

A Sanctifying Wilderness

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[0 : 0 0] Most of you, I think you know, Pastor Matthew is on vacation. And just to reemphasize what Jim Franks mentioned last week, that's normal. It might be new for our church, but it's normal for a pastor to be released to vacation.

He's enjoying his time with his family in Maryland for the next couple weeks. And instead, we have Reverend Jeff Kreisel. He's also a familiar face. You've seen him a few times before. And I think enough times that we can bestow on you the title Friend of Cheyenne Mountain.

So I'm going to do that today. I bestow upon you the title Friend of Cheyenne Mountain. And many of you have heard from Jeff before, and he's going to be preaching for us today. His other title is RUF Campus Minister at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

So he's been ministering there for almost two years now? Almost three years now, yeah, as the campus minister. So that's a ministry that needs your prayers. It's a ministry that's growing by leaps and bounds. But there are a lot of cadets struggling with a lot of college things, normal and abnormal things.

And they have a campus minister in Jeff that needs your prayers. He also has a sign-up sheet in the back where you can get on his email list and some swag, some reminders of RUF serving invisibly to us way down here in the south, but serving faithfully at the Air Force Academy.

[1 : 1 0] So I'd like to invite Jeff Kreisel up to preach for us this morning. Thanks, brother. Hi, well, good morning. My name is Jeff Kreisel.

I'm excited to be here again with you this morning, bringing God's Word to God's people. This is the second year in a row where I've had the privilege of bringing God's Word to you on the first Sunday of the year.

So that's kind of a neat thing. All right, so this morning we are going to return to the book of Exodus, and we're going to see what life looks like after justification. Okay, we're going to see what life looks like after crossing the Red Sea, after crossing over from death to life.

And as we looked at last week, as I mentioned, life after justification does not get easier, right? But it does get better. It's a huge thing that we need to remember.

Our lives may become more difficult on the justification side of the sea, but our lives also become more joyful and more content and more satisfying and more purposeful.

[2 : 1 8] After crossing the Red Sea, the first place that God leads the Israelites is into the wilderness. He takes them into the wilderness. It is a scary wilderness.

It's unpredictable. It is a harsh wilderness. It is a wilderness where their faith would be tested and stretched through a number of various trials.

He takes them into a wilderness that would appear barren and inhospitable. But it's also a wilderness where God would continually meet their needs. God takes them into a wilderness that would expose their doubts and their fears.

But it's also a wilderness where God would comfort and assure his people during the hardest of times. God takes them into a wilderness in which God himself would sometimes seem absent and distant and removed.

But it's also a wilderness where God would walk with his people every step of the journey. He takes them into a wilderness. He takes them into a wilderness that would sometimes feel purposeless.

[3 : 26] But it's also a wilderness where God has written purpose into every word of their sanctifying stories. Are you familiar with this wilderness?

Have you walked through this wilderness? Have you walked through the valley of the shadow of death? If you have crossed over, if you have gone through those baptizing waters of the Red Sea, and you are now on the justification side of salvation, I know that you have.

I am sure that you know that this wilderness often isn't pleasant. I am also sure that there have been times during your wilderness wanderings, maybe even this morning, that you have forgotten the purpose of the wilderness.

You have forgotten why God has placed you here. And you have also probably, during some point in your wilderness wanderings, you have forgotten where you are headed.

We're not going to forget this morning, we are going to remember where God is leading us. So buckle up, because we are heading into the sanctifying wilderness of the Christian life this morning.

[4 : 43] So I invite you all to please stand for the reading of God's holy, inerrant, and inspired word that is sufficient for our salvation. We'll be looking at Exodus 16, verses 1 through 4, then we're going to bounce and we're going to look at 13 through 21.

They set out from Elam, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elam and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month, after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the people of Israel said to them, Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full.

For you have brought us into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them whether they will walk in my law or not.

In the evening, quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.

[5 : 58] When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it? For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded.

Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can. You shall each take an omer according to the number of persons that each of you has in his tent. And the people of Israel did so.

They gathered some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.

And Moses said to them, Let no one leave any of it over till the morning. But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank.

