

Finding Grace In The Wilderness

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of finding grace in the wilderness, acknowledging God's sovereignty in leading us to challenging times, and the need for unity and trust in God amidst societal division and confusion. It calls for a return to God's truth and a reliance on His power for deliverance and restoration. The speaker encourages unfurling our banners of faith, trusting in God's promises, and seeking a spiritual awakening in the midst of turmoil and uncertainty.

Scripture: Psalms 60:1, Psalms 133:1, Matthew 12:25, Jeremiah 31:2, Psalms 74:21, Psalms 40:1, Jeremiah 33:3, Psalms 60:11

Topics: "Grace in the Wilderness", "Unity in Trusting God"

Description

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Transcript

Amen and amen, praise God. I was here in the sanctuary last night, took a little bit of time to pray here. And I told Pastor Tim whenever he's away, because he and Cindy come to the sanctuary on Saturday night and they pray over everyone in the chairs in this sanctuary.

They pray for you that who are sitting here today that the fullness of God would be realized in your life, that you would be strengthened and moved and brought into what God has for your future. And I hope you're thankful for a senior pastor that would spend that time praying for you, because I sure am. So I told him when you're away, I'll come in and I'll take your place and I'll pray for the people.

And what a pleasure it is to see you here, knowing that you were prayed for and have been prayed for continuously, that God would bless you. I'm gonna ask for an honest question and I'm asking for an honest answer. With an upraised hand, how many would be willing to tell me this morning and say, pastor, I feel like I'm in a wilderness time in my life.

Could you just raise your hand wherever you are? All right, hold them up high, all over the place. So just so you know, you're not alone, okay? Would you be surprised if I told you this morning that God drew you

there? This is something sovereign. And for those who didn't raise your hand and you are in a wilderness, God drew you there too as well.

Into this place. And he's going to show you something that I don't think you can really find in the other place, but in the place where God has been drawing you. Psalm 60, if you'll turn there with me, Psalm 60.

I'm using the New King James Bible, if you're wondering what translation to look up on your cell phone. I wanna speak to you this morning about finding grace in the wilderness. A Psalm of King David, a Psalm of trial and difficulty.

He starts out in verse one. He says, oh Lord, oh God, you've cast us off. You've broken us down.

You've been displeased. Oh, restore us again. This was, I don't know the particular time.

There's of course a lot of history behind this, but King David is talking about a time where he was feeling this. Somehow the favor of God had been withdrawn from the nation. He knew that the people he was anointed to govern were supposed to be a people that were used of God to bring glory to the name of God in the earth.

But suddenly he felt very, very distant, not just David, but the nation itself had become very distant from God and broken down in David's own words. In other words, the things that were crafted and built by the hand of God seemed to be in disarray. He sensed the displeasure of the Lord, but he also knew that when you pray, God hears, God answers.

And that's why he finishes verse one with the words, oh, restore us again. God, bring us back to our intended purpose on the earth. I don't know how we drifted from you, but we did.

So God restore us. He said in verse two, you've made the earth tremble. You've broken it.

Heal its breaches for it is shaking. The ground underneath us, in other words, is not as stable as it used to be. We don't feel solid.

We knew our purpose at one time, but our purpose is shaking. You've shown your people hard things and you've made us to drink the wine of confusion. We knew who we were.

We knew where we were going, David is saying. We knew our divine purpose, but we have strayed from it. And now we're looking, instead of blessing, we're looking at difficulty within our borders.

And there's such confusion in our society when everything was so clear at one time, we knew who we were, we knew our purpose, we knew where we were going, and we knew we were the people of God in that season. In verse four, he says, you've given a banner to those who fear you, that it may be displayed because of the truth, that your beloved may be delivered, save with your right hand and hear me. Now this banner is almost, it's a type of a flag.

It's something that you unfurl. It's a public declaration. And David is saying, God, to those who love you still, to those who fear you, you've given us something that can be publicly declared and it can be displayed.

We don't have to be hidden, nor does this work have to be hidden because of the truth. Deliver us, God, we are your beloved. Save with your right hand and hear me.

David starts out this particular psalm by saying, God, you've cast us off. We're no longer united with you. And as a result, we're now divided, even in the nation, one from another.

