



Wilderness in Scripture

- Desert space
- The absence of life
- Where the biblical narrative begins
 - Genesis 1:2: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep”
 - *tohu va-bohu* – wild and waste, unordered and uninhabited

Wilderness in Scripture

- The Garden: an oasis in the wilderness
- Can represent the tragedy of being disconnected from God’s life and voice
- We end up there for different reasons
- God uses the wilderness for transformation, demonstrate faithfulness and provision, build in us trust and faithfulness

Wilderness in Scripture

- Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”
- v.6: “Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life”

Context of the story of Hagar

- **Genesis 16: Hagar is Egyptian, slave of Sarai and Abram**
- **Genesis 12: the call of Abram: “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (vv. 2-3)**

Context of the story of Hagar

- **Abram and Sarai have no children**
- **Genesis 15: God reiterates the promise**
 - **Abram says: “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless...?” (v.2)**
 - **Offspring as numerous as stars (v.5)**

Context of the story of Hagar

- **Chapter 17: God seals covenant promise with Abraham; circumcision becomes sign of the covenant**
- **Abrahamic Covenant: Abraham’s descendants will receive blessing from God, in turn will be a blessing to the nations, and will receive the land that was promised to them**

Genesis 16: Hagar

- **Hagar: means “foreigner” or “immigrant”**
- **Sarai and Abram doubt God will follow through on his promises**
- **Sarai’s plan: Abram sleep with Hagar**
- **v.3: Sarai gives Hagar to Abram as a wife**
- **Hagar becomes pregnant**

Genesis 16: Hagar

- Hagar mistreats Sarai (v.4)
- Sarai complains, Abram washes his hand of the situation (v.5-6)
- Sarai, in turn, abuses Hagar

Genesis 16: Hagar

- Hagar flees to the wilderness (v.7), “near a spring in the desert”
 - *midbār* – the Hebrew word most translated as “wilderness” throughout the OT
- Hagar is vulnerable: foreigner, slave, woman, pregnant, person of colour

Genesis 16: Hagar

- A messenger from the Lord (v.7)
 - *mal'āk* - messenger, prophet, angel, angelic-like being, someone from God
- “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.” (v.10)

Genesis 16: Hagar

- Son will be Ishmael - “God hears”
- “You are the God who sees me... I have now seen the One who sees me.” (v.13)
- Well/spring: “Beer Lahai Roi” which means “well of the Living One who sees me.” (v.14)

Genesis 21: Hagar again

- Abraham and Sarah welcome their son, Isaac
- Ishmael mocks Isaac (v.9), makes Sarah angry, wants to send Hagar away
- Abraham prepares provisions, sends Hagar and Ishmael away
- Hagar is in the wilderness again

Genesis 21: Hagar again

- Hagar is certain the child is going to die, she begins to sob (v.15)
- God sees her
- God hears Ishmael's cries ("God hears") (v.17)
- Boy is blessed, God has not forgotten him (v.18)

Genesis 21: Hagar again

- v.19: "Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water."
- God's provision he had prepared in advance
- "God was with the boy as he grew up" (v.20)

Takeaways

- Wilderness: potentially symbolizes a season when we feel disconnected from God and his voice, where we wonder if he sees us
- From the story: God sees us and hears us
- "God, when I'm in the wilderness, would you open my eyes to see you, to see your provision..."

Takeaways

- **God sees those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed**
- **May we likewise see and care for those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed**