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NEWSLETTER

SO HELP ME GOD

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U.S. MARINE CORPS/SGT. JENNESSA DAVEY



U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD/SGT. JOHN SCHUEBEL

Getting through THE WILDERNESS

by CH (LTC) Steven Hokana
USA (Ret.)

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.


MARK 1:9-13

The wilderness is a dangerous and difficult place to be. In our Scripture reading there is a parallel between "wilderness" and the concepts of "being lost" and "temptation." When I read stories of those lost in the backwoods, their survival is a tale worth telling. Ever notice a common thread? First, they're lost, often stripped of everything useful, abandoned, threatened by both the harsh environment and wild animals. Second, they get their bearings, become a real quick study. Although physical survival takes place, loneliness descends like a sudden dark storm. The horrible feeling of isolation sets in. It's as bad as malnutrition. In the end and as rescue takes place, they are aware that

they didn't quit. They come out of the wilderness experience stronger and more resilient.

However, from a military perspective, being "found" doesn't typically end in a positive outcome. Often the rescue party is irritated you were lost. They were pulled off their own mission in order to save you. Oh, it's not over once you return to base. A commander has a letter of reprimand waiting. I'm sure the senior non-commissioned officer has something to say about sharpening up your "land nav." Expect additional training (so much for the next couple of weekends off). Never mind your own humiliation and embarrassment. The likelihood of endless

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What to carry?

The **JOY** of your **SALVATION**

by CH (LTC) Steven Hokana
USA (Ret.)

Sometimes you find yourself in a wilderness. This may not be a result of sin or going against God's Word, but rather the challenges of life: passed over for a promotion, missing loved ones, a death in the family, being tired, fatigued or lonely. It is loneliness in the wilderness that can drive us to make terrible mistakes. Satan and sin rear their ugly heads. Out of loneliness horrible errors occur: We may make friends with unsavory characters, enter sexual relationships outside of marriage or make poor financial decisions. The list really is endless.

Luther preached on loneliness:

You must come to the place where neither you nor any other man but God is in charge, namely where His Word is. There you will find Him, and you will hear or see neither wrath nor displeasure exist, but only grace and a sincere love for you.



The military teaches us skills and not scenarios. So, you know the latest publications. You go out and do military exercises and flex the muscles of your training. Before you go on any mission, you check your packing list. You take Jesus as recorded in His promised Word.

Wildernesses, filled with desolation and loneliness, are a constant theme in Scripture. Abraham journeyed through vast expanses of nothingness. Jacob, with a rock for a pillow, journeyed through desolation to flee his hunter-killer brother Esau. The children of Israel wandered the wilderness for 40 years. David escaped Saul by hiding in the desert. Elijah spent time in the wilderness. The wilderness shows us Jesus as part of God's good and perfect plan. We need not look further. He is the promised Christ: baptized in the Jordan, acknowledged by God the Father as His Son. The Holy Spirit is present and leads Jesus into the wil-

derness. The wilderness of Jesus was not a gentle segue, no 10-day acclimation program. The Lord was given no map or compass. But Jesus went, was tempted, persevered, succeeded and was tended to by angels.

Christ Jesus goes with us. He is by our side, and never abandons us. We are helpless. We can't find our way out. We are in such dire straits. Our sinful condition is horrible. But the good news is that we have someone who journeys through wilderness experiences and understands parched sands of despair, sandstorms of confusion, sharp rocks that rip and tear.

Jesus came to journey with us in our wildernesses. Even though we walk through dark valleys and vast wastelands, we are never alone. Beside us is our Lord and Savior. A King, who takes wilderness experiences and turns them into events for His glory. He suffered on a cross, died and rose victoriously from the dead. Satan is crushed and death defeated. And He took it a step further: He promises to be with us forever and ever.

In the wilderness, loneliness leads to despondency. Luther raised the issue of keeping despondency in check.

"Thinking must be turned in another direction, and Christ must be thought



of that you may say: Christ lives. I have been baptized. God is not a God of sadness and death. Christ is the God of joy, just as Scripture often says: Exult, rejoice, etc. Such is Christ because you have a gracious God, who has no intention to slay you. A Christian should and must be a cheerful person; if he is not, he is tempted by the devil.”

When we enter wildernesses and feel overwhelmed by loneliness, it is so important that we remember the Good News and hold it fast in our hearts. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes about the resurrection of the dead as the cornerstone of the faith we hold so dear:

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 COR. 15:20–22).

We now have hope. We are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ who has defeated death, hell and the grave. With this we reside in confidence and hope. The Holy Spirit places this promise in your Desert MOLLE field pack of faith. Carry it with you always.