And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat. But when the sun grew hot, it melted. This is the word of our Lord.

[6 : 55] Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, you are the author and sustainer of our faith. And we pray this morning that you would show us what we do not see, that you would teach us what we do not know, that you would convict us where we need to be convicted, and encourage us where we need to be encouraged.

We pray, Lord, that you would use my finite words for your infinite and holy purposes, for our good and your glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. You may be seated.

Amen. No, I put a, I put some cover on this. Nice. All right, so I want us to, I want us to see that the wilderness shows us three things in this passage.

The first thing the wilderness shows us is that it exposes our fearfulness. All right? Our text begins two months after the Israelites have crossed the Red Sea. Okay?

After 400 years in Egypt, in much of that time they were slaves to Pharaoh, they were finally free. They were finally under God's rule and reign instead of Pharaoh.

[8 : 06] They are now following God by day and by night through this wilderness. And they are headed to the promised land. They are headed to a land that is flowing with milk and honey.

They're headed to the land of Canaan. The picture here is that it is essentially like a paradise on earth where God dwells and meets with his people. He lives with them forever.

They're headed there. They're headed to the promised land. But they're not there yet. They're in the wilderness. And in the wilderness, the Israelites have discovered that God's decisive defeat of Pharaoh has not solved all of their problems.

In fact, God's decisive defeat of Pharaoh has introduced a new set of problems and a new set of challenges. Challenges that would expose their fear, their most deep-rooted fears.

And these fears would cause them to forget their redemption story. They would start to long to return to slavery in Egypt. You see, like us, the Israelites, they feared a whole lot of things.

[9 : 12] Okay? Our fears are not unique. Okay? They feared what we fear. They feared failure. They feared isolation. They feared being alone.

They feared the unknown. They feared being uncomfortable and insecure. They feared being unproductive. They feared a lack of purpose.

They feared feeling shame and guilt. But more than anything else, like us, they feared death. The great enemy. Not just their great enemy, our great enemy.

Like the Israelites, we fear death more than anything else. And that is what they feared here in Exodus 16. This is a universal condition.

All right? It doesn't matter what you believe. Everybody fears death. I was reading last night just kind of some strategies you can employ to combat your fear of death.

[10 : 13] And the number one thing was to convince yourself that death is a natural occurrence. But how is that working out for these people? They still fear it.

You can't avoid it. You can't run away from the fear of death because it isn't natural. And we all know that it's not natural. There's something wrong. It is the great enemy. We try to escape from it, though.

A few years ago, I read a story of a guy who built this beautiful playground right next to a cemetery. And it's an amazing park, and nobody brought their kids to play at this amazing playground.

And he was kind of stumped. He was trying to figure out why it is that no one was bringing their children to play at this playground. So he thought outside the box. He's like, maybe it's the cemetery. So he built a fence to block people from seeing the cemetery.

He put the fence up. And the next day, the playground was just filled with laughing children. We wanted to block it out because we're uncomfortable with just being reminded that death is in our future.

[11 : 18] We don't like to grapple with death and the questions surrounding death. But we try all sorts of things. Just look at what our culture does to combat their fear of death. People get plastic surgery, right, late in their life because they see the aging process, and they want to combat that because they know what aging brings.

A lot of people play video games that are really horrific, right? They make light of death. They dumb it down. They try to view death through a screen, try to separate themselves from it because they can't handle the reality of it.

Something that's new in our day and age is that when a loved one dies, we've started to have celebration of life ceremonies instead of mournful funerals where we grieve the loss of our loved one in a healthy way.

We don't want to touch death with a 10-foot pole. The same is true with the Israelites. You see, the irony in Exodus 16 is that the same Israelites who were so afraid of death were redeemed.

They were delivered from death's grip just two months earlier, right? The Egyptians were about to kill them. The Israelites were surrounded.

[12 : 41] They had nowhere to run and hide. Death was all but certain, but then God saves them from death's grip, and then the Egyptians perish in the sea instead.

The threat to their lives had already been defeated. You see the irony here? It's an irony that is not unique to them.

