

Wild Hydrangeas

If you were to hike in Alabama and other parts of the Southern United States in late spring and summer, enormous balls of white flowers growing on long leafy green extensions would likely border your trail. They are commonly referred to as Oakleaf or Wild Hydrangeas, while my mother's favorite was the Limelight Hydrangea. The Limelight is cultivated for hedges and grown in sunny spots across the South. Other species of the plant produce flowers of varying colors based on the pH value of the soil it inhabits. Wise gardeners can introduce metal into the plant's dirt to alter the color of the flowers.

Like Wild Hydrangeas, remembering the mercy and grace available to every person is the beauty to be discovered in the Wilderness. God's intent in calling the 2nd generation of the Exodus to repentance at Mt Moab was for them to remember that his mercy is for all people, including "whoever is not here with us today." They were to call to mind not their own sin, or their perceived lack of it, but the very character of God. We are to take to heart that our only hope is found not in self-righteousness, but in what Christ has already accomplished. The true returning of the mind begins by wrestling with our own natural inclination to depend on what I can accomplish to make up for our wrongdoings. Self-righteousness is not a bug but a feature of life after the Fall. Adam and Eve wanted their "eyes to be opened, and to be like God, knowing good and evil." We suffer from the same temptation every day, especially when we falter in a fashion that creates significant consequences.

The reality is that when we find ourselves in the Wilderness, relying on self is the worst possible option. We have already noted how our thinking is altered, and our support systems drastically change or disappear. At this point, we need to be more dependent than ever on a Being that can appoint a fish to swallow a wayward prophet, sustain a people group for 40 years in a desert, and even bring a mighty empire to repentance. Travelers in the Wilderness need to have their soil altered so that something beautiful and different can emerge when flowers reappear.

God determined that the first step in repentance is to remember. The most critical part in the process is returning your mind to God. What is stopping you from returning your mind to God? Let us encourage you to spend time now with the Creator of Hydrangeas, wild and otherwise. Bring no agenda to the table other than your willingness to consider the character of our Lord. His invitation reaches the Wilderness.