

THIN PLACES: WILDERNESS

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Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" ⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" ⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' ¹¹and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" ¹²Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the

Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Lenten Series Context

The 40 days of Lent symbolize the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness praying, fasting, and tempted. Lent is a time of joining with Jesus for prayerful self-examination, confession, repentance, and preparation for the road that leads to the cross (and to new life).

Scripture Context

Jesus was baptized in the wilderness and remains in the wilderness. His experience echoes the 40 years of Israel's wandering after leaving Egypt. His experience alludes to the manna from heaven, which God provided the hungry Israelites. The experience of Jesus reverberates with the idolatry of Israel (the "golden calf") when Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 commandments.

All these allusions highlight that Jesus extends the heritage of Israel. And he also takes it in a new direction.

He will not be a political, priestly, or prophetic Messiah--each of which were expectations for different people in the time of Jesus. No, he will be a *suffering* one. Just as the final temptation brings him to the Temple, so too his ministry will end in Jerusalem before the religious and roman authorities. Just as he does not position himself to receive the protection of angels,

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his ministry will not avoid death upon a cross. The temptation and the prayer in Gethsemane serve as bookends to Jesus' ministry.

Big Ideas

1. Thin places are where we notice and experience the presence of God.
2. You are the wilderness Christ chooses.

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. Recall a time when you went into the wilderness. *Why* did you go? *Where* did you go? *What* did you see, hear, smell? Did you experience God in any way?
3. What does spiritual maturity look like to you?
4. Why is it important to pause and think about where our life is going?
5. Why do you think that Spirit led Jesus into the desert "to be tested"?
6. What can we learn from how Jesus responded to temptation?
7. When have you been in a wilderness experience in life? How can the wilderness be a "Thin Place".

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