This irony pervades our lives as well. In the wilderness, our greatest fears are exposed, especially our fear of death. The wilderness, it causes us to forget that God has already delivered us from death's grip.

In the wilderness, we forget that Jesus already went through death in order to defeat death so that we wouldn't be afraid of death. In the wilderness, we forget that Jesus has already redeemed us.

We're free. We don't have to be slaves of fear anymore. In the wilderness, the Israelites' fears were exposed.

[13 : 49] They didn't know if they would survive this wilderness. They didn't know if the God who delivered them from Egypt would also meet their physical daily needs here in this harsh wilderness.

And I'll be honest, it's hard to, you can't blame them, right? They're in a really rough condition, right? I have been to some Middle Eastern deserts in my time.

For many months, I've lived in Iraq and Afghanistan and Qatar and Kuwait. And I can tell you all from my experience, these deserts are not hospitable places, right?

They're dry. They are hot. The terrain is rocky and it's really rough. It is not a hospitable place to be. And the Israelites have been wandering in this barren desert, which is what wilderness is actually translated to mean in Hebrew.

It means desert. They've been wandering in this desert for two months now and they have many mouths to feed. And they have very little food and water and shelter and they have enemies surrounding them still.

[14 : 59] This is a fearful place to be, right? Why would God do such a thing? Why would he lead them here? Why wouldn't God just skip the whole wilderness wandering stage and like teleport his people from the Red Sea to the Promised Land?

Why wouldn't he just rapture them up? There is purpose to the wilderness. God purposefully led the Israelites into the wilderness in order to expose and defeat their fears by strengthening their faith.

Okay? He's going to expose and defeat their fear by strengthening their faith in the midst of the wilderness. My friends, while the wilderness is always painful, it is always purposeful.

God understood that it would be easier to get the Israelites out of Egypt than to get Egypt out of the Israelites. Right? The Israelites have been in Egypt for 400 years.

They have adopted their idolatries. They have adopted their idols. They have adopted all of these sins. God understood this.

[16 : 17] And so he uses the wilderness to sanctify them, to rid them of these lifelong idolatries that they had picked up over the course of 400 years in Egypt.

You see, while the Israelites were no longer under the rule of Pharaoh, they were still living as if they were. They didn't really believe that they were free.

They didn't really believe that God was with them, that God was for them, that he loved them more than they could fathom. They didn't really believe that they could live by faith instead of by fear.

What about you? Do you believe that God is with you and that he loves you more than you can fathom? Truly, do you believe that?

If you do, then why are you still living like a slave to fear? Do you believe that you are who God says that you are?

[17 : 19] Do you believe truly that you are a beloved child of God? If you do, then why are you still living like an orphan?

When Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh for the first time, do you remember what God told Moses to say to Pharaoh? He told him to say this.

He said, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, let my son go that he may serve me. These are family terms that God is using. He's describing himself as their father, and he is their child because they were, because of the covenant that God made with Abraham.

The Israelites were God's covenant adopted children. God was their loving father, and he was with them, and he was for them, and if God was for them, who could be against them?

If God was with them, what could they fear? Listen, in order to get Egypt out of you, in order to be free from fear, in order to be who you are, you have to remember who God says that you are.

[18 : 34] You have to remember who God says that you are, and you aren't a slave, and you aren't an orphan. You're a child of God. Truly, you are. A few years ago, I came across a story of a young girl who was adopted by this very loving Christian family, and the home that she came from was really broken, and this poor girl was abused, both physically and emotionally, and she had deep external and internal scars and wounds.

Right? And so, moving into a home with a loving family was not easy for her because she carried Egypt into that home, and it also wasn't easy for her new parents.

Although she was legally their daughter, this girl did not treat her new parents as her parents. Instead, she was cold towards them, and she was full of fear whenever they were around, fearing that they would do the same that her previous parents did to her.

Well, over the course of the next year, this young girl was loved on by her parents, and her parents met her daily needs. And over time, her heart began to soften.

It began to warm towards her new parents until one day, after multiple failed attempts to tie her shoe, she walks over to her father, and for the first time in her life, she says, Daddy, will you help me tie my shoe?

