

“The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him.” Mark 1:12-13 NLT

lectio // Mark 1:9-12

Let's just get all the tests out of the way, right up front! And, let's take all the distractions (of which, I do not consider food to be one of them) of comfort, community and normalcy out of his way. And let's put this test in a desolate place, where there is nothing to look at (just a lot of BROWN). And one more thing, let's make sure the being that lies, steals and destroys is his camping buddy. Sound good? That's the plan. We are told that Jesus faced three major temptations, and that these three represent everything a human would desire to the point of giving into the devil's ways. However, the gospel writers, in this case Mark, tell us the Satan tempted Jesus for forty days. How many days was Jesus fasting? Yep, forty. So this was the daily routine (probably evening too, because we know how Satan loves to haunt us by fear in the night). This was the “welcome to humanity” initiation that Jesus faced, armed with nothing but the memorized words of God. Do you think religious school had practice quizzes for his kind of test? I don't. I like the added flare of him being out with “wild animals,” mostly because I can't stand being eaten while I sleep beneath the stars. But then again, the angels must have scared the really wild ones off. How many of you HATE tests? I do. I've heard of students that struggle with grades BECAUSE of tests. They're smart and know the material, but just freeze up on tests. This massive test was right up front before any “ministry,” or miracles. Pass the Scantron and number 2 pencil, I'll be back in 40 days!

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Dad,

I am reminded that the Spirit compelled Jesus to enter this testing phase, so I am realizing that you can and do lead us into times where the Evil one just comes at us hard. This is frightening on a few levels. One, the obvious test part. Two, the massive internal struggle that takes place in my mind (is it sin, God or the devil). And three, life HAS to go on while I'm taking these “tests.” I have never thought of the times I went through enormous struggle as an invitation, by the Spirit, to go into a desert! I would have begged to get out of it. Let's see if I can be more aware next time, believe me I'm not asking, just saying...

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root