We've lost the blessing and the power that has historically accompanied this unity. You think of the Psalm 133 that talks about when brethren dwell together in unity, there's an anointing of God that comes with that unity. When we're in unity with God, we will be in unity with one another.

When we become disunified with God, we automatically become disunified with one another. When we walk together in unity, particularly with God, first and foremost, there's an anointing that sets us apart, the scripture says, from other people of this world. We look around at the world today and we see just this division almost everywhere.

The division is becoming violent. It's becoming vile in its speech. And it's going to lead to what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24, are wars and rumors of wars.

As a matter of fact, he says that in the last days, ethnos or ethnic culture will rise against ethnic culture. We're seeing that today. We're seeing it in the Ukraine.

We're seeing it in other parts of the world. And I wish I could say it's going to get better, but I don't believe it is because the scripture doesn't bear witness to that. It's going to get progressively worse until the Lord himself has to intervene for the sake of his own elect.

There's an anointing when we walk together in unity. You felt it this morning. We're in this sanctuary and last count, at least there was 104 different nations worshiping in this one church called Times Square Church in New York City.

And because of the unity, because we find ourselves at the cross, that there's a presence of God here you don't find anywhere in the world. You don't find it on New Year's Eve down in Times Square. You don't find it in any theater other than this one on Broadway.

You don't find it anywhere. There is a unity produced by God. There's an anointing.

And you feel that anointing today. The presence of the Lord is here. We don't just sing about it.

His presence is here. And in your heart, you know it. In your heart, you're feeling something.

This world doesn't, even if you're visiting today, you feel something in your heart that you don't find anywhere in the world. No matter how many people give flowers to each other or chocolates or wash each other's feet, whatever it is, you still don't feel that unity apart from God. There is a blessing of life.

There's a blessing of separation. There's a blessing that only comes from God when brethren walk together in unity. The psalm goes on to say that it brings a watering on the earth.

In other words, there's, when we walk together in unity with God, it affects not just us, but it affects people all around us. It can affect towns, cities, societies, cultures, countries, and actually can even affect the world when God's brethren walk together in unity. And the Lord himself says at the end of Psalm 133 that when we choose to walk in unity with God and subsequently one another, there is a blessing of life that is commanded.

Praise be to God. Life is commanded. I pastored here for 26 years, and in those 26 years, I can't tell you the numbers of times that visitors came into this sanctuary and began to weep even before we began to sing because there was a command of life because we were walking together and are walking together in unity with God and with one another.

But David says we've lost this blessing. We've lost this power of unity. We feel like we've been cast off from God.

We're broken down. Oh God, restore us again. A prime example of that would be America itself.

We were once known as one nation under God. In 1776, John Adams, Ben Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson suggested that the theme, actually the motto of the United States should be E Pluribus Unum, which means out of many, one. The first great seal of the United States in 1776 was approved by an act of Congress, and this was declared to be the motto of the United States of America, that no matter where we came from around the world, it was a melting pot.

That's what it was called. We blended together into one people, one value system, one go-forward strategy. It was eventually replaced by an act of Congress in 1956 when the motto In God We Trust was adopted as the official motto of the nation, not just on our coins.

It was actually in the great seal of the United States. Now more recently in America, cultural forces have come in and are changing America's motto into In God We No Longer Trust, and out of one, we are now many. I don't know if you're aware of this or not.

I hope you are. That there are forces at work, and I believe it's spiritual forces, in dark places that are at work to divide this nation and bring it to destruction. Matthew chapter 12, verse 25, Jesus himself said every kingdom divided against himself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

That is definitive. That is red letter in my Bible. That's from the mouth of Jesus Christ.

The disunity that we are now experiencing in our nation is leading to the downfall of one of the greatest testimonies of God's grace, next to Israel, that is, that the world perhaps has ever known. David says, you made the earth to tremble. You've broken it.

Psalms 60, verse two, heal its breaches for it is shaken. In other words, the ground that we once stood upon is now shaking. Psalm 79, the psalmist says in verse one, oh God, the nations have come into your inheritance.

Your holy temple they have defiled, and they've laid Jerusalem in heaps. We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to those that are around us. God, what happened to us, the psalmist is saying.

