



¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. Luke 4:1-2

THE DESERT

The setting of this text (the “desert”; sometimes translated as “wilderness” or otherwise) is important to Luke’s narrative. To begin, read Psalm 106 as a supplemental text and explore the role that the “desert” played in Israel’s faith story. After reading Psalm 106, reflect on the following questions:

1) What insight does Psalm 106 as a whole offer about how the desert is traditionally viewed in Israel’s story?

2) In Psalm 106:14 The *New International Version* goes as far as to convey the desert as a “wasteland”:

¹⁴ *In the desert they gave in to their craving;
in the wasteland they put God to the test.*

Other descriptions of the “desert” include “desolate place”, “uninhabited land”, “wilderness”, and “waste”. What do these translations convey about how this area was generally viewed by the people.

3) Throughout scripture, the Israelites acknowledge their “desert times” and even embrace it as a part of their story. Are there “desert times” in your life story? If so, what are they?

4) Knowing that the desert is such an important part of *Israel’s* story, and knowing all that it represents, why is it significant that Jesus starts his ministry (immediately after his baptism and before his public ministry) for forty days “in the desert” being tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1)?

5) Jesus intentionally spends time dwelling in the desert, being “led by the Spirit” as a part of his ministry. What does this setting offer to us today as Christians living in the time of Lent? How might His presence strengthen our Christian faith no matter where we find ourselves during this time?

Closing Prayer: Psalm 106 embraces the desert times of Israel’s story while also cushioning it in praise and glory to God for His goodness throughout those times. Through prayer, offer your “desert times” to God as a part of your life story, while at the same time giving praise to God for his continuous graciousness throughout it all. And pray that you will be *led by the Holy Spirit* throughout this season of Lent, even when you find yourself “in the desert”. Amen.