

# Feasting in the Wilderness

A LENTEN JOURNEY 2022





## INTRODUCTION

Each year, Christians around the world join together in the observation of Lent, the forty days leading up to Easter. The forty days correspond to Jesus' forty days in the wilderness which almost certainly is meant to be reminiscent of the forty years the Israelites spent in the wilderness after being freed from Egyptian captivity and slavery. When we think of Lent, we think of sacrifice and fasting. Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness, after all. However, if we're not careful, we can forget that fasting wasn't the point of Jesus time in the wilderness and it's not the point of Lent, either.

Lent, traditionally, has been a time of preparation for resurrection, new life, the King and his Kingdom. Historically, churches would even use Lent as a season to prepare members and believers for baptisms that would be performed on Easter Sunday. In the gospels, Jesus's time in the wilderness was preparation for his earthly ministry. In the Pentateuch, Israel's time in the wilderness was meant to be preparation for life as God's people in God's promised land. For us, Lent is a season, then, not primarily of fasting but of preparation. The season is preparation. The fasting is preparation. The wilderness is preparation.

This shift in emphasis is instructive. When we understand the wilderness to be about preparation we begin to view it through different eyes. The wilderness, now, is not a place of hunger, isolation, and weakness. **The wilderness is a place of provision, presence, and power.** The wilderness is a place of strength. It's strength because in the wilderness, God provides (Ex 16:15-35). In the wilderness, God leads (Ex 13:21, Matt 4:1). In the wilderness, God speaks (Ex 19:3-6, Is. 40:3). In the wilderness, God is present. In that sense, all of life for the follower of Jesus on this side of eternity is wilderness. We are

being prepared for eternity, for the fullness of the Kingdom of God. And even as we are being prepared for eternity, eternity is being prepared for us.

**One of the most consistently used analogies for the fullness of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven is a feast—a**

table set for people from every tribe, tongue, people group, and nation to feast with and in the presence of the God-King forever. From Sabbath to the feasts and festivals, Hebrew life was ordered to remind and rehearse that reality. Likewise, the rhythms and practices of the Church remind us and invite us to rehearse that reality. Each week we gather and worship in the presence of the Lord and eat at his table—communion.

**Lent as preparation is Lent as reminder and rehearsal of the Kingdom.** The remarkable thing is that the Church rehearsing the Kingdom together was an invitation to all to join in, to come to the table of the King and feast.

With all of this in mind, we want Lent 2022 to be a season where as a church we are prepared for the fullness of the Kingdom by practicing and participating in three aspects of the Kingdom: presence, feasting, and invitation.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make  
for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well  
refined.

And he will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations.

He will swallow up death forever;  
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from  
all faces,

and the reproach of his people he will take  
away from all the earth,  
for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day,  
“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for  
him, that he might save us.

This is the Lord; we have waited for him;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

**ISAIAH 25:6-9**

## MONDAYS

Lectio Divina (literally divine reading) is an ancient spiritual practice of reading the Bible. It's a way of praying the scriptures slowly in order to encounter God as he speaks directly and personally through his word. It involves reading the scripture passage four times in total, giving an opportunity to think deeply about it and respond. Think of this not as Bible study but approaching Scripture as a meeting place for a personal encounter with the Living God.

Each Monday during Lent we'll sit with the passage from the previous day's sermon.

- 3/6 Matthew 21:1-11
- 3/13 Matthew 22:34-40
- 3/20 Matthew 22:15-22
- 3/27 Matthew 18:21-35
- 4/3 Matthew 25:31-46
- 4/10 Matthew 27:15-23

Here's how to get started: Make sure you are sitting comfortably. Breathe slowly and deeply, asking God to speak to you through the passage.

### Lectio (Read)

Begin by reading the selected Scripture aloud slowly and intentionally. Use your imagination to place yourself into the story. What do you see and feel? Who is there and why? What are you experiencing in this story? Take some time to pause and reflect on the experience.

### Meditatio (Reflect)

Read the passage again, listening carefully for any words or phrases that stand out. There's no need to force it, but wait patiently for the Holy Spirit to give gentle guidance. Allow it to arise from the passage as if it is God's word for you today. Sit in silence, pondering the word or phrase in your head.