We were a people specifically set apart for a divine purpose, but suddenly forces came into the nation, and they defiled your temple, and they've taken that which was governed and guided by your hand, and now we look around us, and it's filled with ruins. And a nation that was once admired, that was once feared in this world is now becoming a reproach and laughing stock and a scorn and a derision as they look and they see confusion abounding on almost every side. Does that not describe the day that we are now living in? Psalm 74, the psalmist says beginning in verse four, he says your enemies roar in the midst of your

meeting place and they set up their banners for signs.

In other words, the psalmist is saying forces have come in that are destroying our history and setting up their own ideas of truth as guideposts. Are we not experiencing that in America today? There are forces, there are powers of darkness trying to destroy everything historical in the nation and erect new truths, which are really lies as if they are the things that have guided us and will guide us into the future. Verse five says they seem like men who lift up axes among the thick trees.

Now they break down its carved work all at once with axes and hammers. They set fire to your sanctuary. They defiled the dwelling place of your name to the ground.

Forces are destroying the work of previous generations. They set fire in your house. They threaten, they intimidate, they try to intimidate the people of God.

They are intolerant of anything that holds to a biblical worldview. And verse eight gives their absolute intendance as they said in their hearts, let us destroy them all together. They burned up all the meeting places of God in the land.

Now here's the bottom line. They want every influence of God in the nation to be gone, eradicated from society, no mention of his name, no morality from the scriptures, nothing of the cornerstone upon which this nation was founded. And if you know history, that's not even debatable.

The people who came to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620, they started, they signed a compact that this nation was founded on the cornerstone of bringing honor to the name of Jesus Christ throughout the world. It was to be a nation founded on the principles of God. That is not up for debate.

That is history for anybody who cares to do any research. Verse 21, the psalmist says in Psalm 74, oh, do not let the oppressed return to shame. Let the poor and needy praise your name.

Arise, oh God, and plead your own cause. And remember how the foolish man reproaches you daily. Do not forget the voice of your enemies and the tumult of those that rise up against you increases continually.

This is what the psalmist is saying. He's saying, oh God, help us. Help us as you have helped those in the past.

Help us, Lord God almighty. Don't turn your back on us as your people. Help us, Lord Jesus Christ.

Because you said in the word that this mountain can still be moved and pushed into the sea. God almighty, you told us that whatever we ask in prayer, believing that we should receive it. And in Psalm 60 again in verse four, David said, you've given a banner to those who fear you, that it may be displayed because of the truth, that your beloved may be delivered, save with your right hand and hear me.

So here's the confidence in this man's heart is God, you've given us a gathering spot. You've given us something of yourself for that we don't have to hide. We can unfurl this banner.

And this banner can be seen and it can bring your name again to reputation because we stand on the ground of truth. And we know the truth cannot be triumphed over by any power of darkness. So realistically, what is this banner that we're talking about? In Jeremiah chapter 31, in a season of terrible difficulty for the people of God, the prophet Jeremiah writes these words in chapter 31 verse two, thus says the Lord, the people who survived the sword found Greece in the wilderness.

When I went to Israel, when I went to give him rest, the Lord appeared of old to me, saying, yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore with loving kindness, I have drawn you. Where has he drawn you in his loving kindness? Into the wilderness.

He's drawn you and I at this season in our juncture as a nation into a very dry place, a very unfamiliar place, a place where all the distractions are being taken away and all the hope in a sense that humankind in a sense can solve its own problem is now gone. And we find ourselves in a place where the only thing left in our heart is that which was in the heart of David. Oh God, oh God, it's got to be you.

It's got to be only you. You've got to come and do something that will vindicate your own name. We have, yes, failed.

We have fallen. We let our guard down. We forgot who we were as a people.

We forgot why we're established as a nation. But in your mercy, you have drawn us into the wilderness to reason with us one more time. And in this wilderness, you promised that we will find grace.

And so if you're in the wilderness this morning, you need to thank God you're there because that is the drawing of God that has brought you into this place. If you're in a place this morning where you don't know the way out, you don't know the way forward, you are indeed blessed by God. I'll tell you that straight out because now there's only one voice that matters.

Now there's only one person to turn to. It doesn't matter if the nation is blue or red or green or yellow. It doesn't matter the color of the nation.

