

**Leaving Egypt: Wilderness, Leaving the Furnace of Temptation**

**Monday, February 27**

Opening thought - how has God "refining process" in your life produced good fruit?

Read - Numbers 11:1-6, 31-35

- How are the people responding to their situation and how does the Lord respond to their sin and disobedience?

As God moves the people of Israel out from Mt. Sinai (see Numbers 10:11-12), he brings them into a new place of refining and testing. God will use these situations to reveal what is really going on in their hearts.

- How do the following passages describe God plan to use hard circumstances for our spiritual refinement: Proverbs 17:3, Jeremiah 17:10, Isaiah 48:10, James 1:2-4

How have you seen God do this very thing in your life? Describe these times.

Pastor Jerry reminded us that the Wilderness is where we move from confessing to possessing our New Identity. The wilderness tests what we say we are and what we say we believe. The specific details of our wilderness are unique to us, yet God is after our idols.

- As you look back at Numbers 11 - what idols or false securities were the Israelites looking to find joy and contentment? How do you see you see these same kinds of things today?

Reflect - *God moves the Israelites deeper into the wilderness, but before they possess the new land, they must be refined by the wilderness. This is the purpose of the wilderness. And in this time God is a faithful shepherd - leading, protecting and loving us. Take time to talk with the Lord about where you are today in the midst of your "wilderness." Ask for his help and strength. Confess your own sinful responses to his testing and refining.*

## **Tuesday, February 28**

Opening thought - what do you do when you are frustrated, upset or sad with how the Lord allowing certain things / events in your life?

Read - Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 21:5

- Describe how the people of Israel are reacting to their circumstances; what could they have done instead of complain?

Pastor Jerry said that the wilderness always reveals the true condition of our hearts and our true beliefs about God. Our choices in the wilderness are either honest engagement that trusts God or petulant complaining that reject God and his plans.

- How have you seen these above statements work out in your own life?
- Pastor Jerry then went on to clarify that a Lament is an honest, transparent interaction and engagement with God. But Complaining reveals a hard heart toward God. He pointed to Psalm 13:1-2, 5-6 as an example of a godly lament.
  - What do you think of this distinction? How is this Psalm a perfect example of a lament?

Reflect - Pastor Jerry explained that Psalm 13 is not whining or complaining because of what is said in verses 5-6. Honest pouring out of anger or confusion or bewildered or depression is fine...as long as our heart is oriented toward trusting and hoping in God. Healthy response = lament. Unhealthy response = complaining (builds anger, bitterness, resentment). So where are you these days in your honest times of prayer with God? Stuffing it all down and not talking about how you feel? Resentment?

- Take time to be real in your prayers with the Lord. Give Him your hurts and questions, but mixed with genuine hope that He knows what he is doing, and He is good and faithful.

**Wednesday, March 1**

Opening thought - listen to this song by Michael Card - <https://youtu.be/H3vwApmk-Z4>  
(Come Lift Up Your Sorrows)

- Write down some of your reflections from listening to this song...

Read - Numbers 11:1-23

- What *new details* are you getting from this story that you read on Monday?
- What do you notice about Moses in these verses? How is he doing as a leader?

Pastor Jerry told us that deliverance in the wilderness comes from the One who walks with us through the wilderness. The wilderness will continue to expose us and reveal our idols, and yet we must see that God is with us in our trials and pain, not distant or unconcerned.

- How do you see this in the passage today?
- How does Psalm 23 or John 14:18-31 reveal these same truths?

Reflect - The Greater Moses is Jesus who for us and for our sake was driven into the wilderness to be tempted but then also on the cross he was cut off and deserted by God for our salvation. On the cross Jesus laments aloud why God has done this to him, yet mixed with this is great trust and hope in God, his Father. This Jesus knows what the wilderness is like and will walk beside us each step of the way.

- Talk with the Lord about your sorrows, disappointments, frustrations but in a lamenting kind of way
- Confess your idols and false places of security that you seek out instead of God himself
- Worship the Lord knowing your sins are covered in Christ

## **Leaving Egypt: Wilderness, Leaving the Furnace of Temptation**

Numbers 11:1-6, 31-35

Premise of this series: that God would bring us to a place of freedom rather than remain in bondage to sin (slaves in Egypt). That God would remove from us our cravings for "other things" and renew or birth in us a new love and desire for God and his Law.

Identity as God's people is true, yet we will "blow this up" in our idolatry - which arises from a disconnect between who we think we are and who God says we are. This is the repeated lifestyle of the people of God - and we see this over the 40 years of the people of Israel. Yet God does not utterly reject his people, but has mercy on them by rescuing them from Egypt and giving them the Law.