U.S. ARMY RESERVE/CAPT. JERRY DUONG



U.S. NAVY/MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS ANDREA RUMPLE

AVOIDING ISOLATION

Holy Scripture is the record book of salvation where we find out all we need to know about God, His plan for us and the love He has for all humanity. With that in mind, the next time you find yourself in the wilderness and loneliness begins to surround you, remember that you are not alone because Christ is with you (MATT. 28:20) and that you will come out stronger (ROM. 5:3–4). Consider the following:



Don't isolate yourself (wildernesses are already isolating). Get out and engage other believers. (HEB. 10:25)



Remain calm ... calm in Christ. (MARK 4:39)



Remember, others have traveled down this route. (1 COR. 11:1)



Participate in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. (1 COR. 11:26)



Pray. (1 THESS. 5:16–18, PSALMS)



Learn, write about it, journal. Put together a map of this vast uncharted wilderness. Someone else is going to travel down this route, they would appreciate a map. (MATT. 5:16)



Read your Bible. (PSALM 1)



Lead a life of service; help others. (1 THESS. 5:14, 1 JOHN 3:17)



Fight off sadness. (PSALM 50)



Seek help. (2 TIM. 3:16, JAMES 5:16)



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nicknames by your brothers and sisters in arms is now very high: “Eagle Eye,” “Lew-is and Clark,” “Directionally Challenged” and, my favorite, “Magellan.” A high price to pay for being lost in a wilderness.

You can get lost and plunged into a wilderness in your own surroundings. Terrified and clueless! By now you realize I’m referring to a terrible experience: sin takes us. Our very nature encompasses our actions, activities and failures. This feels like a place of desolation, filled with the visceral threat of wild animals and unquenchable thirst, where Satan is your only companion.

Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness is important for us, His people. He was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. This sounds familiar. In the Old Testament Israel wandered in the wilderness. The Israelites failed, Jesus did not. Our Lord triumphed. Jesus met the test. As true man, Jesus experienced genuine temptation. As true God, He could overcome temptation. Jesus did not surrender to the animals, the harshness or the temptations of Satan. Jesus knows temptation. He also journeys with us in the darkness of temptation. Jesus saves us from the devastation of sin by His suffering and death on a cross.

Martin Luther has much to say about temptation, being in the wilderness and the life of the Christian:

JESUS KNOWS TEMPTATION. HE ALSO JOURNEYS WITH US IN THE DARKNESS OF TEMPTATION. JESUS SAVES US FROM THE DEVASTATION OF SIN BY HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH ON A CROSS.”

The temptations of the devout accomplish very much and are a most godly training school for flesh and blood. He who has not been tempted knows nothing.

Christ, who was tempted in our flesh, is the best Intercessor before God in all temptations.

The next time you wander into the wilderness of temptation, remember our Lord Jesus. Consider the petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” I recommend the following prayer, included in *Lutheran Service Book*:

Almighty and everlasting God, through Your Son You have promised forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Govern our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek Your help and, by a true and lively faith in Your Word, obtain all that

You have promised; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We have a wonderful Lord, a beautiful Savior who journeyed through the wilderness. He allowed himself to be tempted. Jesus did this for you and all humanity, for all time. Take this Lord with you wherever you go, in wildernesses or in the safety of your own home.

CHECK IT OUT!

WORSHIP AND DEVOTIONS
worshipanew.org

MILITARY ONE SOURCE
militaryonesource.mil

VETERANS CRISIS LINE
veteranscrisisline.net

WARRIORS OF FAITH
thelc.ms/lhm-warriors

FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE
shoplhm.org/forgiveness-is-a-choice

PTSD THE WAR AT HOME
shoplhm.org/the-conflict-at-home-soldiers-confronting-ptsd

VICTIM, VALIDATED, VICTORIOUS
shoplhm.org/victim-validated-victorious

STRENGTH AND HONOR
shoplhm.org/strength-and-honor-the-spiritual-warfare-against-pornography

STAFF

Rev. Craig Muehler, CAPT, CHC, USN (Ret.)
Director, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces
craig.muehler@lcms.org

Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana, CH, LTC, USA (Ret.)
Assistant Director, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces
steven.hokana@lcms.org

Alicia Hinton, MSgt, USAF (Ret.)
Assistant to the Director
alicia.hinton@lcms.org



 **THE LUTHERAN CHURCH**
MISSOURI SYNOD
Ministry to the Armed Forces

1333 S. Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122

888-THE LCMS (843-5267)

lcms.org/armedforces

lcms.org/operationbarnabas

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