

## **The Wilderness – reflection day 5**

### Reading *Luke 4 verses 14 – 15*

In our reading for today, Jesus emerges triumphant from his victory over the devil in the wilderness and begins his public ministry, “...filled with the power of the Spirit” (verse 14 NRSV). Forty days and forty nights seems a very long time for anyone to be by themselves. I am aware that as I write this, the reality of self-isolation due to the coronavirus is for many people just beginning and may go on for much longer than 40 days!

During the long days of isolation, it may be tempting for us to think that this situation will never end. In our moments of loneliness, we may despair of ever getting back to the patterns of life and worship that we have been accustomed to. And as we have seen in previous days, we may feel like Elijah who had given up or we may feel like the people of Israel who were angry and disillusioned.

We cannot make light of how difficult a time this is and is going to be for many people not just in our own country, but around the world. Many people in Asia and Europe have already been bereaved and many will be asking questions of God as a result.

What can we say when faced with such profound issues? We do not have nor do we offer glib answers, but we do have the promise of the risen Christ to cling to; *“And remember, I am with you always until the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28 verse 20 NRSV). We believe in a God who travels with us through good times and bad, through times of sorrow as well as times of joy and as we have reflected this week, a God who can be found in the mystery and remoteness of a wilderness experience.

We have not only considered Jesus and his triumph over the devil in the wilderness, but also we looked at the experiences of Elijah in 1Kings and the people of Israel in Exodus. At the end of the story in 1Kings, God makes it clear that Elijah’s ministry is not over and that he still has tasks to perform.

In the end we know that the people of Israel enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. Time spent in the wilderness is limited and can be precious if used in the right way. Hopefully we will not be in the coronavirus wilderness for 40 years, but will emerge from this wilderness experience filled with the Spirit.

And filled with the Spirit may we be ready to face the challenges of a changed and changing world, to the glory of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessings

Peter