We're not looking to man to solve our problems anymore. We have a spiritual problem in this nation. And David cries out in Psalm 60 verse five, that your beloved may be delivered, save with your right hand.

The right hand of God is the hand of power and hear me. David cries out as a king who was a man after the heart of God. Lord, there is no other way out of this dilemma.

We're broken down. We are distant from you. We've lost our purpose.

The earth is trembling. Confusion is on every corner and in every pair of lips. You have made your people to see hard things.

We've had to drink this wine of confusion ourselves. But oh God, in the wilderness, you've given us a banner that can be displayed because of truth. It's not a bad thing to be in the wilderness.

It's a good thing to be in the wilderness because God is going to do something in this generation that only he can do. That's why, listen to me, that's why God in the last two years has prepared this church to go international all around the world. The Lord is going to do something here that only he can do because we are going to call out to him.

We are going to say, God, save us. Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God. They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen.

Save, Lord, let the king hear us when we call. We call out to you, God, unashamedly, unreservedly, we call out to you for our homes, for our children, for our families, my God, for what we allowed ourselves to become as a nation. Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus, and sweep away the refuge of lies.

Sweep away the powers of darkness that want to swallow the testimony of your goodness in this nation. Sweep away the confusion that wants to confuse our children at every conceivable level. Sweep away the baptism of immorality that wants to destroy the strength of the men of this nation.

Sweep it all away, oh God, sweep it all away. Call to me, the Lord says, call out to me in the wilderness. David says, hear me.

In response, Jeremiah 33 three, the Lord says, call to me and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things which you do not know. In other words, call to me and I will show you things which you are not presently experiencing or maybe you have forgotten. God is the one who took 51 emaciated pilgrims in 1620 who met in a house.

They're half starved, surrounded by enemies with no go forward strategy, but they prayed in that house. And they said, Lord, you promised to bring us to a land where we could worship you freely and according to your word and according to conscience. Half of us have died and the rest of us are starving and we are surrounded by enemies, but oh God, you promised that if we called out to you, we would see our prayers answered.

And from 51 half dead people meeting in a house that's now called lot one Plymouth, Massachusetts, a nation of over 330 million people was born. We were given abilities to do things that only God could have given us. We became a nation that became the envy of the modern day world and people, even in our backslidden condition, people are still risking life and limb to come here under the promise of a better life.

The Psalmist says, God, give us help. Psalm 60 verse 11 and 12, from trouble for the help of man is useless. Through God, we will do valiantly for he it is who will tread down our enemies.

Through God, through God, I'm not looking to government. I'm not looking to courts. I'm not looking to personalities.

I'm not looking to fancy preachers. I'm looking to God to do what only God can do in this generation we're now living in. I'm looking for a spiritual awakening in America.

I'm looking for a moment of conscience among the people. I'm looking for a season, a time where all of a sudden, just like the prodigal son, it's like in the snap of our fingers that we suddenly come to ourselves and say, God, what have we done? As David did in this Psalm, says, in a sense, when you look at the Psalmist, Lord, what did we do? How did we lose what we had? And you and I know from the history of King David that God had a tender heart towards him and would answer him when he crawled out. So the bottom line is, I'm unfurling my banner today.

Hallelujah. No matter where I am, no matter where you are, I don't care if I'm in the backside of the desert, it means nothing to me whatsoever. I'm unfurling my banner because that is the promise.

You've given a banner to those who fear you that it may be displayed because of the truth. I'm unfurling a banner that says, in God, I still trust. Hallelujah.

And I still believe that unity is possible. I still believe the powers of darkness can be caused to flee. I still believe you're the same yesterday, today, and forever.

I still believe that you answer prayer. I still believe that out of weakness, we will be made strong. I still believe that we can shut the mouths of lions.

I still believe we can stand against armies and enemies. I still believe in the mercy of God. I still believe in the power of God.

I still believe in the glory of God. I still believe in the plan of God. I still believe in God.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Glory, glory, glory to your name Lord. Glory, glory, glory.

Glory, glory. Hallelujah. And though I may be in a wilderness, maybe we're there together.

I will find grace there. I will find God there. I'm taking my flag out of its container.

