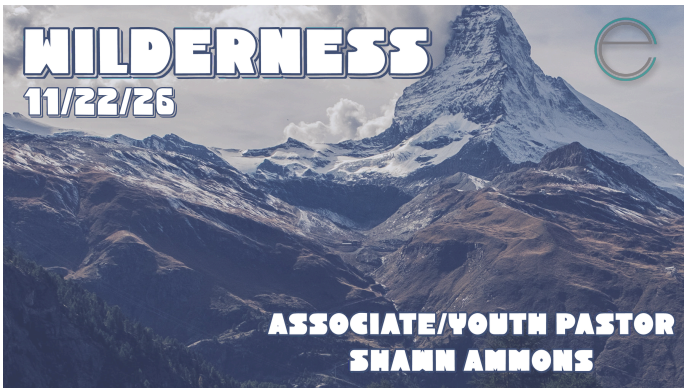
November 22, 2026 – Wilderness – Associate/Youth Pastor Shawn Ammons

THE WILDERNESS



Sermon Discussion Guide

Big Idea: The wilderness prepares us for what comes next by exposing lies and teaching us to trust God's faithfulness.

Anchor Scripture: Lamentations 3:21–27

Hymn: Great Is Thy Faithfulness

1. When you hear the word *wilderness*, what comes to mind? Have you ever experienced a season in life that felt like a wilderness? What made it difficult?
2. Why do you think God sometimes uses wilderness seasons to prepare us for what comes next rather than simply removing us from them?

Digging Deeper

Read Lamentations 3:21–27.

Jeremiah writes these words in the middle of tremendous suffering and loss. Yet, in the midst of his circumstances, he chooses to remember God's character and faithfulness.

1. What stands out to you about Jeremiah's perspective in these verses?
2. Verse 22 says that we are not consumed because of God's steadfast love and mercies. How does remembering God's mercy change the way we approach difficult seasons?
3. How can the wilderness expose things we believe about God, ourselves, and our circumstances that may not actually be true?

Three Truths That Set Us Free & Three Lies We Believe

1. Truth: I deserve judgment, but God gives mercy.

Lie #1: I deserve better.

It is easy to become frustrated when life doesn't turn out the way we think it should. We can begin to believe that God owes us comfort, success, or an easier path. But the gospel reminds us that what we deserve is judgment, yet what God offers is mercy.

- Where do you find yourself thinking, "I deserve better"?
- How can an attitude of entitlement affect our relationship with God?
- What changes when we begin viewing life through the lens of God's mercy rather than our expectations?

Reflect: Am I focused on what I think God owes me, or on the mercy He has shown?

2. Truth: God knows my needs; I can trust His provision.

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Lie #2: I deserve more.

The wilderness teaches us the difference between what we want and what we need. Just as God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, He knows our needs and is faithful to provide. Trusting God doesn't mean we will always have everything we want, but it means we can depend on Him.

- Why is it sometimes difficult to trust God to provide?
- How do we distinguish between trusting God for what we need and demanding what we want?
- Can you think of a time when God provided for you in an unexpected way?

Reflect: Am I trusting God for what I need, or asking for everything I want?

3. Truth: I need God's help. I can't live the Christian life on my own power.

Lie #3: I can do it on my own.

We were never meant to live the Christian life through our own strength. Jesus reminds us in John 15:5 that apart from Him, we can do nothing. The wilderness exposes the limits of our own strength and teaches us to depend on God.

- Why are we sometimes reluctant to admit that we need God's help?
- What is the difference between working hard for God and depending on God?
- What does it practically look like to abide in Christ in the middle of a difficult season?
- Where are you currently relying more on your own strength than on God's power?

Reflect: Where am I relying on my own strength instead of abiding in Christ?

Putting It Into Practice

The wilderness isn't wasted when it teaches us to trust God more deeply. Consider these three questions as you reflect on your own walk with Christ:

1. **Mercy:** Where do I need to stop believing I deserve better and start recognizing God's mercy?
2. **Provision:** Where do I need to surrender my expectations and trust God to provide?
3. **Dependence:** Where do I need to stop trying to do everything on my own and begin abiding in Christ?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your steadfast love and mercies that are new every morning. Forgive us for the times we believe we deserve better, demand more, or try to live life in our own strength. Use the wilderness seasons of our lives to shape our hearts, expose the lies we believe, and teach us to trust You more deeply. Help us remember that You are faithful, that You know our needs, and that we cannot live apart from You. Prepare us for what comes next as we learn to depend on You today. Great is Your faithfulness! In Jesus' name, Amen.

A challenge for the week: Read Lamentations 3:21–27 each morning this week. When you encounter frustration, unmet expectations, or feelings of inadequacy, pause and ask yourself: *Am I believing a lie, or trusting in God's faithfulness?*