

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MARCH 9th, 2025**

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
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First Sunday of Lent - "Into the Wilderness"

Lent calls us into the wilderness—a season of reflection, testing, and growth. Jesus’ journey into the wilderness was not accidental; it was Spirit-led. As we enter this season, we ask: *What does God want to reveal in our own wilderness experiences?*

OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious and faithful God, as You provided for Jesus in the wilderness, so You provide for us each day. We bring these gifts as an offering of our trust in Your provision. Use them to strengthen Your church, to bless those in need, and to lead us all into deeper faith. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

PRELUDE AND WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: For some of us, it was tempting to “sleep in” this morning.

P: But God has called us to this place, to hear God’s word, to open our hearts in prayer and praise, and to seek direction for our lives.

L: There are many temptations placed in front of us. We are called to be strong and place our trust in God.

P: God is always faithful to us, comforting, guiding, lifting us.

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OPENING HYMN: #635 All The Way My Saviour Leads Me

- 1 All the way my Saviour leads me;
what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy
who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
here by faith in him to dwell,
for I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.
- 2 All the way my Saviour leads me,
cheers each winding path I tread,
gives me grace for every trial,
feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter,
and my soul athirst may be,
gushing from the rock before me,
lo, a spring of joy I see!
- 3 All the way my Saviour leads me;
O the fullness of his love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
in my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed, immortal,
wings its flight to realms of day,
this my song through endless ages,
'Jesus led me all the way!'

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, the temptations of the world loom large before us. We are enticed, cajoled, and “sweet-talked” into moving from lives of service to lives of self-centeredness. We need your healing love. As you resisted the temptations in the wilderness, help us to place our trust in you, that we may be strong in our faith and confident in our service to you through serving others. AMEN.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN’S TIME

CHILDREN'S VIDEO

LITANY: INTO THE WILDERNESS

Leader: Lord, You were led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

People: Lead us, O God, through the wilderness of our lives.

Leader: You fasted and prayed, preparing for the journey ahead.

People: Teach us to seek You in times of trial and testing.

Leader: You overcame temptation with the power of God's Word.

People: Strengthen us to stand firm in faith and trust in Your promises.

Leader: In the wilderness, You found communion with the Father.

People: Draw us closer to You in the silence and struggle.

Leader: Lord Jesus, walk with us in this Lenten season.

People: Shape us, guide us, and lead us into Your will. Amen.

*CHORUS: #66 "I WILL SING OF THE MERCIES"

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever, I will sing, I will sing.

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever,

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.

With my mouth will I make known

Thy faithfulness, thy faithfulness,

With my mouth will I make known

Thy faithfulness to all generations.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 4:1-11 (you will also, find Jesus' temptation in Luke 4:1-13)

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. **2** After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3** The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^[b]"

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. **6** "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'^[c]"

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^[d]"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **9** "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'^[e]"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

MESSAGE: Lent—A Personal Wilderness Experience

Lent calls us into the wilderness, but not just in a physical sense, it is a spiritual wilderness where we are invited to reflect, be tested, and grow in faith. The wilderness is often a place of uncertainty, discomfort, and challenge, but it is also a place where God reveals Himself in new and transformative ways.

Jesus' Journey Was Spirit-Led.... So Is Ours

Matthew 4:1 tells us that "*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*" This reminds us that:

- Our wilderness moments are not random or accidental.
- God is at work even in our struggles.
- The Spirit leads us, even when we don't understand the path.

Many people experience personal wilderness seasons, some examples, times of doubt, searching, or hardship. These moments are not meant to break us but to bring us closer to God.

I ask this question as we begin our Lenten journey ... What Does God Want to Reveal in Our Wilderness?

This is the heart of Lent..... it is a time of asking the hard questions like these:

- *Am I truly depending on God or just on myself?*
- *What distractions do I need to remove to hear God more clearly?*
- *How is God shaping me through my struggles?*
- *Where is my faith being tested, and how am I responding?*

For some, the wilderness might look like:

- A season of waiting - longing for an answer from God.
- A time of loss - grieving something or someone deeply missed.
- A period of doubt - questioning faith, struggling to understand God's plan.

- A call to transformation - where God is inviting them into something new, but fear and uncertainty stand in the way.

Though the wilderness is often associated with isolation, it is also the place where God meets His people.

- Moses met God in the burning bush in the wilderness.
- The Israelites encountered God as He led them through the desert.
- Jesus, though physically alone, was never abandoned He was sustained by God's Word.

If Jesus had to go through the wilderness, then we should not be surprised when we experience our own wilderness journeys. But the good news is this: God never leads us into the wilderness without walking with us through it.

That is why it is so important, to take this time through Lent to look for a transformation in yourself and others,

Because, Lent is more than a time of giving things up. It is a time of letting God in. It is a time to slow down, examine our hearts, and ask, *"Lord, what do You want to reveal to me in this season?"*

Just as Jesus emerged from the wilderness stronger, more focused, and ready for His mission, we, too, can come out of our own wilderness journeys renewed, refined, and ready to follow God more faithfully.