[20 : 06] And he has tears streaking down his face, and he says, Yes, I would love to. You see, in this moment, what was legally true had become practically true.

She was already their daughter, but she didn't fully understand or believe it, but now it had become practically true. That truth had been driven into her heart. It took a year in the wilderness for her to realize that she was no longer a slave to fear, that she was no longer an orphan, but she was a daughter who was deeply loved.

According to J.I. Packer, the revelation to the believer that God is their father is in a sense the climax of the entire Bible.

I'm going to say that one again. The revelation to the believer that God is their father is in a sense the climax of the entire Bible. When you understand and firmly believe that God is your loving father, that changes everything.

Right? It changes everything. Being able to cry out, Abba, Father, is at the heart of Christianity.

[21 : 21] And it is the truth that must fight your fear in the wilderness. The second thing the wilderness shows us is that it addresses our forgetfulness.

Our problem is like the Israelites. We are a very forgetful people. With the Israelites, God was visibly with them.

He was visibly leading them by day and night through the wilderness. They had just witnessed God perform ten miraculous plagues to deliver them from slavery in Egypt.

They got to see that with their own eyes. As we saw last week in Exodus 14, the Israelites just walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. But when hunger struck, they forgot their redemption story.

It only took two months for spiritual amnesia to kick in. And they start to grumble and complain. And they start to long to return to Egypt of all places.

[22 : 27] And like I said last week, they start to rewrite history. They keep doing this. And they're going to do it over and over again throughout the remainder of their time in the wilderness. They rewrite history. Look at verse 3.

It says, they said, back in Egypt, we had meat pots. We had meat and bread. We had water. We had shelter. We had everything that we could have needed and then some.

Which is not true. Right? They say, what have you done bringing us out here into the wilderness? Back then, back there, we had everything we needed.

But here, we're barely surviving. And that's how the wilderness feels sometimes. It feels like we're barely surviving. It feels like we're holding on by a thread.

But the good news of the gospel is that that thread that we hold onto, it's indestructible. Right? It won't let us go. Their conditions in the wilderness were very rough.

[23 : 27] I will conceive that point. Okay? But they're acting as if the God who was with them in Egypt was not with them now. I was wondering, like, how could they not trust God after God just delivered them?

The amazing thing about Exodus 16 is that even though the Israelites were grumbling and complaining and longing to go back to slavery in Egypt, God still gets down and ties their shoes.

He knew their physical needs and so He meets their physical needs. God knew that their fragile faith needed a daily divine reminder of their redemptive story.

They needed to be reminded every single day of God's faithfulness towards them. And so He sends bread from heaven every single day. You see, the bread wasn't only to feed them, it was to remind them of who they were and where they were headed.

I love this. This is often overlooked. God doesn't just give them enough bread to survive the wilderness. He gives them plenty.

[24 : 45] He gives them an abundance of bread. In verse 18, it says, each of them gathered as much as He could eat. Their stomachs were full people, which was a rare experience, a rare thing in the world back then and today.

They were feasting in the wilderness. This was like an all-you-can-eat buffet. God was not stingy. And God also, He wasn't just giving them like this buffet of tasteless, stale bread, like the bare minimum.

He was giving them bread that tasted like honey, which was the delicacy of the day. He was giving them bread that tasted like heaven.

And you see what God is doing here. He's giving them this honey bread feast in order to give them a taste, a foretaste of what they will one day experience, what they will enjoy.

He's giving them a foretaste of the place where they were headed, and that is to a place flowing with milk and honey. He's giving them a taste of paradise in the wilderness.

[25 : 59] Listen, to survive the wilderness, you have to remember where you are headed, that you are headed towards the promised land. You have to remember that life, this life, isn't the promised land.

You have to remember that your dream job isn't the promised land, that your dream vacation isn't the promised land, that successful children isn't the promised land, that retirement isn't the promised land.

Right? We have to remember that this world is not the promised land. This world, my friends, is a spiritual wilderness where we get to taste heaven now, but it's not yet been fully consummated.

It is a painful wilderness, yet it is a purposeful wilderness. And thankfully, God knows exactly what He is doing in this wilderness. And so we can trust Him throughout it.

