

“Let us give thanks to the Lord
for his steadfast love and tell of
God’s deeds with songs of joy.” AMEN!

“La-la-la.... Baby, I love you
But if you want to leave
Take good care
Hope you make a lot of nice friends out there
But just remember there’s a lot of bad and beware

Oh, baby, baby, it’s a wild world
It’s hard to get by just upon a smile
Oh, baby, baby, it’s a wild world
And I’ll always remember you like a child.”

I left out the word, “girl” on purpose
because it does not matter what
gender you are, the truth is,
no matter how you identify,
it is a “wild world.”

The song, by Cat Stevens, was released in 1970
and speaks of heartbreak when lovers
must separate.

I sing it today not for that reason
but because we live in a world
where snakes bite,

in a world where people get sick
and/or die, and

in a world where the Son of Humanity
was lifted up on a cross and
was wrongly executed.

These are just a few of the examples of
the world's "wildness." (Hm)

If we were to imagine that God sings
the words of Cat Steven's song to us,

then we find that there's the
expression of God's love...

"Baby, I love you," and

there's an expression of freewill...

"If you want to leave, take good care."

God does not force us into
relationship with the divine, nor
will God's love,
poured out for the world, ever cease.

God will "always remember you like a child." (Pause)

We find that wildness of nature in the section we read from the Book of Numbers.

Our Bible's translate for us that "the Lord sent poisonous snakes."

What!?!

It doesn't make the words any easier to swallow when we find that the Hebrew word is really "fiery serpents."

The word is "seraphim," where in other places in the Bible, we find the gentler word "angel."

These seraphim are noted to gather around God's throne.

All this does not make us feel any less anxious but indicates an otherworldliness revelation about God's agents.

Either way, these snakes, serpents, or angels - Sent by the Lord, bit people and many died. We need to stay in this tension because the words are clear that God sent them to bite and those bites caused death. (Pause)

This is not a response from God we
tend to like hearing.

We often discount or ignore things like this
by saying that's "an Old Testament God."

This Lenten season we will agree that this is
not how we prefer to see God, or understand God,
or believe that it is something that God
would do now,

but how do we really know that?

We know that there are consequences to our actions.

We know that living lives of selfishness and
seclusion are not healthy for us.

We know that when we play with fire
we will get burned.

We know that it's a wild world. (Pause)

Parents know what it feels like
to be the smartest, bravest, most
heroic person alive.

They know if for at least a few years
when their children are at a certain age. :-)

But there always comes a time when
we can't fix a toy, or there's a question
we don't know the answer to, or
the pain from a scraped knee or
a broken heart we can't make
go away.

That's real life in a wild world.

There comes a time for all of us when
we humbly accept who we are.

And at that moment, we may
cry out to the Lord.

Crying out is different than complaining.

When we complain we make it seem as though
we could do better than God or
know more than God knows.

But, when we cry out, we accept
who we are and we recognize the
wildness of the world.

We make clear that we know our place and
stay in our lane when it comes to God.

That God is God and we aren't.

It is then that the Holy Spirit might come and
startle us with healing.

I need to hear this as much as anyone,
"It is good to be uncomfortable sometimes."

It is good for us to know that we don't know
everything about God and for us to be
reminded that God can act freely
in any way God wants. (Pause)

We should also know that, often times
the repercussions of our behavior is not
because God decided to send something
to bite us,

but that with freedom there are consequences.

Like the way the psalm said,
"Some were sick from their ways." (2X)

The ways we behave have the potential
to make us (and others),
literally and metaphorically, sick. (Pause)

Does God send those
sicknesses/bites/stings/arrows or are

they the repercussion of poor decisions
while living?

Maybe it is both... Maybe it is neither...

That's between you and the Lord.

I prefer to rather dwell on the
hope written that says -
when we cry out, God will intervene
and say,

“Enough is enough, the children
have come back come, it is time to live. (Pause)

Which brings us to the eternal life that
Jesus promises to the world God loves.

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world
that God gave God’s only Son, so that
everyone who believes in him may not
perish but may have eternal life.”

Verse 19 goes on to say,
“And this is the judgment,”
but it is really a crisis.

The Greek word here is “krisis.”

The crisis of humanity is that
we love the darkness of evil rather
than God's light, and so
we condemn ourselves.

I hope we can step into the intimacy of
this reading that Jesus communicates to
and with us,

that eternal life is right now offered
because God wants us to know God.

To know God loves the world.

To know we need to be loved and that
Jesus did not come to condemn,
but to give us a way to be healed and
a way to live boldly amid
the crises of the wild world.

AMEN!