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Journey in the Wilderness

An Outdoor Prayer Path That Lengthens Throughout Lent

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Please note:

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This document includes a template for the welcome poster, the editable text for each of the prayer stations, and links to suggested artwork along with short texts to use on the prayer station posters. You can click on a link below to jump to the corresponding portion of this document.

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Welcome Poster: Walking the Journey in the Wilderness

During the season of Lent, Christians all over the world reflect on the great mystery of Jesus’ suffering with and for the world. Walking a path marked by crosses can be a way to connect with Christ and also to pray honestly about the suffering in the world and in our own lives. There is comfort and power for here and now when prayer includes our bodies.

Lent comes with an especially urgent invitation for us to contemplate and trust God's promised provision in the deserts of life. Can God really spread a table in the wilderness of [name a single, overriding wilderness reality for your congregation, the nation, or the world]?

Yes, says the deep well of Christian faith. Yes, says Jesus. Over and over, God does spread a table before us in the face of all our greatest fear and suffering.

The stations here at [church's name] are unique to our observance of Lent this year. Over the six weeks of Lent and into the Holy Week of Easter, you will be invited to reflect on stories of people who sat at the table God spread before them in the extreme wilderness of their lives.

Take as much time as you need, and use only what is helpful in the materials provided.

When your heart is drawn to God, often no more words are needed.

Consider making a commitment to walk the path each week of Lent as the prayer path grows. If you come every week, you may want to spend the most time at the newly placed station.

If anything about your time of prayer needs conversation, or if you would like to know more about the cross-shaped way of Christian spirituality, [provide contact information for the pastor or elders].

A QR code at each station allows you to listen to the Scripture being read and as well as a song about tables in the wilderness. The artwork at each station is by [name the artist you choose to feature or, if using suggested artwork, "artists representing a range of Christian art throughout time and across the world"].

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever he may send you. May he guide you through the wilderness and protect you through the storm. May he bring you home rejoicing at the wonders he has shown you. And may he bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.

Prayer Guide

I. A Table in the Wilderness for Jesus

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the

Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him (Mark 1:9–13).

Reflect

Insert wondering questions about the Scripture text and/or picture you are using or use the following.

Jesus’ baptism must have been a spiritual highlight for him. Why did the Spirit then immediately send him into the wilderness?

What do I notice and feel as I look at this picture?

How lonely and tempted am I?

Can God really provide a table in the wilderness of loneliness and temptation?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God’s hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

II. A Table in the Wilderness for Israel

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

In the desert, the whole community of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron: “You have brought us out into this desert to starve!” Then the LORD said, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you.” In the morning, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. The people of Israel called the bread *manna*. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey (adapted from Exodus 16).

Reflect

Insert wondering questions about the Scripture text and/or picture you are using or use the following.

What do I notice as I look at this picture?

What is making me grumble and worry?

Can God really provide a table in the wilderness of grumbling and worry?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God's hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

III. A Table in the Wilderness for Hagar

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy [Ishmael]. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying. . . . Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water (from Genesis 21).

Reflect

Insert wondering questions about the Scripture text and/or picture you are using or use the following.

What do I notice as I look at this picture?

What is making me sad and thirsty?

Can God really provide a table in the wilderness of sadness and thirst?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God's hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

IV. A Table in the Wilderness for Elijah

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life . . . a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God (from 1 Kings 19:2-8).

Reflect

What do I notice or feel as I look at this picture?
What is making me afraid or tired?
Can God really provide a table in the wilderness of fears and tiredness?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God's hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

V. A Table in the Wilderness for David

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

While David was in the wilderness, he asked a wealthy man named Nabal, whose shepherds David had protected, to give food to him and his men. Instead Nabal hurled insults at David. But Nabal's wife, Abigail, acted quickly. She took bread, wine, meat, roasted grain, cakes of raisins, and pressed figs, loaded them on donkeys, and went out to meet David and his men. David said, "Praise be to the Lord", who has sent you to meet me and kept me from avenging myself." He accepted from her hand what she had brought him and sent her home in peace (adapted from 1 Samuel 25).

Reflect

What do I notice or feel as I look at this picture?
What makes me angry and perhaps even wanting to even the score?
Can God really provide a table in the wilderness of anger and vengeance?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God's hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

VI. A Table in the Wilderness for a Hungry Crowd

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee. He looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him. He asked his disciples, "Where shall we find bread for these people to eat?" Peter said, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus took the loaves and the fish, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. "Let nothing be wasted," Jesus said. And his disciples gathered twelve baskets of leftovers (adapted from John 6).

Reflect

What do I notice or feel as I look at this picture?
What is making me skeptical of God's care in my life?
Can God really provide a table in the wilderness of skepticism and anxiety?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God's hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

VII. A Table in the Wilderness for Our Savior

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

On reaching the Mount of Olives, Jesus withdrew about a stone's throw beyond his disciples, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (adapted from Luke 22).

Reflect

What do I notice or feel as I look at this picture?

Where am I in anguish?

Can God really provide a table in the wilderness of anguish and abandonment?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God's hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

VIII. A Table on the Beach for Us

Opening Prayer

O Lord, can you really spread a table in the wilderness of life? Walk with me as I walk this path of the cross with honest questions of life in my heart and my face turned to find the table you have spread in the wilderness for so many before me, and now also for me. Amen.

Reading

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. . . . When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. . . . Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead (John 21:4-6, 9, 12-14).

Reflect

What do I notice or feel as I look at this picture?

What amazement and awe do I experience this Easter?

How has this journey through Lent opened me to trust God's provision in the wilderness of life?

Christ Speaks: Words of Encouragement

Take heart, my child. I will not let the cross you bear grow beyond your endurance. My Father attends you. He is your Father too. All that is needed God's hands will provide.

Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your life, your death, and your resurrection you have shown us how God always spreads a table in the wilderness in the face of all our fears. Amen.

Art Suggestions and Short Texts for Prayer Station Posters

Below you will find suggestions for art to use with the prayer station posters. At the time of publication these artworks were available for most churches to use for free. However, you are responsible for securing the necessary legal permissions for use making sure the appropriate author and copyright information is included with each image.

I. A Table in the Wilderness for Jesus

Suggested Artwork: ["Temptation in the Wilderness," Briton Rivière](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

II. A Table in the Wilderness for Israel

Suggested Artwork: ["The Gathering of the Manna," James Jacques Joseph Tissot](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: You will not starve. I will rain down bread from heaven for you.

III. A Table in the Wilderness for Hagar

Suggested Artwork: ["Son of Hagar," Frank Wesley](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well of water.

IV. A Table in the Wilderness for Elijah

Suggested Artwork: ["Prophet Elijah in the Wilderness," Dieric Bouts](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: Get up and eat, said the angel, for the journey is too much for you.

V. A Table in the Wilderness for David

Suggested Artwork: ["David fordert von Nabal," Anonymous](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: Abigail took bread, wine, meat, grain, and cakes of raisins and went out to meet David.

VI. A Table in the Wilderness for a Hungry Crowd

Suggested Artwork: ["Jesús multiplica los panes," Rodrigo Fernández](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: Jesus took the five small loaves and two small fish and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted.

VII. A Table in the Wilderness for Jesus (Good Friday)

Suggested Artwork: [“Christ on Gethsemane,” JESUS MAFA](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: Being in anguish, Jesus prayed earnestly, and an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

VIII. A Table on the Beach for Us (Easter)

Suggested Artwork: [“Breakfast on the Beach,” Peter Koenig](#)

Shortened Text for Artwork: Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.”