

## AUDIO RETREAT

# Lenten Landscapes 2023

## Week Two | The Wilderness

### Lenten Landscapes

Lent invites us to share Jesus' journey into the wilderness: to step beyond the familiar landscape of our lives, and allow our reality to rest in God.

Wilderness begins to put us in touch with our own wildness. One way or another we present an ordered face to the world; we are shaped by the expectations other have of us and we have of ourselves. And as much as this is often necessary and has the capacity to bring good, this is not our truth. Our unacknowledged fears, needs and desires can drive us – even oppress us.

Prayer of the wilderness is not our asking God to restore our notion of order. but allowing God to meet us in our disorder and remake us from within. It often feels clumsy and inarticulate. This isn't prayer of performance; it's prayer of vulnerability; prayer of simple need and desire. Lent invites us to let our raw and awkward reality rest in a safe place – in God, who created this reality and loves it. We are often our own harshest judges; we attempt to shut the door on what we do not like about ourselves. God, on the other hand, rejects nothing about us, and desires to integrate all we are into a free and loving wholeness. Rather than fret about all we lack or get trapped in self-judgement, we are invited to go on resting our reality in the compassion of God who is working to make us free, wild and loving.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. [Mark 1.35]

Therefore, I will now persuade her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her vineyards, and make the bitter valley a door of hope. [Hosea 2.14-20]

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water. [Isaiah 35]

I will make a way in the wilderness. [Isaiah 43.19]

Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
In whose hearts are the highways to Zion.  
As they go through the valley of Baca  
They make it a place of springs. [Psalm 84.5-6]

### **When the wilderness chooses us:**

The wilderness – being wild – is not always of our choosing. Circumstances drive us there, and then our old maps of how to be, what to be, no longer seem to work. These wilderness times are disconcerting. We are lost – and it is painful to be lost. We can't see the grand picture of the meaning of this time – not now at least. Yet God is the God of wild places like these.

- Look back with God to your own wilderness experiences. What was the fruit of those times?
- What did you come to see more clearly about yourself?
- Were there ways in which these times when you felt lost began to open up new directions for your life?
- Where and how was God for you in those times?
- Where and how is God for you now?

### **Get out into the wild**

Everywhere, at this time of year, the wildness of living things is stirring. In city and in countryside, birds seek out material to make nests. Weeds grow uninvited and uninhibited. The first leaves break from swelling buds. Each day – if only for a short time – be present to this wildness of living things. Move from the preoccupations of your mind into your senses: listen, look, smell, touch, taste...wonder.



All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled [who knows how?]  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

[From 'Pied Beauty', by Gerard Manley Hopkins]