He has placed us in this wilderness to sanctify our souls, to free us from fear, to instill in us a dependence on Him, and to prepare our hearts for the real promised land.

[27 : 11] There's a story about Michelangelo. I don't know how true it is, but it's a fun story. He was asked about the difficulties that he faced while sculpting his masterpiece, David.

And supposedly, Michelangelo replied, you just chip away the stone that doesn't look like David. I love this because that's what the wilderness is for us.

In the wilderness, our fears, our struggles, our idolatries, our deepest sins are being chipped away by God to reveal this beautiful masterpiece of faith.

In the wilderness, God is chipping away the parts of you that don't look like Jesus. Do you trust God in the wilderness?

Truly. The Israelites did not trust God in the wilderness, which is why they begin to hoard the manna that God sends from heaven. They start to hoard it.

[28 : 14] Instead of gathering enough food for one day as God commanded, they gathered food for multiple days because their physical fear trumped their spiritual faith. The Israelites suffered from what I like to call spiritual amnesia.

They were quick to forget their redemption story. They were quick to forget the Passover lamb who was sacrificed as their substitute and whose blood sheltered them from God's judgment.

They were quick to forget the baptismal waters of the Red Sea that cleansed them. They were quick to forget who they were as children of God. We are no different.

My favorite Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore movie is 50 First Dates. These two have been in a slew of movies together. 50 First Dates is my favorite. In the movie, Lucy, played by Drew Barrymore, she gets in a bad car crash and she has, she causes short-term memory loss and as a result, every day that she wakes up, she thinks is the same day that she got in the car crash.

Right? And her family and friends, they weren't really helping the situation. They come up with this elaborate plan to make her think that every day was, in fact, the same day as her car crashed because the few times that they told her what happened, she freaked out and she had a panic attack and they didn't want to deal with that.

[29 : 45] She was unhappy so they wanted to kind of keep her in that little bubble, that little lie that they had created for her. And their plan was working great.

Right? It was working fine for month after month until this guy named Henry Roth comes around. He's played by Adam Sandler and he falls in love with Lucy. And Henry wasn't content with a lie that was being fed to Lucy over and over and over again.

And so Henry, he makes Lucy this video. He calls it Good Morning Lucy. Right? It's her Good Morning Lucy video. And every morning she was to watch this video to set her memory free.

In the video, she saw pictures of her car crash. She saw what happened to her. And then she saw like cat scans of her damaged brain.

And then she saw clips of her friends and they were telling her like it's going to be okay and we're going to walk with you through this. And then the video ends with like the most profound thing.

[30 : 49] She watches her own wedding ceremony. And then she looks down at her hand. She sees a ring. And she's reminded, I am married.

And then she walks out of her room and she goes up the stairs and she meets her husband for the first time every single day. My friends, you have to meet Jesus every single day because we are so forgetful.

You serve a God who is not content with the lies that the world is feeding you. And so he graciously inspired a book. It's like our good morning Christian book that we are to read every day to set our memories free.

We are to be reminded of who we are, who God is, and where we're headed. He's given us a book that it tells us. All right? You need to be reminded of your redemption story every day.

You need to be reminded of Genesis 3, the event that caused your spiritual amnesia that explains all of the bad in the world.

[32 : 05] All right? You need to remember that you were married to a Savior who despite your many flaws chose to set his love on you. That's the greatest news you'll ever hear.

The third thing the wilderness shows us is that it strengthens our faithfulness. In order to survive the wilderness, we have to remember our redemption story. Right?

And to help us remember, God has graciously given us a taste of heaven now in the midst of the wilderness. I'm going to give you three things that God has given to us to get through the wilderness.

First, he gives us a Christian family. Did you notice how the Israelites gathered manna every morning? They were to gather bread as a family, as a community.

They didn't go out into the wilderness alone. They went together to find manna and to feast on this bread. They didn't go as individuals.

[33 : 14] They went together as a family. And we are to do the same. You and I, we cannot survive the wilderness alone. You can try all you want, but it's not going to work.

