

Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent

Date: February 22, 2026

Location: Zion – Colby, WI

Old Testament: Genesis 3:1-7,14-15

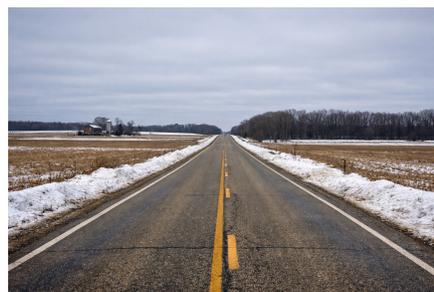
Epistle Reading: Romans 5:12-19

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:1–11

Sermon Series: Hope in the Dark

Sermon Title: When God Feels Far Away

Sermon Text: Psalm 6



Hymns:

LSB 423 – Jesus refuge of the Weary (v.1,2)

LSB 439 – O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken (v. 2)

LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own

LSB 420 – Christ the Life of all the Living (v. 1,7)

Distribution:

LSB 451 – Stricken Smitten and Afflicted

LSB 774 – Feed Thy Children, God Most Holy

LSB 623 – Lord Jesus Christ We Humbly Pray

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316-Sermons by Phone:
715-316-4098

(No Internet or Smart Phone needed)



Text: Psalm 6

O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger,
nor discipline me in your wrath.
Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.
My soul also is greatly troubled.
But you, O LORD— how long?

Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.
For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who will give you praise?

I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
My eye wastes away because of grief;
it grows weak because of all my foes.

Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.
The LORD has heard my plea;
the LORD accepts my prayer.
All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled;
they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

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God's grace, His peace, and His mercy I pray is always yours. Amen.

Opening Orientation – Where We Are Beginning

Last Sunday we stood at the Transfiguration and watched Jesus shine with glory on the mountain. This Sunday the Church walks Him straight into the wilderness. That turn is deliberate. Lent begins without a resolution. Lent begins where many believers live, trusting God's promises while feeling distance.



The prophet Habakkuk knows and believes God is faithful, yet cries out because God feels silent. He looks at what is happening and asks a question many faithful people still ask, “How long will this continue?” The Gospel, the third reading today, places Jesus in a similar place. The Spirit leads Him into the wilderness, surrounded by hunger, isolation, and temptation. God has spoken at His baptism. Heaven now goes quiet. Faith remains even God does not feel close. Sometimes God feels far away.

I. The Feeling of Distance Is Real

Jesus is driven into the wilderness immediately after His baptism.¹ One moment there is a voice from heaven. His Father is close. The next there is hunger, dust, and silence. No crowds. No reassurance. Time stretches out. The days grow long.



The Bible shows this experience again and again. Israel wandered in the wilderness and questioned whether God was still among them.² Habakkuk cried, “How long, O Lord?”³ Faithful people experience seasons when prayer feels and faith thin.

Lent begins by admitting this. Doubt is real and denying it is more dangerous. Acknowledge it. Bring it to God. God calls His people to trust Him. Distance is not abandonment. Silence does not signal absence. God's people have always lived with unanswered questions. Many of us have been there. Life continues. Responsibilities remain. Life goes on but for a time feels empty.

II. When God Is Silent, the Tempter Gets Loud



In the wilderness, the devil speaks while God remains silent. He attacks when strength is low. He presses Jesus toward self-rescue, self-provision, and self-proof. Satan quotes the Bible, but it is twisted toward independence from the Father. The same temptation brought to Adam and Eve appears again: step away from trust.

- 1 Matthew 4:1
- 2 Exodus 17:1-7
- 3 Habakkuk 1:2

We deal with the same stuff. Trust weakens when answers delay. Control feels safer than patient waiting. Proof feels easier than promise. When God feels distant, temptation grows closer.

Martin Luther understood this struggle well. He taught fearing, loving, and trusting God above all things remains the central struggle of the Christian life.⁴ The Law holds up a mirror and shows how quickly trust slips into control⁵ The wilderness doesn't create this struggle. It exposes what already lives in our heart.

III. Christ Stands Where We Fall

Jesus doesn't endure temptation to display how powerful He is. He stands in our place. He stands where fall. He stands where Habakkuk questioned God. Faithfulness marks His path. When we reach for control, He clings to God's Word. He answers the devil with Scripture and trusts the Father even when Divine nearness feels feeble.

This obedience already points toward the cross. The wilderness leads to thorns, mockery, scourging, and crucifixion. The sermon hymn,⁶ foreshadows the suffering carried on His shoulders. Jesus walks this road for His people so they never walk alone.

Paul reminds the Church the saving Word remains near, spoken and confessed.⁷ Salvation rests on Jesus' faithfulness not the faith we muster on our own. Because He stands firm, His people stand forgiven.



IV. When God Feels Far Away, He Remains Faithful

Habakkuk anchors faith with a confession: “The Lord is in His holy temple.”⁸ The Church confesses God delivers forgiveness and life through Word and Sacrament, even when emotion fails to tell us the truth.⁹ Jesus is present. He comes through ordinary means: spoken words, water, bread, and wine, strengthening faith. These quiet moments teach trust in the wilderness reminding us silence does not negate mercy. Distance does not undo grace.

Closing Direction – Looking Ahead

So what is the answer? Where is the answer found? This message does not resolve problem. It names it. It says it out loud. It brings our questions before God. Then it waits. It waits for the answer which is sometimes slow to come. Lent does not hurry past quiet times or rush toward easy answers. God allows His people to remain in the wilderness longer than we prefer because faith grows there.

4 Luther's Small Catechism – First Commandment

5 Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VI

6 LSB 439 Verse 2

7 Romans 10:8–13

8 Habakkuk 2:20

9 Augsburg Confession V

Next week the journey moves deeper. Distance will give way to doubt. Questions will challenge us. Darkness will press in. Nicodemus, a faithful teacher who knows Scripture, comes to Jesus at night because his certainty has slipped. Faith remains present because questions have come.



The path continues forward. Faith waits. Faith listens. Faith trusts. Jesus continues to meet His people in the dark, nearer than they dare to hope.

Amen.



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5:17-Prayer Requests: 715-390-0517 (1 Thessalonians 5:17) *Your prayer request will be forward to our prayer team.*