



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

Mailing Address : 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701
562-924-5051

Website : www.sp-ecc.org

August 23, 2009

Theme: WWJD—The Desert Experience

Text: Luke 4:1-13

This is the second sermon in a series of messages in which we ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" If we were to ask this question before every decision and every action, our lives would be profoundly changed. Today we will deal with an aspect of following Jesus that many of us might want to avoid. We are going to take a look at Jesus' desert experience. After he was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove. He heard God's voice from heaven saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved. With you I am well-pleased." Immediately after this powerful experience, Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. In the wilderness of Judea, Jesus fasted, prayed, and was tempted by the devil. He did his work in the towns of Galilee but he won an important battle against the devil in the desert. If we desire to do what Jesus would do, God may well call us into an experience of the desert.

The first thing that we could say about Jesus' desert experience is that it was a place of conflict. Jesus had just experienced the glory of God. Now he will face Satan himself, who will try to turn Jesus away from his God-given purpose. In the desert, Jesus faced three temptations: (1) He was tempted to turn the stones into bread to satisfy his hunger. (2) He was tempted to worship Satan in exchange for authority over the kingdoms of the world. (3) He was tempted to jump from the temple to see if God would save Him according to Psalm 91. We will not be tempted quite like Jesus was tempted. For example, none of us will be tempted to turn stones into bread. We will probably not be tempted by Satan himself. Satan is a finite creature. He can only be at one place at one time. But we can expect conflict with the forces of darkness—Satan's evil allies, the fallen angels. Paul wrote that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of darkness who rule in the fallen world of mankind. Satan wanted to win a decisive victory over Jesus. He wanted to defeat Jesus in such a way that his entire work of salvation would be ruined. But Jesus was victorious. He gained his victory by quoting the Word of God each time he was tempted.

The desert experience can also be a place of communion. It can be a place of fellowship with God. Luke tells us that Jesus withdrew to the wilderness where he prayed. Luke tells us that on one occasion, Jesus spent all night in prayer to God. Jesus found in God a listening ear. He found Someone with whom he could share the struggles of life and ministry in a fallen world. Jesus didn't just speak to God. God spoke to Him also. He was praying at His baptism when God spoke to Him in an audible voice. God wants to speak to us also. God can speak to us directly through His Spirit. The apostle Paul wrote, "For the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God." But the primary way that God speaks to people is through His Word. Remember that each time



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

Mailing Address : 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701
562-924-5051

Website : www.sp-ecc.org

Jesus was tempted by the devil, he quoted Scripture. If we desire to do what Jesus would do we must become very familiar with the Scriptures.

The desert experience can also be a place where God tests our commitment to His will and purpose. In the desert, Jesus made the commitment to do God's will whatever the cost. Toward the end of Luke's Gospel, we find Jesus in a spiritual desert as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke tells us that as Jesus faced the cross he was in such agony of soul and spirit that he sweat blood. Why such agony? The main reason was that he was going to take the sins of the world upon his shoulders. He would identify Himself with all of the world's sin. In His humanity, he would experience abandonment by God. Jesus made a commitment to God's will in that Garden. He prayed, "Not My will, but Yours be done." Jesus was willing to be abandoned by God so that we would never have to be abandoned by God. The desert was Jesus' place of commitment.

Although, it may be hard to believe, the desert can become a place of contentment. The desert experience can be a place where we discover that our vocations, our possessions, and even our deepest human relationships do not ultimately satisfy the soul. It is when we discover this that we may also discover that only God's Spirit can satisfy the deepest longings of our souls. God's first desire is that He Himself be glorified; but He also desires that our souls should be satisfied in Him. When we think about this for a moment It is often only when we have nothing else to lean on that we turn to God alone. When we turn to God alone our source of joy and strength come from Him.