**The Testing in the Wilderness**

**The Word**

Read together Luke 4:1-13

**The Big Idea**

In the wilderness, Jesus is tested and trained in preparation for his earthly ministry. The wilderness presents a challenging circumstance in which he is tempted to question his Father’s love and veer from his Father’s path, but in every moment, he remains faithful. As Christ followers, we will find ourselves in the wilderness from time to time, and while “wilderness experiences” can be very painful and challenging, God is at work shaping and refining our hearts in ways that can only happen in the wilderness.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. On Sunday we saw Jesus in action against Satan in the wilderness. What specifically impressed you most about him? What specific idea or moment of his journey is sticking with you?

2. On Sunday we discussed the idea that in any trial, Satan may have a purpose he is hoping to achieve, and at the same time God has a purpose that he is working in us. When you experience painful times, what perspective do you tend to have? Do you view it as the result of evil forces at work? Do you view is as part of God’s plan for your life? How do you hold all that together in your own worldview?

3. Take some time to discuss together the essence of each temptation. Which one do you most relate to? Which one do you tend to fall into most? Be as specific as you can.

4. As you consider the current challenges in your life, what is one thing you want to do differently in light of this passage? What is one way you want to face your challenges differently that would be a step towards greater faithfulness to God?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Introductory Considerations

A. The testing in the wilderness immediately follows Jesus’ baptism. At his baptism, he experiences the Father’s love and approval in a very tangible way. The wilderness creates a situation in which all the tangible expressions of love and approval have been stripped away, and so Satan’s strategy is to call into question God’s love for his Son and to tempt Jesus to distrust and disobey his Father in light of his painful circumstances.

B. Jesus’ testing in the wilderness for 40 days echoes Israel’s testing in the wilderness for 40 years. He faces the same issues they did, yet he succeeds where they failed.

C. Our own wilderness experiences provide times of testing and training where our hearts are revealed and where God can bring about a sanctification that only comes through trial (see 1 Peter 1:6-7).

II. Temptation 1

A. The temptation Turn stone to bread

= take matters into your own hands and bring relief and personal comfort in a way that takes you outside of God’s revealed will for you. Fix the problem yourself in a disobedient way rather than relying on God’s provision in his time.

 B. Jesus response: “man does not live on bread alone”

1. Jesus will wait for his Father to provide in his timing rather than disobey to bring relief and comfort

 2. “My food is to do the will of him who sent me” (Jn 4:34)

= What satisfies Jesus heart more than anything (even food!) is obeying his father

 C. Our wilderness journey

The wilderness provides an opportunity to ask ourselves, “what is most important to me? Personal comfort or obeying God?”

III. Temptation 2

A. The Temptation: worship Satan to receive the kingdoms of the world

= Satan is offering Jesus the world cheap and easy. Rather than go the painful way of humility, service, suffering, and death, he can receive the kingdoms of the world now. So it’s a temptation to compromise his heart’s allegiance to get the thing he wants (which is a good thing in and of itself).

 B. Jesus’ response: “worship the Lord your God and serve him only”

1. Jesus will not compromise his heart’s devotion to God in order to get what he wants.

2. “What does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose his soul?” (Mk 8:36)

 C. Our wilderness journey

The wilderness provides the opportunity to ask ourselves: “What’s most important in this situation? Getting the outcome I want, or my soul’s devotion to God through this experience?”

IV. Temptation 3

 A. The Temptation: Jump from the temple and watch God rescue you

= Rather than simply trusting in God’s word (“you are my son whom I love”), Jesus should look for a concrete sign from his experience to validate the fact that God really does love him.

B. Jesus’ response: “Don’t put God to test.”

Jesus refuses to demand that God work in his experience in a particular way. He simply trusts in his father’s promise of love and holds fast to that no matter how hard the circumstance.

C. Our wilderness journey

The wilderness provides the opportunity to ask ourselves: “will I simply trust in God’s word, or will I demand that he act in certain ways in my life in order for me to believe that he loves me and is for me?”

V. Conclusion

A. Jesus has been tested in every way just as we have

B. Therefore, he is a faithful high priest who can empathize with us and can help us when we go through our own wilderness experiences (see Hebrews 4:15-16 and 2:18)