

The Wilderness – reflection day 2

Reading 1 Kings 19 verses 1 – 13

In yesterday's reflection we thought about how Jesus used his 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness to cultivate his relationship with God the Father. Today, we consider the experience of the prophet Elijah. We first meet Elijah in chapter 17 of 1 Kings, and God works powerfully through him in the next couple of chapters of the book.

One of the things I mentioned yesterday was that whenever we go through a wilderness experience there is always a primary cause for us doing so. For Jesus it was the life-changing moment of his baptism in the Jordan and everything that went along with that event. For you and I it could also be a life-changing event; moving to a new town, moving job, experiencing mental or physical illness, the end of a relationship, unemployment, or perhaps a bereavement.

What leads Elijah to his wilderness experience is a death threat from Jezebel. We read, *"Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life...went a day's journey into the wilderness and sat down under a solitary broom tree."* (Verses 3 and 4 NRSV). Then Elijah – this prophet who has seen God work so powerfully through him in recent times asks God that he might die. He has given up.

I wonder if we are ever tempted to give up on God? Or if we ever feel that he has given up on us? In these days when we are unable to attend church, when we are missing the fellowship of our congregation and have to worship God in isolation, are we – like Elijah on the verge of giving up, or are we able to use this time to cultivate our relationship with God?

The angel of the Lord encourages Elijah to eat and strengthen himself. As we each go through this coronavirus wilderness together and yet alone, may I suggest that God encourages us all to strengthen our faith by partaking of the food of the Bible, prayer and reflection?

At the end of our passage, Elijah stands ready to meet with God. And he does so not in earthquake wind or fire – but in the sound of sheer silence. May our own wilderness experience lead us to the place where we stand ready to meet with God. And in the stillness that this time in the wilderness offers us, may we hear his voice speaking clearly.

God had not finished with Elijah. He is not finished with you or I.

Blessings

Peter