

Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent

Date: March 9, 2025

Location: Zion – Colby, WI

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 8:2-3

Epistle Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:1-11

Sermon Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Sermon Series: From Ashes to Glory

Sermon Title: Into the Wilderness



Introit: Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Antiphon:

Hymns:

LSB 657 - A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (v.1,4)

LSB 424 - O Christ, You Walked the Road (v.1,4,5)

LSB 718 - Jesus, Lead Thou On

LSB 422 - On My Heart Imprint Your Image

Distribution:

LSB 617 - O Lord, We Praise Thee

LSB 761 - Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

LSB 547 - The Lamb

Pastor James Groleau
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
Phone: 320-336-8149



ZionLutheranChurchColbyWI.com



Sermon by Phone: 715-316-4098
(No Internet or Smart Phone Needed)

Zion – Colby
PO Box 438
301 N 2nd St
Colby, WI 54421
715-223-2166



Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written,

“Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,’

and

“On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve.”

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

NOTE: Copyright information.

© 2025 Pastor James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace and peace I pray would be yours in Jesus name. Amen.

Opening



The man steps into a vast and barren wilderness. The air is dry, and the landscape stretches endlessly before him. He looks around, seeing rocks, dead trees, and distant hills. There is no easy path, only the unknown ahead. As he clamors along, he hears whispers surround him, soft but persistent, urging him to turn back. “Why suffer?” one voice hisses. “There’s an easier way,” another tempts. The man hesitates, feeling the weight of doubt bearing down on him.

As the whispers grow, the man recalls the record of another who walked such a path: Jesus, who faced the wilderness not as punishment but as preparation. Just like this man wrestles with his doubts, Jesus too was led into the wilderness to be tested by doubt.

Introduction: Testing and Preparation

The wilderness is a place of uncertainty, challenge, and refining. That’s something of what our Lenten journey will explore, as we walk along with Jesus, facing our own spiritual battles, and learning to trust God more deeply. Just as Jesus’ journey in the wilderness prepared Him for His mission, Lent is a time of preparation for us. It shapes our faith and renews our understanding and dependence on God.



If you’re praying through the psalms with us this year, today you will pray these words from Psalm 30

Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.¹

Even in struggle, challenge, or pain there is always hope. Jesus endured His trial in the wilderness knowing victory was coming. We endure our own trials knowing, come what may, Easter’s joy is ahead.

Part I: The First Temptation – Dependence on God

After forty days of fasting, Jesus was hungry. Satan tempts Him:

If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

But Jesus responds with the words from Holy Scripture:

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God²



If you’re reading through the Bible in a year, today you’ll read about how Israel was tested in the wilderness.³ The Israelites grumbled for food, doubting that God does provide. Where they

- 1 Psalm 30:1-5
- 2 Deuteronomy 8:3
- 3 Deuteronomy 8:2-3

doubted, Jesus remained steadfast, trusting the Father completely. Teaching us that God's provision is greater than our physical needs. We often look for immediate answers. We want our prayer answered, right now. We want our comfort and our treasures. Too often we don't trust God's timing. Jesus shows us faith is often about waiting on God.

Part II: The Second Temptation – Trust Without Testing

Satan takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple and says:

Throw yourself down. If you are the Son of God, won't the angels protect you?

He is quoting Psalm 91, twisting Scripture to justify testing God.

But Jesus answers him, quoting Deuteronomy 6:

You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.⁴

Jesus, our great High Priest, was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.⁵ He understands our struggles because He's walked through them. He shows us faith is trusting God without demanding proof. I think too often we ask God to prove Himself to us. We say something like, "God, if You're real, prove it. Answer my prayer right now. Show me You exist." True faith doesn't need tests or proof. True faith simply trusts.⁶



Part III: The Third Temptation – No Crown Without the Cross

Satan then offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. The offer is power, authority, might, riches, comfort and wealth. All Jesus needs to do is bow down and worship him.

Jesus trounces him again, saying:

Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'⁷

We are always tempted to take the easy wrong over the harder right, But Jesus teaches the path of faithfulness is the only true path to real victory and real peace.



Conclusion: Strength for the Wilderness

Jesus resisted every temptation, but not for Himself. He resisted, He endured for you. Where Adam failed in the garden, where Israel failed in the wilderness, Jesus triumphed. His victory is ours. The wilderness, the world we live in, is not a place of punishment, it is a place of preparation. What is God preparing you for? The answer is: eternity with Him.

4 Deuteronomy 6:16

5 Hebrews 4:14-16

6 Matthew 18:3

7 Deuteronomy 10:12-13

Final Thought

This Lenten season, as we face our own wilderness moments, whatever they might be in your life, remember:

- Temptation is not sin, giving in to temptation is.
- Jesus overcame for us, so we could stand strong in Him.
- The wilderness is temporary, the victory is forever.

On Wednesday we will answer the questions: Where are you going to run? Where are you going to hide? We worship a “God Who Sees” us wherever we are.

Narrative Story Closing



The man was hearing whispers, but they faded as the man presses forward, but the path ahead remains difficult, narrow and uncertain. Will he find the strength to face the challenges ahead? Join us on Wednesday as we encounter, “The God Who Sees” and cares for us in our struggles.

This man’s journey is not so unlike our own spiritual walk. Each step forward in life requires faith, trust, and endurance. As he moves ahead, he is not just walking into the unknown. He is stepping deeper into trust in God’s presence and guidance. We are never left alone in our trials. Just as Jesus relied fully on the Father for strength and guidance, we are called to lean on God’s Word and trust His guidance in our own seasons of testing.

Reflection Questions:

- What is your wilderness? Where are you being tested?
- Are you trusting in God, or seeking your own solutions?
- Are you demanding signs from God, or resting in faith?
- Are you chasing worldly power, or walking the way of the cross?

Those questions, and your answers to them are critical. As we walk through this journey of Lent we’ll help you answer those questions well.

Trusting in Jesus.

Amen.



Proclaiming God’s Word.
Encouraging one another in faith.
Witnessing to God’s love.
Serving all people.



Weekly messages and other information can be found at:



ZionLutheranChurchColbyWI.com



Messages can also be heard at our Sermons-by-Phone service:
715-316-4098 (No smart phone or Internet needed.)