### Oratio (Pray)

Read the passage aloud slowly once again and let the words be your prayer. Address God using words from the Scriptures upon which you have meditated. It could be a prayer of thanksgiving, petition, etc., inspired by the Word and your communion with the Living God.

### Contemplatio (Contemplate)

As you read the passage for the last time, consider what God is inviting you to do or become. Is there something you need to relinquish or take on as a result of what God is saying to you in this word or phrase? In the silence that follows the reading pray for the grace of the Spirit to plant this word in your heart.

## **TUESDAYS**

As we take this journey of prayer together, here is the model that each week will follow:

We will pray through five phases each week, including Adoration, Confession, Petition, Thanksgiving, and Charge & Benediction.

ADORATION is where we declare to God and remind ourselves and our hearts that there is no one like God; that he is sovereign and reigns over everything. These are prayers of exaltation and expressions of love to God for who he is and what he's done.

CONFESSION is where we acknowledge the choices we make that are unlike Jesus. This allows us to repent, or turn back, to God. When we do this, instead of experiencing guilt and shame, we remember that Jesus has erased the power of sin, and through him, we are completely forgiven and covered in his grace. This kind of prayer helps remind us of the ways that the Holy Spirit is healing us bit by bit and shaping us to be more like Jesus.

PETITION is a sweet and humbling time in prayer. It is important to remember that petition is not merely a time for us to rattle off a wish list of gifts we'd like from God our Father, yet it's just as important to remember that God is absolutely a generous giver. Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 7: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" During these prayers of petition, we come to our Father and practice true dependence in a bold way. Ask the Father for the things you need. Ask him for help. Ask him for guidance. Jesus models this for us all throughout the Gospels, as we will see throughout this journey in the season of Lent together.

THANKSGIVING prayers can feel a bit more straightforward. Throughout this guide, prayers of thanksgiving will be contextualized differently, and it is crucial to continually orient



our hearts and attitudes to a habit of gratitude. Author Melody Beattie puts it this way: “Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.”

CHARGE & BENEDICTION is meant to simultaneously be a word of encouragement, as well as a challenge to action. These are prayers focused on us taking steps forward and putting prayer into action. As we end each week in this posture, our hope is that this journey of prayer continues to deepen our faith and stir us to action, not just thought, in our lives, our families, our cities, and the world around us.

**As we prepare for week one, take time today and make a sentence-prayer for each phase listed below.**

#### ADORATION

Finish this sentence. “God, you are \_\_\_\_\_.”

Continue to praise God for who he is and what he’s done.

#### CONFESSION

Open up about any habits or choices that are misaligned with the heart of Jesus. Hand these over to him and receive healing.

#### PETITION

Ask God to guide you on this journey of prayer through the season of Lent. Ask for the things you need. Ask for a release of the blessings and gifts that God has for you.

#### THANKSGIVING

Reflect on the material, circumstantial, and relational blessings that you enjoy in your life. Express gratitude to God for his generosity, and ask him to awaken you from taking anything for granted.

## CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Throughout this guide, we will leave you each week with a blessing and prayer you may have heard before. Receive this as a blessing over you, but also as a challenge to step into prayer and action as we join together on this journey.

Today's benediction comes to us from Numbers 6 – the blessing God dictates to Moses that Aaron and his sons are meant to speak over the nation of Israel:

*The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you  
and give you peace*

## WEDNESDAYS

### Feasting

This may seem counter-intuitive to how we think about Lent but remember, Lent is about preparation for the Kingdom. Feasting is not indulgence. Feasting is not the abandonment of self-control. Feasting is not contrary to dependence. In fact, **the feasts of Scripture always reminded God's people of their dependence on God—his past actions, his sustaining presence, and his future work.** Feasting is not isolated, it is always communal. Feasting rehearses the Kingdom. We feast together weekly as a church as we come to the Lord's table in communion. We want to further practice feasting together weekly in community.

Whether your Community Group meets on Wednesday or not, the hope is that you'll gather together in a slightly different manner throughout Lent. Choose a time to come together to prepare the food and the table and to sit, eat, and celebrate the past and future goodness of the Lord. If you're not in a community group, consider joining one, or open your home to people to participate in this weekly act of Kingdom preparation.

