

## Packing For The Wilderness

Our trip into the wilderness is just about to get underway. We are going into a hostile environment where life sustaining water is scarce, food as we know it is non-existent, and there are deadly creatures all around who would like to make a meal out of us. We are going into the wilderness of Lent. It's a place where images of ourselves float in front of our eyes like a mirage shimmering in the heat. It's a place where we confront our sins—the lies we've told, the people we've hurt, the anger we have felt, the things we have stolen, the people we have hated, and those that we have secretly committed adultery with. The wilderness of Lent is where we go to be tested, to be proven and where, if we survive, we meet God.

We aren't the first ones to make this journey, there have been at least three who have been here before us. They survived. The questions are who were they and what did they bring with them? The answers are Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, --- and they brought nothing with them.

In Deuteronomy 9: 9 we read about Moses journey into the wilderness on Mount Sinai. It says that he drank no water and ate no food. When you go before the presence of God, you

don't need anything, because God will supply all your needs. In I Kings 19: 9 we read about Elijah and his trip into the wilderness. God made sure he was strong enough for the trip. And again what you need to notice is when you are on God's mission, God will supply all your needs. Then we come to Jesus. His story was today's gospel lesson. Again notice, that Jesus was going before the presence of God and he was on a mission for God, so even with the devil nipping at his heels the entire time, Jesus lacked for nothing.

Our 40 days into the Lenten wilderness will not be as rigorous or demanding as the days that our fathers Moses and Elijah or our brother Jesus went through. But they can be just as rewarding if we put some thought into what it is we are doing. The fast that we are being asked to undertake is not a fast of physical food. But it should be rather a fast from something we can do without. Like lying. Can you go 40 days without lying? Even little white lies? If you're thinking to yourself, I don't know pastor Arnie that might be pretty hard to do, I have to ask why! Is your life so wrapped up in appearances, and shallowness that you can't go a day without spreading falsehoods? Can you go without lusting for 40 days?

That should be an easy one right? But what about the entertainment industry that promotes sexual innuendo, the advertising industry that is constantly trying to convince you that there is a lifestyle or a product you can't live without? You might have to give up watching television or going to the movies for the next 40 days to give up that one. And I really think we should go see "The Passion of the Christ".

What I believe God has put into this message for us today, is this: If you're going to give up something for Lent, examine yourself and give up something that is separating you from God. God just wants a closer relationship with you and me. He wants to be that one we rely on, the one go to for help, the one that we can have faith in and the one that we know without a doubt loves us so much that he gave his son for us.

In closing here are just a few suggestions for your Lenten Fast this year:

Fast from gossip----feast on the Gospels

Fast from darkness----feast on the Light

Fast from junk foods----feast on the Bread of Life

Fast from the secular----feast on the sacred

Fast from despair-----feast on hope

Fast from revenge-----feast on forgiveness

Fast from getting-----feast on giving

Let us pray: Lord God throughout these next now 37 days, send your angels to protect each one of us just as you protected your son in the wilderness. Fill our hearts with the knowledge of your law so that we can know what sin is and avoid it just as you did for Moses on Mount Sinai, and as with Elijah give us the strength we need to sustain into our own Lenten wilderness, so that when the journey is complete we will be ready for you to talk to us in that still small voice. This we pray in the name of your only son our savior and soon coming king Jesus Christ, Amen.