



Wilder + ness “state of the wild”

Lent begins in the wilderness. The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness where he comes face to face with temptation and struggle. Yet, in his forty days of fasting, resisting, and wandering, Jesus is shaped and formed for ministry. Similarly, through the wilderness of Lent, we are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. We rarely enter the wilderness willingly, but hopefully through our wandering we remember who we are and whose we are. The wilderness can become sacred even if it remains dangerous. There is no wilderness space too harsh or threatening for God’s love. Welcome to the wilderness journey.

3rd SUNDAY in LENT March 15, 2020

In today’s texts the Israelites experience crisis in the wilderness. They experience the full spectrum of emotions the wilderness incites—doubt and disillusionment, disorientation and disconnection. Memories of their liberation from Egypt fade as their thirst deepens and they ask, “Is the Lord among us or not?” In John’s gospel, Jesus greets a woman of Samaria—a foreign land he chooses to travel through, not around—and transforms her personal wilderness into living waters.

Exodus 17:1-7 (NRSV) *The Israelites thirst in the wilderness*

17 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people quarreled with Moses, and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” ³But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” ⁴So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

John 4:5-42 (NRSV) *The Samaritan woman at the well*

⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from

it?” ¹³Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” ¹⁵The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” ¹⁷The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” ¹⁹The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” ²⁶Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

²⁷Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” ²⁸Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” ³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” ³²But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to

eat?”³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.”³⁵ Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

THROUGH SAMARIA

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 4:5-42 | Graphic Image

Artist Statement: A wilderness exists between them. Samaria (currently known as part of the West Bank) was a region between Judea and Galilee, a place most Jews journeyed around, not through. Long-standing religious animosity existed between Jews and Samaritans. By cultural standards, a woman was not to encounter a man alone, and it was considered indecent for a man to speak to a woman in public places.

A wilderness of isolation and shame exists within the woman. She has had too many husbands, but not by choice. She’s been labeled infertile, and in turn, been divorced and passed around from man to man. She’s been widowed, grieving men who have died from sickness and from war. She’s had to sell her body to survive. She’s been shunned and shamed by other women. She’s been objectified and sexualized since she was a child. She’s still a child, but she’s lived a hundred lives. She is one woman, but she holds within herself the pain and secrets of thousands of women throughout time and space.

And in this wilderness terrain—a space where she is both vulnerable and alone, where she blends in but also longs to be seen—she is sought out, welcomed, known. That’s all she needs, really—to be seen. Really seen and truly known.

A wilderness exists between them, and yet the wilderness brings them together. The wilderness becomes a place to begin again. She leaves her jar behind, filled instead with a new story to share.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.”⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”



Wilderness

*...can be a place of surprising connection
...is a place to be vulnerable and seen
...is a place to tell the truth
...is a place where we seek God’s provision
...is a place to meet God.*