

# ***Wilderness: David***

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Ravensworth Baptist Church  
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Psalm 23

Last December, I started thinking about what our Lenten theme might be. As I looked through the lectionary texts, I was drawn to the stories of the people we encountered—these little snippets in different books, sprawling through space and time. To be honest, I wasn't really sure how they connected and if they did. But reading Adam & Eve alongside Sarai and Abram, Moses and the Israelites, Photina and Jesus at the well, Samuel and David, I felt like their stories were speaking a powerful truth—that in the ordinary and extraordinary, God is with us.

A few weeks later, I found that the organization, *A Sanctified Art*, had released their theme, which included a devotional, artworks, and poems. The theme was called, "Wilderness." That's it, I thought—for Lent, those stories of people encountering God all happened in some kind of a wilderness season.

As the group over at Sanctified Art wrote this week and I have to agree, "Never could we have ever imagined that this theme of Wilderness would lead us here, where we are today."<sup>1</sup> Each week, they release a poem that was written months ago. Ready for this week's?

This week's poem in our *Wilderness* Lent poems is titled, "The Wilderness is a Place of Disruption." We are all feeling this disruption deeply.

Here are a few lines from the poem by Sarah Are:

My grandfather was a good man,  
But he believed  
That wilderness emotions  
Were not to be seen.  
Cry with the door closed,  
Don't dwell on the negative.  
Chin up, kid,  
We've been here before.  
My grandfather was a good man,  
But I'd like to say—  
The wilderness is here to interrupt your  
previously-scheduled programming.  
Like water in the desert  
And setting the slaves free,  
The wilderness might be  
The very thing we need,  
The very thing we dream,

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<sup>1</sup> A Sanctified Art, Email, March 18.

The very thing we plead  
For.  
I guess what I'm trying to say is—  
It never seems appealing to let a bird  
in the house,  
But if you do,  
Then you might as well  
Open every window and door.

And if you do,  
Then you just might find yourself  
Basking in the light,  
Dancing in the breeze,  
Overwhelmed with the beauty  
That an open door brings.  
So I'm opening my door  
And inviting in the wind,  
To rustle up my heart  
And start over again.  
For sweeping the truth under the rug  
Has never gotten us far.  
So may the wilderness be like a  
Bird in your house.  
Throw open your doors.  
The truth must come out.

“We're not quite ready to bask in the light and dance in the breeze, but we'll continue to trust that this wilderness has formative gifts we can't yet see. We'll continue to walk, side by side and step by step. The beauty of this pandemic is that we're in it together.”<sup>2</sup>

We are in it together. I think maybe that togetherness is what drew me to those lectionary texts too. In each one, there might be wilderness, but no one is alone. Even if it appears that they are because our community is bigger and wider than we can imagine.

The lectionary pulled another fast one today with the pre-appointed text of Psalm 23. When we discussed it in Tuesday Morning Bible study this week, we said that we felt comforted and assured that God was with us.

Tradition attributes the Psalm to David, the shepherd boy who became king. In the passage I read from 1 Samuel, we hear how David was anointed. All the other sons of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Jesse passed before Samuel, an ancient beauty pageant of sorts and Samuel knew that none of them were the one chosen.

Samuel asked Jesse, are you sure there are no others? Jesse told him that yes, there was one more, David, one out there somewhere in the fields, watching the sheep, keeping them safe. He was out in the pasture somewhere—wandering around solo, while those more powerful than he were strutting, selling off stock, and positioning themselves for financial gain.

David was the one, Samuel said. And so he was anointed. Who knows when and if David actually wrote Psalm 23. But I can imagine him out there, wandering with the sheep, singing this psalm as he cared for them and God cared for him.

God is our shepherd, there are green, lush spring pastures right now. There are peace-filled still waters. Our souls can be restored.

In a way, the poem I read earlier by Sarah Are, sounds like a modern-day translation of Psalm 23. And that got me wondering: if we were to write our own versions of Psalm 23 during this season, what would it sound like? That's your invitation this week. To take some time in the midst of the virtual meetings, and newly-found teaching responsibilities, and cooking and cleaning, and loneliness, to consider: what would Psalm 23 sound like if I wrote it this week?

I'd love to read your offerings if you're up for sharing them. I think this is part of a wilderness season where we are figuring it out as we go. And like we've been saying all along—in the wilderness, the presence of God can be clear and we can find new signs of hope around us.

We might feel like some of people in the stories we've been reading- disconnected, wandering, isolated. But the truth is: we are in this together friends.

And God is with us. Amen.