



# THE THREAD

*weaving Sunday's message through the week*

**Date:** January 29, 2023

**Theme:** "Grace in the Wilderness" **Psalm:** 23

Contextual note: Understanding the geographical context that serves as the backdrop of Psalm 23 is critical if we are to rightly interpret, understand, and apply it to our daily lives.

1. Wilderness Narratives in the Bible
  - a. The grand wilderness narrative (Genesis to Revelation)
    - Genesis 1-2 – Garden of Eden
    - Genesis 3:23-24 – Adam driven from the garden
    - Revelation 21:1-22:5 – Restoration of creation
  - b. The key wilderness narratives (Abraham, Moses/ Exodus, David, Jesus)
    - Abraham (Genesis 11-25)
    - Moses/ Israel (Exodus)
    - David (1 & 2 Samuel)
    - Jesus (Matthew 4)
  - c. The communal wilderness narrative (our local church context)
  - d. The individual wilderness narrative(s) (individual lives)
2. The nature of the wilderness (from Jack Beck, *How Does God Use the Wilderness?*)
  - a. The wilderness is vast and rugged
  - b. The wilderness is a land with precious little water
  - c. The wilderness is a land without grain
  - d. The wilderness is a land with little human habitation
  - e. The wilderness is a land with few travelers
  - f. The wilderness is a land without borders
  - g. The wilderness is a land that lacks everything
  - h. POINT: God uses the wilderness to *humble, test, and teach* his people to trust him (Deut 8:3-5)
3. How the wilderness changes us
  - a. The wilderness requires us to be humble – it disrupts pride
    - Humility is the prerequisite for grace (Matt 5:3; James 4:6-8; Prov. 3:34)
  - b. The wilderness requires us to be dependent – it disrupts self-sufficiency
    - Matt 6:11; 1 Cor 4:6-7; James 1:17

- c. The wilderness requires us to be vigilant (awake and focused) – it disrupts apathy
  - Rom 12:11; Eph 5:14-17; 1 Thess 5:6-8; Heb 3:12-15; 12:1-17; 1 Pet 1:13-21; 4:7-11
- d. The wilderness requires us to be patient (adjust our pace) – it disrupts haste
  - Lam 3:25-26; Rom 8:22-25; 12:12; Gal 5:22-25; Heb 10:35-36; Rev 6:9-11
- e. The wilderness requires us to curb our appetites – it disrupts gluttony/ lust
  - Rom 13:14; 1 Tim 6:6-10; Heb 13:5; 1 John 2:15-17
- f. The wilderness requires us to be grateful – it disrupts entitlement
  - Ps 100; Rom 15:5-6; Phil 4:4-7; 11-13; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Heb 12:28-29

The main question in every wilderness narrative is: "Will you trust me?" (Revelation 7:15–17)

### MAIN IDEA + APPLICATION:

God leads his people into the wilderness to *humble, test, and teach* them to trust him for guidance and provision as his purposes are accomplished for his glory.

Living faithfully in the wilderness requires a radical reorientation to the Person and Work of Christ as our Shepherd, who gives us His peace and rest because He is with us.

Receive. Rest. Rejoice. Reproduce.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What images most immediately come to mind when you read Psalm 23? How do they compare with the biblical context of the Judean wilderness?
2. How does our understanding of the geographical context of Psalm 23 shape our interpretation and application of it in our lives?
3. Recall some of the wilderness seasons in your life. What are some of the assumptions you made about God (his character, purpose, goodness, presence, etc.)? How has God used these hard seasons to shape character and hope in your life?
4. Consider this as honestly as you're able: Would you rather God give you a path and a plan that leads to comfort, but does not require or promise his presence? OR would you choose a path that involves difficulty and uncertainty, but where God is ever present?
5. How does understanding the context in which God has called us to live out our faith prepare us to endure wilderness seasons with hope and joy? (see Romans 8; 1 Peter 1:15-21; 2:11-12, 21-25; 4:12-19). Why is this critical as we make disciples?
6. Main questions: Do you want life with the Shepherd, and will you trust

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