

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November**

**In the Wilderness**

**Scripture: 1 Kings 19:3-12**

We are continuing with our series – God with us, and our theme today is: “in the wilderness.”



Our anchor text is Matthew 1:23 “Look the virgin will conceive. She will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means “God with us.”

Last week we spoke about “being in the valley”. The wilderness is different from the valley, because time in the wilderness usually lasts a lot longer. It is a barren, dry, and desolate place where you feel alone. Like the valley, we are calling out to God – when am I going to get out of here? We feel disoriented, like nobody really understands what we are going through.

Finding yourself in the wilderness can be a result from a variety of experiences and stressors. Things were going great and then you found out that someone you had trusted, wasn’t being honest with you; or you become suddenly estranged from your family, or you are struggling with financial or housing instability.

**Here is what I want you to hang onto today: Your deepest need, as much as it hurts, becomes a gift when it drives you to depend on God.**

Let’s explore Elijah’s situation which will help us learn more. God has used Elijah in massive ways, he had been literally, on the

mountaintop, Mount Carmel, where he experienced the power of God.

And then he heard rumours – the evil wife of King Ahab, Jezebel, was out to kill him. She sends him a message – this time tomorrow you will be dead.

Now you would think that Elijah, having just experienced 2 great miracles from God, would call out to God to save Him. But he doesn't. What does he do – he runs for his life. There were no Ubers in those days, so he ran over 200 miles and flops down in despair.

Some of you here or listening may be feeling the same way right now. I have had enough, I can't take anymore, I am exhausted, I am overwhelmed, my best isn't good enough.

And it is not just about getting more sleep that will fix you up, but what you really need is spiritual replenishment as you are spiritually depleted.

What does God do? He doesn't preach a sermon to Elijah, saying this is your fault. God doesn't make him memorize 10 verses either. What God does is tells him to eat and to rest. An angel wakes him and tells him to eat. No McDonalds Cheeseburgers either, but bread from heaven and a jar of water and then Elijah rests in the presence of God. And God returns a second and a third time because He continues to pursue Elijah and us today, when our soul needs restoring.

But where does Elijah end up – hiding in a cave, and God says to him – what are you doing; why are you running away from me?

And then Elijah gets into his whingeing voice. Look God, I have served you; I have been working very hard for you; why don't you hear my prayer? Why don't you do this for me. The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, torn down Your altars, killed all the other prophets and now, God, they are coming after me. I am alone, desperate, and scared. Are You hearing me God?

Sometimes we can respond like that when we feel God is not answering our prayers.

What does God do? He ministers to him in his moment of vulnerability. God brings healing in the middle of the hurt. That is why your deepest need can become a gift, when it drives you to depend on God. God comes to Elijah again and again.

In verse 11 God tells Elijah – go out and stand before me on the mountain. I wonder what Elijah was expecting.

We can sometimes assume we can only hear from God when we are praising Him in song; or reading His Word; or being in community. And God certainly speaks to us during those times too, but when life is difficult, God's voice is so quiet. Why is He gentle? Why is His voice so still and so small? If God wants us to hear Him, why does He whisper, why doesn't He shout and speak in spectacular ways?

Elijah witnessed a mighty wind – God was not in the wind.

Elijah witnessed an earthquake – God was not in the earthquake.

Elijah witnessed a fire – God was not in the fire.

Like the band – Earth, wind, and fire – God was not there.

God whispers because He is so close to us, right now, right here, today and every day. He whispers to draw us close and what does He say to us? “I will never leave you, nor forsake you. I have been with you every single moment and I love you more than you can imagine. When you hurt, I hurt with you. I am with you when you are afraid.

In the middle of your wilderness, whatever that may be, you don't have to run to God because He is already with you. He is right there, He is close.

If your heart is hurting and you feel broken-hearted, where is God – Psalm 34:18 has the answer. “The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushing in spirit.”

When we are wandering in the wilderness and we feel like nobody understands, He understands, He cares, and He is always good. If you stop for a moment from your busy life, remember to be ready and dig that well, be ready for God's presence.

**As we pray this morning, take a moment and ask yourself, am I wandering now in a valley or stuck in the wilderness. And I you say, I am not in the wilderness right now, but no matter where I am, I want to be even more aware of the still, small, quiet voice of God.**

**Let's pray:**

**Father, we ask that in Your presence You would minister to us, Your peace, Your goodness, and Your grace.**

**Father, I pray today for those who are in the wilderness. I ask that by the power of Your Holy Spirit, You would reveal**

**yourself in the whisper. God, show us that You are with us, that You care, that Your grace is enough.**

**Be our rock when our world is unstable, be our strength when we are weak. God be our comfort when we are hurting. God may Your presence be enough.**

**God, for those today who are saying – I want to hear God’s quiet voice, let me encourage them to carve out some time, to put it aside and say God – I want to meet with You. I need Your presence. I need You moment by moment.**

**When you draw near to God, He will draw near to you. You will find Him, Scripture says, when you seek Him with all your heart. And if you will be quiet and if you listen, you will hear the gentle whisper of a good God, who is always with you, and who is always close.**