bears. I’m talking about the wilderness of your life. I’m talking about being in a place in your life where nothing makes much sense. A place where you can’t see your way out of. A place where you feel alone and deserted. A Place where you have no plans to escape and can’t see your way out of the wilderness.

We’ve all been there. Maybe some of you are there at this very moment...this very day...this very chapter in your life. The wilderness can be an addiction. It can be a health crisis for you or someone you care for. It can be the death of someone close to you that is burying you in grief. The wilderness of life can be a financial issue, a job issue, a pay check issue. The wilderness can be a period in your life where you are lonely. Where no matter where you look you can’t find anyone you believe cares. The wilderness can be a broken marriage or relationship. The wilderness can be anxiety, depression, or other mental illness.

The wilderness of life is a place where you lose joy...you lose hope...you lose peace. It’s a place where you sometimes can’t do anything but sit down and cry for what seems forever. You can’t even fathom that you can get out of the wilderness. No matter how hard you think you can’t see the opening in the trees that will take you back to the sun light.The wilderness is where you most need God.

II – THE ISREALITES:

I want to stay in the book of Exodus that Pastor Becky started with you last Sunday. It’s in that story of God’s deliverance of his people through Moses that I see this principle pointed out.

The Israelites had been led to Egypt through the providence of God. We see in the book of Genesis that God had turned the evil of Joseph's brothers into a blessing and Joseph became a high ranking ruler in Egypt second only to Pharaoh. When the land was struck with a seven year famine Joseph was able to bring his family to Egypt and settled them in the land of Goshen where they had everything they needed to eat and prosper. Over the years things changed and humankind being humankind, evil again was used to make slaves out of the Hebrew people. We find at the beginning of Exodus that just as Joseph was put into place to save God's people, so was Moses. A baby who was supposed to be killed by Pharaoh's people was instead placed in a basket and floated down the river into the arms of Pharaoh's daughter who raised him. He then grew up in the palace but discovered who he really was and saw what his people were going through. He killed an Egyptian slave driver and fled to a different land to escape his own death. It was there at a burning bush God sent Moses to go and get his people out of Egypt which he did through a series of plagues and miracles like the parting of the water you heard last week.

Moses led them into the wilderness as God instructed him to do. It's while they are first in this wilderness, while God's deliverance is fresh in their memory and on their hearts that it begins...the whining! I sometimes wonder why Moses repeatedly prayed to God not to smite them for their disobedience and just get out from the burden. But he did pray for them and lead them through the wilderness towards the Promised Land.

III – TEXT:

It's in this morning's text I want to explore some of these lessons of being in the wilderness in the hopes they will help you in yours.

Exodus 16:2-15 (NLT)

²There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron.

³"If only the LORD had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death."

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. ⁵On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual."

⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "By evening you will realize it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ⁷In the morning you will see the glory of

the LORD, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?" ⁸ Then Moses added, "The LORD will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the LORD, not against us."

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Announce this to the entire community of Israel: 'Present yourselves before the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'" ¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the LORD in the cloud.

¹¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹² "I have heard the Israelites' complaints. Now tell them, 'In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

¹³ That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. ¹⁴ When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. ¹⁵ The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. "What is it?" they asked each other. They had no idea what it was.

And Moses told them, "It is the food the LORD has given you to eat.

So...just a matter of a few weeks after they were singing songs of praise for Moses and or God in chapter 15, while camped beside a beautiful oasis with palm trees as springs we start Chapter 16 of the story this way...WHINING! After crying out in Egypt for God's help for release from the brutality of slavery and forced labor, they now say they would have been better off to have stayed there. The way they speak about it a full belly is better even if it involves sweat and a whipped back. Right now they see the wilderness as a place of starvation.

God intervenes. God would help Israel to depend on him for their food. Not cruel evil people. They would learn that if they depended on God in all they needed they would never have a reason to fall back in to slavery. This lesson was later taught by Jesus as he taught us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread." They were supposed to gather only enough for each day but on the sixth day they should gather double because even in the wilderness the Sabbath is supposed to be observed. I'm going to say especially in the wilderness the Sabbath is supposed to be observed.

In the speeches of verses 6-15 we see three points made:

1. God heard the complaints made in the wilderness, and he answered them.
2. All the speeches were made so that the people would know it was God who had heard and rescued them.
3. Among all the complaining about food, God's glory was known in the wilderness.

The wilderness was an empty place. A place full of barren rocks, bad lands, a few and far between watering holes. But it was also filled with the presence of God. WOW!!!!

IV – FIND GOD:

The biggest lesson I want you to learn about all of this is that when you are in the wilderness, you need to find God. You need to look until you see his glory in the midst of the wilderness. I personally think that verse 10 in today's text is a WOW moment. How must that have brought the people peace? How much reassurance would they have gotten in their troubled travels?

As you travel through your own wilderness how are you facing it? A lot of times we go through the same stage of whining don't we? We see the past as better than the future no matter how bad it was. It would be easier to live in the past because we are familiar with it. We sit around and stew about and fret and we end up getting deeper and deeper in the wilderness as we go along because we're not looking for God in our personal wilderness most of the time. Are we reading God's word in the Bible for comfort and direction? Are we spending time with God as we seek to feel his presence and see his glory? Are we praying? What are you doing that will lead you out of the wilderness of your life?

I want to suggest to you that the way out of the wilderness is God. If you could do it on your own you wouldn't be in the wilderness to start with would you? Sometimes we have to get to our absolute worse, be broken down and in despair before we look up and see God. But it's when we do that we start the journey to come out of the wilderness.

After being given bread and meat the people could now see the wilderness as a place where they could meet and be led by God. I hope you will turn your present wilderness experience into a God encounter. That you allow it to do what it did for the Israelites wandering in the desert. I will be praying that your wilderness experience would have a verse 10 too:

¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the LORD in the cloud.

V – BEFORE THE WILDERNESS:

Can I make one other suggestion to you today? Don't wait for your wilderness moment to look up and see God and his Glory. Do all you can to make him an integral part of your life now.

It's my experience that if you do you probably won't even have to enter the wilderness and if you do you'll just be passing through and not staying.

AMEN