Okay? You can't survive this wilderness alone. You need this family that God has graciously given to us. And my friends, this family is a taste of heaven now. This morning, we're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

In this meal, it's a family meal. You don't take it as an individual. We take it corporately. We take it together because it is a family meal. We take it together in faith.

The second thing that God gives us is the Sabbath. Since God made us, he knows what is best for us. He knows better than we do. He knows that we have a limited bandwidth.

He knows that we can't go forever. He knows that we need to slow down and take a deep breath and rest. He knows that we need a day each week to fix our eyes on him.

[34 : 19] In Exodus 16, God set aside the Sabbath. It wasn't to be a day of labor. It was to be a day of rest for the Israelites, and it is the same for us. The Sabbath, it may not make economic sense, but it makes divine sense, and that's where true wisdom lies.

Wisdom is believing and trusting that God knows what's best for you. Listen, we are wired for worship, worship, and God gave us a day each week for worship to remember who God is, to remember who we are, and to remember where we're headed.

The Sabbath is a gift from God. It is a taste of heaven. The rest that we experience each Sabbath, each Sunday, it is a taste of heaven in the wilderness.

the third thing God gives us is bread, and he gives us an abundance of bread. He gives us the one bread that actually satisfies our hunger.

Get this, the word manna, it literally means what is it, or what is this? That's what they named the bread because they had no idea what it was or where it came from, but they still feasted on this bread in faith to survive the wilderness.

[35 : 42] Similarly, after Jesus calmed the storm in Mark 14, do you remember what the disciples said to one another? Who is this that even the winds and the seas obey him?

In Luke 5, after Jesus heals the paralyzed man, do you remember what the Pharisees said to one another? Who is this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?

You see, the Pharisees and the disciples, they didn't fully understand who Jesus was. The answer to this question, who is this?

It comes from a very unlikely person in Matthew 27. After Jesus was crucified and the curtain and the temple was torn in two and the barrier that separated God from his people was removed, the earth shook and the centurion who nailed Jesus to the cross looks over at his friends and says, truly, this was the Son of God.

It clicked for him. Right? Listen, do you see the connection between the manna that came down from heaven in Exodus 16 and Jesus Christ?

[37 : 12] We read from John 6 earlier. They're the same thing. Right? Jesus says in John 6, 35, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. You see, the manna that came down from heaven and satisfied the fearful and forgetful Israelites is the same bread that comes down from heaven to feed fearful and forgetful us.

And we don't just get a taste of it. Right? We get the fullest and final revelation of God himself and Jesus Christ. Listen, when one of my kids is hungry, they don't look at their report cards to satisfy their hunger.

They don't look at their bank accounts or their Instagram feeds. They come to me and they say, hey, dad, I'm hungry. Can you give me something to eat?

They go to the right source to satisfy their hunger. Likewise, we are God's children and we have to go to the right source to satisfy our soul's deepest hunger because it's the only place where we'll actually find satisfaction.

[38 : 36] We are to be a people who, like in John 6, say, give us this bread always. We're to be a people who pray, give us this day our daily bread.

In other words, give me this day, Jesus. And tomorrow, give me Jesus. And the next day, give me Jesus. And next week, give me Jesus.

Next month, give me Jesus. Next year, give me Jesus. And give me Jesus every single day until it's my last day. Because on that day, I won't just get a taste.

We're going to feast. Brothers and sisters, this year, I pray that you remember this life-changing truth.

Even in the wilderness, God is with you. He is for you. He loves you. He knows what he is doing. And his mercies are new every single morning. Amen.

[39 : 39] And let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this paradigm that we see of our own salvation in Exodus 16. That as Christians, we have crossed over to the justification side of the sea, the sanctification side, and we are walking and wandering.

Sometimes it feels through a wilderness that is harsh and difficult and painful. But we know that you are with us, that you're for us, and that you will not abandon us. We pray, Lord, that you would press these truths into our heart, that we would remember who we are, that we are children of God, and that this truth will change the way that we view ourselves, view others, and view this entire creation that you have given to us.

We pray that you would change us, form us, chip away the parts of us that don't look like Jesus. And it's through his name we pray.

Amen.