To begin your meal together and set the tone, we invite you to use the liturgies on the following pages, one per week.

**LITURGY FOR THE FEAST  
MARCH 9, 2022**

**CELEBRANT:** To gather joyfully  
is indeed a serious affair,  
for feasting and all enjoyments  
gratefully taken are,  
at their heart, acts of war.

**PEOPLE: In celebrating this feast  
we declare that**  
    **evil and death,**  
    **suffering and loss,**  
    **sorrow and tears,**  
**will not have the final word.**

But the joy of fellowship, and the welcome  
and comfort of friends new and old,  
and the celebration of these blessings of  
food and drink and conversation and laughter  
are the true evidences of things eternal,  
and are the first fruits of that great glad  
joy that is to come and that will be unending.

**So let our feast this day be joined  
to those sure victories secured by Christ,**

Let it be to us now a delight, and a glad  
foretaste of his eternal kingdom.

**Bless us, O Lord, in this feast.**

Bless us, O Lord, as we linger over our cups,  
and over this table laden with good things,  
as we relish the delights of varied texture  
and flavor, of aromas and savory spices,  
of dishes prepared as acts of love and blessing,  
of sweet delights made sweeter by  
the communion of saints.

May this shared meal, and our pleasure in it,  
 bear witness against the artifice and deceptions  
 of the prince of the darkness that would blind  
 this world to hope.

**May it strike at the root of the lie that  
 would drain life of meaning, and  
 the world of joy, and suffering of redemption.**

May this our feast fall like a great hammer blow  
 against that brittle night,  
 shattering the gloom, reawakening our hearts,  
 stirring our imaginations, focusing our vision open.  
**on the kingdom of heaven that is to come,**  
 on the kingdom that is promised,  
**on the kingdom that is already,**  
**indeed, among us,**  
 For the resurrection of all good things  
 has already joyfully begun.

**ALL PARTICIPANTS NOW LIFT THEIR GLASSES OR CUPS.**

May this feast be an echo of that great  
 Supper of the Lamb,  
**a foreshadowing of the great celebration  
 that awaits the children of God.**

Where two or more of us are gathered,  
 O Lord, there you have promised to be.  
**And here we are.**  
 And so, here are you.  
 Take joy, O King, in this our feast.  
**Take joy, O King!**

**GLASSES ARE CLINKED WITH CELEBRATORY CHIME, AND PARTICIPANTS  
 IN THE FEAST SAVOR A DRINK, ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER HEARTILY  
 WITH THESE SINCERE WORDS:**

## **Take joy!**

All will be well!

### **PARTICIPANTS TAKE UP THE CRY:**

#### **All will be well!**

Nothing good and right and true will be lost forever.

All good things will be restored.

Feast and be reminded! Take joy, little flock.

Take joy! Let battle be joined!

#### **Let battle be joined!**

Now you who are loved by the Father,  
prepare your hearts and give yourself wholly  
to this celebration of joy,  
to the glad company of saints,  
to the comforting fellowship of the Spirit,  
and to the abiding presence of Christ  
who is seated among us both as our host  
and as our honored guest, and still yet  
as our conquering king.

#### **Amen.**

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, take  
seat, take feast, take delight!

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**THE TABLE OF THE BELOVED**  
**MARCH 16, 2022**

O King of Love, You have called us beloved.  
Your love sustains us. Your love provides for us. Your love brought your Kingdom near. Your love has brought us to this earthly table. Your love will bring us to Your Heavenly table.

To your earthly tables, O Lord, you invited fishermen and zealots, tax collectors and thieves, prostitutes and lepers, women and children, the unnamed, the unwanted, and the unknown. Your love welcomed them in. Your love opened your table to them.

As we gather now at this table, help us to remember that your love has gathered us here. Open our eyes to the unnamed, the unwanted, and the unknown.

As we gather, may we remember the homeless.  
As we eat, may we remember the hungry.  
As we laugh, may we remember the mourning.  
As we embrace, may we remember the rejected.  
As we pray, may we remember the hopeless.

