

March 1, 2020 delivered
1 Lent
Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11
Rev Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

On this first Sunday in Lent we read about Adam and Eve falling to the temptations offered by the serpent. This was the setup that got them kicked out of Eden – and into the wilderness that awaited them ‘outside’.

God had drawn a line in the sand for Adam and Eve, and they crossed it. Their sin was not about eating apples. Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to satisfy a desire to test the limits of God, to have God's wisdom – as the serpent had told Eve they would receive.

God was still with Adam, who lived to be 930 years old, and had many children.

When Jesus was baptized by John, and by the Holy Spirit, a voice from heaven was heard, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Then God the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. As Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent, now Jesus was being tempted by Satan. God was testing Jesus' conviction to live into his humanity and to complete the assignment he had been given by God. Jesus was faithful to God; he kept to the plan.

The Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. It was a time for them to learn and practice godly life.

John the Baptist lived in the desert wilderness, to escape the dysfunction of the city, and to sharpen his focus on a godly life. In the third century, the desert fathers and mothers chose to live in the Egyptian desert, much like John, to sharpen their focus on a godly life.

So throughout history, the wilderness has served as a place of challenge and learning.

I recall a wilderness time when I really, really hated my job. I thought I had made a terrible decision becoming an electrical engineer. I looked into border patrol, being a veterinarian, buying a TV repair business, patent attorney, anything... looking for my next step.

I recall the wilderness time in the next job I found, when the fuel embargo shut down my business, and I had no income. The only job I could find was as a night watchman. I was desperate to find another next step.

I recall a wilderness time when I was working full time, and commuting to Berkeley to attend seminary ¾ time, and being a support for Ruth when she was going through her chemo and radiation treatments.

The list is longer...

I am very sure that all of us have lots of experience with time in the wilderness.

Paul said, “Just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners (Adam), so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous (Jesus-second Adam).”

We have Adam’s genes in us, and we have Jesus’ spirit in us; each tugging at us as we go through life. The Adam in us is tempted to play God; but the Jesus in us is even more committed to fulfill God’s plan.

The way for us to get through our wilderness times is to remember that God never abandoned Adam and Eve. God never abandoned Jesus. God never abandons us.

[Hand out pocket crosses.]

I have a Lenten token for you keep with you, to serve as a reminder of the focus for Lent this next 40 days. I am not so big on Lent being a time to take things away from ourselves. They don’t last. I am a big proponent for adding something to these 40 days that helps us strengthen our relationship with God.

Whatever we add or take away, needs to make space for us to reflect on our own humanness; our living out the tension between **Adam’s will to be God-like**, and **Jesus’ will to fulfill God’s purpose – no matter what**. Spend time reflecting on the wilderness times in your life, and whether you can see where God never abandoned you. Consider what your response to God should be. As your pocket cross will remind you, Jesus is with us always. Amen.