As we enter this Lenten season, let's not rush past the wilderness experience. Instead, let's embrace it, knowing that God is using it to shape us, strengthen us, and draw us closer to Him.

If you find yourself in a wilderness today ... struggling, searching, waiting, know this: God has not abandoned you.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, but He also led Him out. Jesus was tempted but not defeated. The enemy sought to undermine His identity and mission, but Jesus held fast to the truth of God's Word. Therefore, the wilderness is not the end of your story. God is shaping you, strengthening you, preparing you for what's next.

Remember that, Satan offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship. But Jesus declares, *"Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."*

Jesus could have turned the stones into bread. He could have called on angels. But He didn't—because He trusted the Father's provision. Therefore, Satan will tempt us with shortcuts, an easier way to success, influence, or comfort.

But when Jesus left the wilderness, He was empowered for ministry.

"Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him." (Matthew 4:11)

Jesus' wilderness experience was not wasted, it prepared Him for His mission.

I ask you these questions for contemplation, Where is God leading you in this season? What might He be revealing to you in the wilderness?

Are you willing to trust Him through it?

Remember ... Lent is not just a season on the church calendar—it is a personal journey that mirrors the wilderness experiences we all face in life. Amen.

HYMN: #651 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

- 1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.
- 2 Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.
- 3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: Almighty God, Creator of all, You formed us from the dust and breathed life into us. Yet in our wandering, we turned from You. Still, in love, You sent Jesus—who, led by the Spirit, journeyed into the wilderness, resisted temptation, and remained faithful. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He made a way for us to be restored to You.

And so, with all creation, we join in the song of heaven:

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

Rev. Peggy will share the words of Invitation and Consecration

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Leader: Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and cup. May they be for us the body and blood of Christ, so that we may be His body for the world. As we partake, strengthen us for the journey ahead, that we may walk in Your ways. Amen.

Please remain seated as we share the words of #466 and we will sing it through 2x

Eat this bread, drink this cup;

come to me and never be hungry.

Eat this bread, drink this cup;

trust in me and you will not thirst.

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

(Distribute the elements)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray: Gracious and Everlasting God, we give You thanks for this holy mystery in which You have given Yourself to us. In this bread and cup, we have tasted Your goodness, received Your grace, and been nourished for the journey ahead.

As Christ was led into the wilderness, so too are we called to walk through seasons of trial and testing. But we go not in fear, for You are with us. Strengthen us by Your Spirit, that we may stand firm against temptation, trust in Your provision, and follow Christ's example of faithfulness.

Lord, where we are weak, be our strength. Where we doubt, grant us faith. Where we hunger for things that do not satisfy, fill us with Your righteousness. As we depart from this table, may we carry the presence of Christ with us into the world—living as bearers of hope, instruments of peace, and messengers of Your love.

Send us forth now, not as people weighed down by burdens, but as those lifted up by Your grace. Let our lives reflect the light of Christ, and may our words and actions bring glory to Your name.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who walked the wilderness before us and leads us ever forward. Amen.

POST COMMUNION HYMN: #481 Sent Forth by God's Blessings

1 Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from this dwelling take leave.

The supper is ended, O now be extended
the fruits of this service in all who believe.

The seed of Christ's teaching, receptive souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for God and for all.

God's grace did invite us, God's love shall unite us
to work for the kingdom and answer its call.

2 With praise and thanksgiving to God ever living,
the tasks of our everyday life we will face.

Our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,
embracing God's children of each tribe and race.

With your feast you feed us, with your light now lead us;
unite us as one in this life that we share.

Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving
give honour to Christ and the name that we bear.

SENDING FORTH

Leader: You have been fed at Christ's table; now go forth, strengthened for the journey. Walk in faith, resist temptation, and trust in God's grace. May the peace of Christ go with you.

CHORAL AMEN**POSTLUDE**

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Announcements

Tuesday, March 18th: Coffee Tuesday at Springvale beginning at 9:30am. All are welcome!

Sunday, April 13th: Palm Sunday & Communion

Friday, April 18th: Good Friday Joint Service at Hagersville beginning at 10:30am. Join us after worship in the C.E. Wing for fellowship & hot cross buns.

Sunday, April 20th: Easter Sunday. Springvale will host their Easter Breakfast beginning at 8:30am with worship to follow.

July 28th to August 1st is V.B.S. "Blast Off with Jesus" – Exploring God's Universe.

It was suggested at the Official Board meeting that Friday August 1st we invite the congregations to the wrap up at Bible School at 12:00 pm. in the form of a celebration service and not have a Church Service on the Sunday August 3rd. That would mean that Peggy will be away Sunday August 3rd and both Churches would be closed that Sunday. Or we have worship on August 3rd, joint service at Springvale to celebrate V.B.S. On Sunday August 10 – Peggy will be on holidays; but Peggy stated that she will prepare a service to be shared on that Sunday if your congregation decide to be open for Worship on the 10th.

Next Sunday, each congregation will decide whether to have a service on August 10th. I am bringing this forward in this announcement, so you time to think about this and then there will be discussion around these two Sundays and motion is to be made.