

The Wilderness – reflection day 3

Reading Exodus 16 verses 1-12

A wilderness experience can be something that we go through alone, or it can be a shared experience with others. In our first 2 reflections we thought of individuals in the wilderness – Jesus and Elijah. Today our story focuses on the collective wilderness experience of the people of Israel.

In the village where I live, I have probably found out more about local people since the coronavirus outbreak started than I knew beforehand. When we go through things together, we get to know what people really think and feel.

As we join our story today, the people of Israel are not happy. They complain to Moses and Aaron, *“If only we had died...in Egypt...you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill the whole assembly with hunger.”* (Verse 3 NRSV) Isn't this astonishing? Only a short time ago these same people have experienced both the power and the saving grace of God as he parted the Red Sea and freed them from the slavery of the Egyptians. Yet as soon as they are in the wilderness it seems they have forgotten what God has done for them and they are angry and disillusioned.

As we enter the wilderness caused by the coronavirus – together, yet alone – I wonder what the attitude of our own hearts is. Are we angry at the restrictions being placed upon us by the government? Are we disillusioned because we cannot go to church or even run our regular coffee mornings or similar events? Are we fearful because of what we see around us and because we do not know what the future holds?

If that is how you are feeling, I wonder if I might ask you to think about a time when you saw God moving powerfully – either in your own life or in the life of someone you know. Perhaps you can also reflect and give thanks for the saving grace that God has revealed to you through Jesus Christ and that you are an accepted, forgiven, redeemed child of his.

Sometimes it is easy for us all to be “fair weather” Christians. It is easy to praise God when all is going well in our lives. Perhaps not so easy when we are travelling through a wilderness experience. Psalm 103 (attributed to David) says, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits”* (verse 2 NRSV). As we travel through these days of difference, let us endeavour not to be like the people of Israel, who so quickly forgot their experience of God.

Had we read the rest of Exodus 16, we would have found that God provided for the people in the wilderness in a miraculous way. If they stopped complaining perhaps they would have recognised that God was with them all the time.

As we said on day 1, the wilderness is a place where we can find God. Are we willing to seek him?

Blessings

Peter

