

Saint Joseph Parish, San Mateo CA  
Sermon of Trinity VII  
July 23, 2023  
Mark 8:1-11  
Father Herb Plimpton

“In those days the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.”

We really have to admire the devotion and confidence of these people who followed Our Lord three days and nights into the threatening wilderness without any concern about where they were going, what they were to eat, or where they would lay down their heads. They abandoned themselves to the guidance of Jesus and would rather have died at his feet than have left His presence.

They did not complain about the length of the road or murmur like the Jews when Moses led them into scarcities of the

wilderness after the first steps of their deliverance from Pharaoh. On the other hand, every consideration was forgotten in the delight these people in Mark's gospel felt at hearing our Lord's voice and being cared for in His presence. The gospel text is clear: they did not complain of hunger or want. Like the ideal flock of sheep with their shepherd, they went after Him, following His footsteps.

Jesus' temptation story tells us that He knew well the want and the waiting of the wilderness. That was where He went first as He began His ministry on earth..and where he stayed alone the longest...just to be dependent on His Father alone.

How few people decide to follow Jesus into the wilderness life presents at times in their lives? And by “wilderness”, I suggest to you not only a place of physical want, but those ‘rough patches’ in life..real stony ground that doesn't give way to our wants..where one's own resources, friends and families fail us. How few truly place their trust in Him and abandon themselves into His presence, His providence.

On the contrary, how many complain of the past and are troubled for the future?

Mark's gospel presents us with a live picture of our Lord's tenderness, meekness, and charity. You see that He cannot see the miseries of humankind without being moved with compassion. Our faith holds that He sees every day, every hour and moment our sufferings. And when the proper time comes, He assists us. Just a reminder.. that deliverance comes when He sees fit. When everything tempts us to despair, it is then we must hope the more, for it is in such straits, He works miracles.

It was necessary for the multitude to have been in the wilderness three days..Why is that? So His providence might be more apparent and His divine power better known. During the Exodus, it was necessary that the Egyptian flour should have been entirely consumed before their God sent manna. So the Jews would know their food, their lives, descended from the hands of their God in heaven.

In our times, if we do not receive heavenly consolation, it is without doubt because we seek too ardently for our solace on earth. Looking back at our pasts, if Jesus seems not to have done great things in our behalf, it is because we have not hoped or confided in Him with our whole heart. Going forward, He asks only that we trust in Him.

Our trials come to awaken us to that basic necessity.

"I have compassion on the multitude, He says, for behold they have been with me three days." That is to say, they have attached themselves to Me and depend on My care. Rest then, Christian soul, on the providence of God, and you shall never want.

The man or woman who trusts in God and casts his or her whole care proves beyond dispute that he or she believes Him to be a good, wise and powerful God who rewatches over the spiritual and corporeal needs of His creatures. But wait. How many act as if there was no such thing as "the providence of God"? Or, as if they were afraid to abandon themselves to its guidance?

One highly skilled professional believes herself ruined unless human reason, skill or reason can be brought to bear to help her. Another desperately lonely widower forgets to cast his emptiness on God and depend for support on His companionship..His power and goodness. Sometimes he drifts aimlessly and seeks his friends among those who have power and riches and esteem, but doesn't come to our Savior, who alone knows all the bitterness of our miseries and has the power and will to deliver us.

Do we follow Jesus into the scarcity and want of the wilderness? Do we abandon ourselves to His providence? Or are we tempted to distrust His wisdom, His power and His goodness? No, ..we are here, so instead, follow me to the altar and be fed.