



March 16, 2025

The Wilderness – A Time of Challenge
Mark 1:9-13; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

Big Idea: The wilderness offers profound challenges, but also a time to embrace weakness to see God's power.

Overview: As Mark demonstrates, the baptism of Jesus immediately leads him into the wilderness. It is the theme of wilderness that defines the season of lent – a period of 40 days leading up to Easter. Throughout this series we join Jesus in the wilderness, learning dependence in the various trials we face. This week, we look at the idea that the wilderness is a place of challenge. We turn our attention to learn from Paul in 2 Corinthians 4.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 reminds believers that they carry the treasure of the gospel in fragile, earthly bodies, showing that their strength comes from God, not themselves. Paul describes the hardships faced in ministry—being afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down—but emphasizes that these struggles do not lead to ultimate defeat.

Despite suffering, believers are never abandoned by God and continue to endure through His power. Paul explains that they carry the "death of Jesus" in their bodies, meaning they experience suffering like Christ, so that His life may also be revealed through them. This passage highlights the paradox of Christian life—experiencing both suffering and resurrection power at the same time.

Paul encourages believers to see trials as a means by which God's glory is displayed. Their difficulties are not meaningless but serve to advance the gospel and strengthen others. Ultimately, this passage calls Christians to remain faithful, trusting that even in weakness, God's power is at work.

Life Group Objectives:

Remember why you exist as a group! Life Groups are to:

1. Reflect on this past week's message and passage or dig into the series you are going through as a group. When we all track together on the sermon series, we learn and grow together as a church.
2. We desire for you to have the Bible play a key role in your time together. Please have people open up Bibles, seeking clarity, asking questions, sharing insights, and allowing it to guide your time together.
3. Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members. How can you build one another up this week?

Conversation starters:

- Have you ever had a moment, decision, or season that you thought was a total disaster, but God seemed to use it, or you, to shine his light?

Learning from God's Word: Bible Study Discussion

Read Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

Questions for Discussion:

1. **Declaration of Power – 2 Corinthians 4:7**
 - What image does a "jar of clay" evoke in your mind?

- What does it look like to embrace weakness for you? Why does this seem difficult to do?

2. Paradoxes of Power – 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

- What are you “perplexed” by right now? What doesn’t seem to make sense in your life and in our world?
- Have you ever experienced the sense of being “knocked down but not knocked out” in your life? What was this like?
- How have you seen God’s power during your most challenging season?

3. Principle of Power – 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

- In what ways have you been shaped by the Western idea that life should be perpetual happiness, pleasure, and success?
- What is an area of consolation in your life (joy, peace, love, hope and faith)? What is an area of desolation right now (dryness, challenge, discouragement, doubt)?
- How do we hold these two things going on at the same time?

4. The Surprise of Power – 2 Corinthians 4:12

- Who in your life can benefit from your places of desolation?

Listening to God:

- The Lord speaks, and we need to discern. What are some key themes that have emerged in your time together? What is the Holy Spirit impressing upon us?