Mt. Sinai - (mostly) a great time of knowing God and receiving from Him. But God moves them on from that place to the wilderness. (This movement can mimic the life of a believer from amazing beginnings to difficulty and hardship as life progresses).

### **I. After giving us a new identity, God moves us into the Wilderness**

God is on the move...

"In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony, and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai. And the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran."

Numbers 10:11-12 ESV

- God moves the Israelites deeper into the wilderness; before they possess the new land, they must be refined by the wilderness
- This is the purpose of the wilderness; to refine us

"The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts."  
Proverbs 17:3 ESV

"Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10 ESV

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." John 12:24 ESV

Those things we rely upon must die, so the true fruit of a life with God can grow and flourish.

Takeaway Truth: The Wilderness is where we move from confessing to possessing our New Identity

- The details of our wilderness are unique to us, yet it is true that all face this
- Kaberra - the burning place; its only 3 miles from Mt. Sinai - not long at all
  - Some rebel and some do not
  - Each of us responds differently to the testing of the Lord
  - Verse 34-35 - new place: "the place of craving"
    - More rebel here; and God is after revealing our idolatries and will use the wilderness to do this!
    - The details of the wilderness will be different yet God is after our idols

- Relational break-ups, loss of a job, or a disease/suffering, chemical imbalance, death of loved ones, injustice....all different kinds of wilderness
- Sometimes it's the wilderness of silence of God!

We see this is the life of Job...

“Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man is conceived.' Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.” Job 3:3-5 ESV

It doesn't seem loving, yet God is loving you deeply by taking you deeper

## II. The difficulties of the wilderness expose our beliefs about God

“And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” Numbers 21:5 ESV

The wilderness always reveals what is the true condition of the heart ❤️

- Numbers 21:5 - why have you done this to us, there is no food!
  - Our choices in the wilderness is either honest engagement that trusts God or petulant complaining that reject God and his plans
  - Both reveal the heart ❤️
- Numbers - spies spy out the land, return and want to go back into slavery and Egypt
  - Complaining and lack of trust of God
  - Revealing the heart
- Lament is an honest, transparent interaction and engagement with God
- Complaining - hard heart toward God
  - Psalms of Lament - perfect response to God in times of wilderness
    - Psalm 13:1-2, 5-6
      - "How long, O Lord...?....But I have trusted in your steadfast love"
      - Lament mixed with faith and trust
      - This is not whining and complaining because of what is said in verses 5-6. Honest pouring out of anger or confusion or bewildered or depressed...as long as our heart is oriented toward trusting and hoping in God.
        - Healthy response = lament
        - Unhealthy response = complaining (builds anger, bitterness, resentment)

## III. The wilderness reveals our idolatry

About 5 days out from Mt. Sinai begin to cry out and complain about the year full of manna. This is what the "rabba" is saying

Their place of stress reveals their functional savior!

- Meat, food - this is their comfort and place of relief

- This is idolatry
- We want to go back to Egypt and eat its delicious food
- The wilderness will expose our hearts and the easy road -- or give you the opportunity to trust God

"The fish cost nothing" - wrong! It cost you your freedom!  
The cross isn't free either - it cost God his Son

"Our strength is dried up" - but they are walking on; we will lie to ourselves

#### **IV. Deliverance in the wilderness comes from the One who walks with us through the wilderness**

Numbers 11:23 - A must for our wilderness experiences!!!

- God is asking if he is too weak to supply what you need, is He not enough, all-knowing and all-powerful? Now watch what I will do for you in the wilderness!
- Great promise and reminder!
  - In this chapter: God provides for fresh leadership, food in abundance and water enough for all
  - God will keep us in the wilderness until our hearts are changed -- in order to reveal the heart and the identity we have
- Deut 18:15 - the greater Moses is Jesus, coming out of Egypt and then returns Israel. Then Jesus is baptized (Mark 1:10-13) and then driven into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.
  - Jesus experienced for us the ultimate wilderness on the cross (deserted by God). And we find him lamenting on the Cross! (Why have you forsaken me!?)
  - Yet Christ trusts in his Father even on the cross (Mt. 27:46)
  - He has gone before us & still walks with us

#### *Hidden Face of God, by Michael Card*

If you are wounded, if you are alone,  
If you are angry, if your heart is cold as stone,  
If you have fallen, And if you are weak,  
Come find the worth of God, That only the suffering seek.

Come lift up your sorrows, And offer your pain;  
Come make a sacrifice, Of all your shame;  
There in your wilderness, He's waiting for you  
To worship Him with your wounds ,For He's wounded too.

He has not stuttered, and He has not lied  
When He said, "Come unto me, you're not disqualified"  
When you're heavy laden, you may want to depart,  
But those who know sorrow, They're closest to His heart.