They are your beloved. As your love draws us to you, it draws us to them. May we love them as you have loved us. Let us welcome them to our table. Let us invite them to your table. Our table is your table.

Love set this table and provided this meal—your love and ours. May our the depth of our love increase as we eat this meal. May we recognize the presence of your Kingdom among us. May we be reminded that we are your beloved.

To the glory of your great name, we pray.  
Amen

**A LITURGY FROM PSALM 24**  
**MARCH 23, 2022**

**CELEBRANT:** The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein  
for he has founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

**PEOPLE: He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not lift up his soul to what is false  
and does not swear deceitfully.**

**He will receive blessing from the Lord  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.**

**Such is the generation of those who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.**

Lift up your heads, O gates!  
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.  
Who is this King of glory?

**The Lord, strong and mighty,  
the Lord, mighty in battle!**

Lift up your heads, O gates!

**And lift them up, O ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.**

Who is this King of glory?

**The Lord of hosts,  
he is the King of glory!**

For from him and through him and to him are all things (Rom.  
11:36). Let us pray together:



**All:**

**Father in heaven,**

**we praise you for your provision,**

**we welcome your presence,**

**and we render back to you all that you give us.**

**To you be glory forever and ever.**

**Amen.**

**LENTEN FEAST LITURGY**  
**MARCH 30, 2022**

**CELEBRANT:** Here we have gathered to enjoy rest and feast together. Let us partake of the richness that is God's provision, and embrace the forgiveness he has covered us in.

**PEOPLE: In celebrating this feast, we declare that evil and death, suffering and loss, anger and unforgiveness, sorrow and tears, will not have the final word.**

To gather to feast is a grace and a gift, as those who have been provided for and those who have been forgiven deeply. The Kingdom of Heaven is like one settling scores with his servants, yet in love has forgiven the debt. We cannot walk through life without wounds from others, just as we have been ones to carry out wounds to others. May this feast remind us of the Lord's kindness with us, that in forgiveness, we may know him more.

**We, the forgiven, are those who are called to receive the Lord's goodness and in turn, pass that goodness along beyond ourselves. Let us remember deeply the forgiveness of the Lord and release those whose debts we have held against them, that such forgiveness can taste sweet to us as this food and drink.**

The joy of fellowship, and the welcome and comfort of friends new and old, and the celebration of these blessings of food and drink and conversation and laughter are the true evidences of things eternal, and are the first fruits of that great glad joy that is to come and that will be unending.

**So let our feast this day be joined to those sure victories secured by Christ, Let it be to us now a delight, and a glad foretaste of his eternal kingdom. Bless us, O Lord, in this feast.**

**ALL PARTICIPANTS NOW LIFT THEIR GLASSES OR CUPS.**

May this feast be a foretaste of the Supper of the Lamb, where in our forgiven-ness, we will know true restoration and completeness. May we carry the same forgiveness and goodness that we have received to all those we encounter. Take joy!

**In kindness and grace, may we love the same way we have been loved. Take joy!**

**Glasses clink in toast**

All will be well!

**All will be well!**

Nothing good and right and true will be lost forever.  
All good things will be restored.  
Feast and be reminded! Take joy, little flock.

Now you who are loved by the Father, prepare your hearts and give yourself wholly to this celebration of joy, to the glad company of saints, to the comforting fellowship of the Spirit, and to the abiding presence of Christ who is seated among us both as our host and as our honored guest, and still yet as our conquering king.

**Amen.**

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
take seat, take feast, take delight!

## **A FEAST FOR SOJOURNERS**

**APRIL 6, 2022**

**CELEBRANT:** Fellow travelers, we gather again in this journey of Lent. For weeks now we have walked the ways of Jesus through the wilderness, seeking to empty ourselves and depend on God alone. It is through this practice we find deeper communion with the Holy Spirit.

**PEOPLE: The journey has been difficult at times,  
but it's in those moments we feel your presence.**

**You are heard when we turn down the noise of this world,  
you are seen when we step away from the multitude of  
screens encountered each day.**

**In times of weakness, the power of your unwavering strength  
is seen more clearly.**

**In times of discouragement, we are reminded of your abiding  
presence.**

**In times of sin, we experience the provision of your  
forgiveness, already given through your death and  
resurrection.**

In the wilderness, you are there.

