

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Meeting God in the Wilderness

Luke 3: 1-6

John the Baptist, the hero in this reading, is living in the wilderness, which is not a usual place to find a hero. The wilderness is a dangerous place, far from civilisation where wild beasts roam. It's a difficult place to live, boiling hot during the day and freezing cold at night with little food.

It's not a place of safety. It's a place of uncertainty, where survival is difficult.

Yet out of this place John speaks to the Israelites. The wilderness was significant for the Israelites. An important part of their history occurred several hundred years earlier when God led them out of slavery and into the wilderness where they travelled for 40 years before reaching a land God had promised they could settle in.

Fast forward to the time of John and the Israelites were settled in this land, only it was occupied by foreign forces. Whilst they were not physically in the wilderness they must have been emotionally.

John, speaking from the wilderness, says God is coming to save them and the glory of God will be revealed, therefore they must get ready by making themselves right before God, in other words, repenting of the things they have done wrong, and making sure they are leading good lives.

Because John was talking to a nation that had lost faith in God. A faith that was once strong had become not so vital. That huge trust and dependency on God had gone and they were instead relying on their own strength to get them through – which wasn't working.

They were in a spiritual wilderness, far from God and far from safety.

So this voice calls to them out of the wilderness. God goes to the wilderness, meets them where they are and calls them back home, back into repentance and back into relationship with Him.

Where is your wilderness?

We all have times when we find ourselves in the wilderness. Illness, money difficulties, loneliness, grief ... the list goes on.

Sometimes wilderness periods in our life can bring us closer to God and sometimes they take us away from Him. And yet, God meets us in the wilderness and calls us back to Him. Sometimes God takes the wilderness away, and sometimes it remains, but whether we remain in the wilderness or not, it's much easier to deal with when God is there with us.

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