

Desert Song

Our story this week takes us to the wilderness, where we find God writing a song to give to Israel. You might be surprised to know that “wilderness” is a huge theme in the Bible. Most of the notable people of faith in the Scriptures spent time in the wilderness dealing with God. The truth is, that “wilderness” holds great value for us. It did for the Israelites during their 40 years there. It did for Jesus and John the Baptist. The list goes on and on. Listen to what Eugene Peterson has to say about wilderness.

There's something enormously attractive about wilderness. Jack London wrote a famous book with the title "The Call of the Wild" – and it does call.... When we're in the wilderness, we aren't in control, we have no assignment, no appointments to keep. Stay alert, stay alive – that's it. When we're in the wilderness, we commonly feel our lives simplifying and deepening.... Always in the wilderness, there's a tension between the beauty and the danger, between pristine simplicities and sinister threats. And because most of us can't sustain this tension for long, we live in towns and cities. We surround ourselves with water faucets and furnaces, roofs and street signs, grocery stores and police officers and firefighters. We lock our doors at night, put umbrellas over our heads when it rains and keep our dogs on a leash. But there are times, no matter how thoroughly we're civilized, when we're plunged into the wilderness – not a geographical wilderness but what I'm going to call a circumstantial wilderness.... What I want to say is this: I readily acknowledge that this circumstantial wilderness is a terrible, frightening and dangerous place; but I also believe that it's a place of beauty. There are things to be seen, heard, and experienced in this wilderness that can be seen, heard, and experienced nowhere else. When we find ourselves in the wilderness... we're plunged, if we let ourselves be, into an awareness of the great mystery of God and the extraordinary preciousness of life. Eugene Peterson, Leap Over a Wall

Monday – Warm Up Act

1. Please read Deuteronomy 31: 19-22. What lessons of dependence had Israel learned from God during their wilderness years? As you look at Deut. 31:19-22, what is the gist of what God is saying to Moses?
2. Why do you suppose God is giving the Israelites a song that forecasts their future rebellion?
3. Why are we so prone to turn away from God when all is going well (e.g. when we are wealthy and satisfied)?

Making it Personal - Think of a time in your life when you turned away from God. What led to that?

Tuesday –Mood Music

1. What music was last on in your car? Was it a CD or a song from a radio station? What was the mood of that music?
2. Please read the first part of Moses' song to the people, Deuteronomy 32: 1-18. What mood do you think would be appropriate for Moses' lyrics?
3. Which stanza stands out to you? What makes it so distinctive?

Wednesday – The Songwriter

1. Please reread Deuteronomy 32: 1-18. Who is the songwriter?
2. What does this song say about God? What kind of person is he? (Don't miss verses 6, 10)
3. In verse 9, God refers to the people of Israel as a singular person, Jacob. Verses 10-12 describe God's treatment of Jacob during the forty years of wandering in the desert. How did God treat Jacob?

Thursday – Forget Me Not

1. Please read Deuteronomy 6: 10-12. Why is their future situation such a temptation for the Israelites?
2. Think about your own life for a moment. What has the Lord “brought you out of” that you might be tempted to forget?
3. The Lord declares “Be careful that you do not forget....” What practical things can we do to remember our legacy of faith?

Friday – The Gift of Song

1. Please read the rest of the song, Deuteronomy 32: 19-43. Also, please read verses 44-47, Moses' presentation of the song to Israel.
2. In what way is this song a gift to Israel? What did Moses mean when he said, “They are not just idle words for you--they are your life?”

Making it Personal – Is there something you have forgotten about the Lord and his goodness? What can you do today to remember all that he has done for you?

Weekend:

1. Reread Eugene Peterson's words about wilderness in the opening introduction. Do you find yourself in a circumstantial wilderness at this point in your life? What lessons do you suppose God is trying to teach you?
2. What are you in danger of forgetting regarding your relationship with Christ? What steps can you take to ensure that you remember all that he has done and all that he means to you?