

# Meetings in the Wilderness

*After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.* Luke 4:13

*The devil left him, and angels came and took care of him.* Matthew 4:11

I admit it, while I usually prefer Luke's Gospel because of the Jesus who cares for the poor, and the women involved with Jesus and stories like the Prodigal Son (not to mention the beloved story of Christmas), I have to go with Matthew on the temptation in the wilderness account.

I do not usually pay much attention to which Gospel we are using when we come to this story each year. We have this nice regularity that on the first Sunday of Lent we read about Jesus' forty days in the wilderness and the way he beats the temptations of the devil with quotes from Deuteronomy.

But with the world increasingly feeling like a wilderness, and life under attack from evil forces and those who have gone with the temptation to use their power for their own enrichment and comfort, I need some hope. I want to know that Jesus left the devil behind in the wilderness and that we can, too. I want a little tender loving care when I feel battered and bruised by life.

This is why I like Matthew's account. It struck me this week as we began our seven-week journey of reading Matthew which included the temptation story, while at the same time I am preparing for Sunday with Luke's account. Do you see the difference in the two endings? In Matthew Jesus beats the devil and then the angels come and take care of Jesus. Aaahhhh, that sounds perfect. Ministering angels after a tough day in the wilderness. Wouldn't you take Matthew over Luke? Luke ends with those ominous words, "until the next opportunity." Wait, didn't Jesus just win? Do you mean the fight with testing and temptation is going to happen over and over again? Yes.

That is the point. Jesus experiences the same ongoing struggle that we do as human beings. Right up until the end, in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. Jesus goes through all of this so that I know when I am in the wilderness I may meet with the devil, but God is also there with me. Maybe angels will come and meet me sometimes. As a matter of fact, I think they have. And maybe sometimes I will get to be a ministering angel for someone else travelling through the wilderness.

by Rev Karen Oehl

*God,  
in the wilderness  
fight between  
angels and devils,  
may I find Jesus  
in the middle,  
my rock and  
my fortress.  
Amen.*

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