**In the wilderness we find your provision, presence, and  
power.**

Tonight we do not escape the wilderness,  
but instead gather together in the midst of it.

**We gather to remember your repeated message: the kingdom  
of heaven has drawn near.**

**We gather to declare that even amidst the brokenness and  
darkness of this world,**

**Jesus the King does indeed reign.**

**We gather to celebrate that when the King returns,  
he will usher in a new heavens and a new earth,  
ruling with all power and all love.**

We will eventually be in the presence of God,  
in a city with “no need for the sun or the moon to shine on it,  
for the glory of God gives it light,  
and its lamp is the Lamb”  
Until that day, we, your church,  
walk in the light by your Holy Spirit.

**As people on a journey,  
we carry lightly the things of this world.  
As children in your family,  
we daily seek the face of you, our Father.  
As citizens in your kingdom,  
we walk in your ways, and worship you only.**

We gather together in the wilderness to receive your blessings  
of good food, good drink, and one another. We are grateful that  
you are with us. May we rehearse now the day when we gather  
with you, face-to-face, in your kingdom fulfilled.

**Amen.**

## **THURSDAYS**

### **Presence**

We're coming out of an extended season of isolation. For so many reasons, so many of us are feeling isolated from our community and from God. This Lenten season, we want to be guided back into the practice of presence. First, we desire—as Ruth Haley Barton puts it—to “be present with the one who is always present with us.” We want to partake in the divine essence. We want to practice the presence of God. In order to do that, here are a few ideas:

Use your daily commute as time with the Holy Spirit. If you usually try to fill that with distraction through podcasts, music, etc., turn them off. Pick one way of your commute and just “be” with God

Take a walk but leave your phone at home. As you walk, talk with and listen to God.

Prioritize 20-30 minutes when you'll sit in the presence of God. There is time, and it may cause you to be less productive, but it's so much more worth it to sit with the Father rather than check one more thing off the list. If you have kids, this can be especially tough, but don't rush right to tv or tasks when they are asleep.

Choose one, two, or three of these each Thursday, but make sure you try each one at least once. Consider how this could become a rhythm for you beyond Lent.

## FRIDAYS

### Invitation

The season of Lent is often understood as a private, personalized season of sacrifice and reflection and, to an extent, it is. However, the Christian life, as patterned by Jesus, is a life of rhythms of retreat and engagement. **We retreat to be restored by Divine presence so that we can be present with others.** Just like the Spirit invites us to presence with him, we invite others to presence with us. This Lenten season, we want to encourage you to invite others to feast in the wilderness with us. Whether that is reconnecting and spending time with friends, joining and participating in a community group, or returning to the Sunday gathering, take this season to commit to reengage, to resist isolation, and to life in community. Covid is still shapes the reality of our lives and we are not calling you to foolishness but rather reminding you that isolation kills the soul but the practice—and it is a practice—of presence is life-giving and restorative. How will you create time with someone over the weekend to share a meal, go for a walk, or just sit and talk over coffee?

It can be easy to fall into rhythms of hanging out with friends; while that is so natural, this is more. Even pray about who you will hang out with. The Holy Spirit may lead you to someone you wouldn't immediately think of or even someone you don't know well. Consider how your presence is a gift. Be there not only in body but also mind. Listen well, without thinking about what you'll say next. Give them your time, your attention, and the care of your heart. Pray for them before and after.

## **ONE MORE THING...**

The culmination of our wilderness journey is the same as the culmination of Jesus' life and ministry, Resurrection. Lent leads us to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and ultimately Easter Sunday. On these days, we're invited to the table, the Cross, and the Resurrection of Christ. We want to provide every possible resource for you to extend that invitation far and wide. With that in mind, we want to encourage you to invite whoever the Lord places on your mind to our Easter Sunday celebration by providing invitations for you to personally give to your family, friends, co-worker, and neighbors. They will be available at church services as Easter draws closer. Let this time of presence and feasting fill you up to go invite others to the Feast Christ is preparing as we walk in the wilderness.