

A voice calling in the wilderness

Wildernesses normally depict a dry, arid place – a desert with hardly any life forms. At least so it seems. Deserts have more life forms than we would think by plain at first sight observation. There are seeds buried in the sand that blossom into beauty after the first rains. There are little creatures in their little nooks and crannies that peep out when they need to eat and when they think it's safe to do so. Moses spent time in the wilderness before he freed the Israelites from Egypt. The Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness before they entered the promised land. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness before starting his ministry. A wilderness experience is difficult, but God often uses it before taking us into a time of fruitfulness.

Isaiah 40: 3 – 5 A voice of one calling:

“In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

1) A voice in the wilderness

- The world that we live in is a wilderness and should be treated as a place to prepare for what's to come and not a place to settle down in.
 - The Israelites never viewed the wilderness as their home. They were looking to their promised land where they would settle.
 - Moses never set up permanent camp on Mount Sinai. He spent forty days and forty nights there to receive what God had to give him for the people.
 - The prophet John spent his time in the wilderness calling people to repentance for what was to come.
- John was the fulfilment of Isaiah 40 as the voice in the wilderness calling for highway in the desert to be made straight for our God.
- There had been many voices pointing to Jesus before John. Isaiah, Micah, Hosea, David, and Zechariah were all voices calling out pointing to the one who was to come.
 - Those voices were often misunderstood and the Messiah came to His own and his own didn't know him.
 - John 1: 10 – 11 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.
- He has called us to be a voice in the wilderness crying out for the world to receive their Saviour.
 - 1 Peter 2: 9 – 10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- The four lepers who found food in the Aramean camp are examples of what God expects of us.
 - 2 Kings 7: 8 – 11 The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp, entered one of the tents and ate and drank. Then they took silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also. Then they said to each other, “What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace.”
So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, “We went into the Aramean camp and no one was there—not a sound of anyone—only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were.” The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported within the palace.

2) A voice of repentance

- John was the voice in the wilderness calling people to repentance.
- Repentance is the turning away from sin and the turning to God to do what pleases Him in righteousness.
 - Matthew 3: 7 – 8 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
- As John was the voice preparing the way for the Lord in His first coming, so we are voices in this world preparing the world for the second coming of Jesus.
- Many mockers mock at the second coming of Jesus not understanding His grace and patience with us
 - 2 Peter 3: 3 – 4 Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.
 - 2 Peter 3: 9 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
- Calling the world to repentance is confrontational, yet it is an act of love.
 - If we see someone ruining their life and family by drinking too much the best thing for them is to repent and to stop drinking.
- The time is now for the world to repent as Jesus could come any moment and then there won’t be another opportunity to do so, but only the seat of judgment.
- A voice of repentance is a loving voice

3) A voice of hope

- When we look around us in the wilderness of this world, we see a world in desperate need of hope.
 - Isaiah 40: 4 – 5 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together.
- We may be in a dark valley that the Lord wants to lift us out of, or we are facing an insurmountable mountain that the Lord wants to make low, or life might be rough going that he wants to make level.
 - Whatever he wants to do for us he wants to do for all people for his glory to be revealed to everyone.
 - It is not for us to keep the hope of the Lord to ourselves. It is to be shared.
- Hebrews 9: 27 – 28 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

If you are in need of the Lord have you heard the voice in your wilderness – the voice of repentance and hope?

If you have received the salvation of the Lord have you become the voice of repentance and hope in this wilderness that we live in?