

Monday, March 2
Out of the Water, Into the Wilderness
Mark 1:1-13

What a beautiful picture: Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan and, as He came out of the water, He saw heaven torn open and the Spirit descended on Him like a dove. God's voice came from above: "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Cherished affirmation from the Father, even before His ministry began. But then just as quickly, the Spirit sent Jesus off to the wilderness. From a high and holy moment to wandering in the wilderness – just like that. Sound familiar?

Why did Jesus, who knew no sin, have to be baptized? Why did He have to spend 40 days in the wilderness where He would be hungry and weak and vulnerable – where He would face temptation by Satan? All we know for sure is that it was God's divine plan to fulfill all righteousness and to prepare Jesus for His earthly ministry.

But personally, for us, it means that Jesus knows our human condition. We will not walk anywhere Jesus has not already been. We will not suffer anything He has not already suffered for us. He lived in the flesh and He understands our spiritual highs and lows. He knows what God's affirmation means to us. Even more, He knows how quickly we can go from that holy moment to wandering in the desert. He knows how devastating that plunge can be – regardless of how we got there. And because of Jesus, the battles we face there are only temporary.

I am praying that whether you find yourself on the mountaintop or in the wilderness today, that the Spirit will fall fresh on you like a dove. Remember that YOU are God's son or daughter, whom He dearly loves; and that with YOU He is well pleased.

Ruth Bearden is married to Rob and they have lived in Madison since 2001 where they raised their four children: James (25), Emily (25), Clayton (22), and John David (20). Rob works in the software industry and Ruth is a would-be writer who co-leads a weekly women's Bible Study, volunteers where she can, and holds down the fort at home.

Mark 1:1-13 New International Version (NIV)

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,[a] the Son of God,[b] 2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way”[c]—

3 “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”[d]

4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with[e] water, but he will baptize you with[f] the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13 and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted[g] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Footnotes:

- a. Mark 1:1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One.
- b. Mark 1:1 Some manuscripts do not have the Son of God.
- c. Mark 1:2 Mal. 3:1
- d. Mark 1:3 Isaiah 40:3
- e. Mark 1:8 Or in
- f. Mark 1:8 Or in
- g. Mark 1:13 The Greek for tempted can also mean tested.