

Assembly Liturgy

April 14, 2020

Scripture reference: Zephaniah 3: 14-20

Leader: Oh God of all creation, your church, even the whole world has been called into the wilderness. For many, a place of confusion, fear, hunger, and thirst. Which has revealed a spirit of preparation. A place of changed priorities and radical re-orientation, a time of separation, stripped of all normalcy. Called into a place of hearing your word, listening in prayer and a re-alignment of our lives.

People: Lord, prepare our hearts, minds and bodies for this time.

Leader: Lord, in this wilderness, you allow obstacles and situations to test your people. You test our loyalties, our actions, our inactions and our words. You test our faith in your designs, our trust in your provision and our willingness to submit to your desires. You search the wilderness to find those who have focused on you and challenged the stark reality of being alone.

People: Lord, test our minds, bodies and spirits, that we might fully submit to your will.

Leader: Lord in this wilderness, our mind and spirit seek reconciliation, with others, with our own internal conflicts and with you. In the wilderness, we recognize and realize the foolishness of our stubborn will, the destructive effect it has on others, and our overwhelming desire to always be right, even at the expense of the other.

People: Lord, help us to reconcile our own thoughts and our relationships with others.

Leader: Lord, in this wilderness, our rebellion becomes clear. We begin to see how the world appears through your eyes A world filled with lawlessness, greed and self-fulfillment. A world where self-preservation exceeds self-sacrifice. We see our world filled with the hunger for power, the hunger for bread made from stone and water which leaves us thirsty. We see how far we have fallen from your grace and mercy.

People: Lord, quiet our hearts and allow us time to confess, that we would cease from fighting against your desire and against each other.

Leader: Lord, in the wilderness, we find ourselves in a place where we are helpless without you. We seek your nurturing presence. We use this time of separation to soak in your wisdom, to grow and expand our understanding of the world and of your kingdom. You feed us with the power of your Spirit, building us up and preparing us for the future, just as a mother nurtures a baby. Help us to learn new ways to use resources and abandon old habits.

People: Lord, help us to be good students, discovering the many ways you teach us to live.

Leader: Lord, we recognize the wilderness as a place where you challenge us, expecting us to grow, exploring the gifts of creativity, the gifts of adaptation, the gifts of conservation and respect. You ask us to endure hardship, loneliness, scarcity, disappointment and loss. You give us tasks which seem insurmountable, tools which seem insufficient and knowledge which seems lacking.

People: Lord, give us strength to meet all challenges.

Leader: Lord, in the wilderness, you prepare us, test us, reconcile us, nurture us, challenge us, and through it all, you *transform* us. Everything we experience you have used to change us forever. Our spirits, our families, our churches, our minds our attitudes and our desires have been changed, there is no going back. Transformation can be painful, and change can be hard and yet in your creative dynamic, many things must change.

All: Lord God of the wilderness, we praise you; giving thanks continually for your mercy and love. We seek your healing of our bodies, our society, our nation and world. We praise you for your faithful servants in church and society who unselfishly sacrifice to help us to stay safe and well. We thank you for allowing us to meet today in spirit and look forward with great anticipation the day we can meet together again. To Jesus be all glory and praise, in His name we pray, Amen