I'm unfurling that thing and holding it high. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. And one day every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Glory, glory, glory. Glory.

And David the psalmist says many will see it and turn back to God. It's time for the church to rise. It's time for you and I to unfurl our banner and say God I trust you.

I don't care what anybody else says. I still trust you. I don't care what anybody else does.

I believe in the power of unity. And I'm going back to what we left behind. Praise God.

And I'm going to believe for a spiritual awakening in this generation. Because let me tell you something folks. People are sick and tired of the sin in this country right now.

They're tired. They're tired. They've had enough of it.

David said in Psalm 40 and I'm going to close with this. I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit.

Out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my steps. And He put a new song in my mouth. Praise to our God.

Many will see it and fear and trust in the Lord. Praise God. I'm unfurling my song.

I'm taking my banner. I'm taking out my song sheet. And I'm going to start singing in the wilderness.

Praise God. I'm going to start giving God glory for who He is and what He does and what He's going to do in the future. The best days are just ahead of us.

Glory to God. And you know it in your heart. I'm not telling you something you don't already know.

Because the Holy Spirit's been speaking it to you. You and I both know that this is a perilous moment in the history of this world. We don't know how many days we have left.

We don't know if some madman somewhere is going to release a nuclear weapon. We just don't know. In all probability it will happen one day.

But this one thing I do know. Jesus Christ is still on the throne. And if I turn to Him, He will make me more than I am.

He will give me more than I could ever possess and He will take me where I could never go. And when I get there, He'll give me words to speak to the people He sends me to. Praise be to God.

Many will see it and fear and begin to trust in God. Years ago, I wrote a song based on one of David's psalms called, I Will Trust in God. And I want to give an altar call this morning.

Because I want to call people who are, you're in a wilderness of some sort or maybe you're just stuck in neutral. Maybe you're one of the persons that can say, Pastor, I'm not in a wilderness but I'm just going nowhere. I feel like I'm treading water.

I'm not gaining, I'm not losing ground but I'm not gaining ground either in my walk with God. And that's a wilderness place. But today, I hear this drawing of God.

I hear God calling me to something deeper than I've known or a place farther than I've ever gone to be more than I could ever hope to be in my own strength. And I want to live the kind of life that brings glory to God in this season of utter confusion that we're now living in. I want to be a person that brings, I want to get to the place where I don't even have to say anything.

People will see this song. I was checking out at the grocery store just a few years back and it wasn't a particularly good day, just an ordinary day. And as I'm putting my stuff along the conveyor belt, the lady at the cash looks at me and says, I see something in you.

What is it I'm looking at? Isn't that amazing? It's called a new song. It's called a confidence in God. It's called no matter what's going on around me.

Yes, the price of groceries are going up, but that doesn't affect me. Obviously, it doesn't affect me. My confidence is not in the price of groceries or the price of oil.

It's in God. And more than anything in my whole life, I want his name to be loved again and honored, understood, revered. I will trust in God all of my day.

Though the seas may roar, mountains leave their place, the hearts of men may fail. Tears on every face, safely I will stand. In God's amazing grace, I will trust in God.

I will trust in God. Come what may in Christ I say, I will trust in God. I will trust in God.

I will trust in God. Come what may in Christ I say, I will trust in God. So I'm going to invite you.

I'm going to sing it again. And I'm going to invite you to come to this altar and unfurl your banner. Pull that flag that is yours, and it's uniquely yours.

Pull it out of the tube. Set it in the right place and display it. And say, God, give me a song.

God, give me a countenance that speaks of trust in you. Give me strength that can only come from God. No matter how confusing the day is, no matter how dark the wilderness might be, Lord, you have drawn

me here, and you told me that if I call out to you, you would answer me.

So this is my altar call to you today. That you come and we'll unfurl our banners together, and we'll pray together, and let's believe God for the miraculous. Let's stand together.

Now you can't unfurl that banner until you have acknowledged Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And if you haven't done that, I would encourage you to open your heart today. Just say, Jesus, I can't save myself and forgive me for thinking I ever could.

You died on a cross for me to pay the price for the wrong I have done. And it's because of that sacrifice that you made, I can know today that I can be forgiven for the things that I have done, which the Bible calls sin. I believe in my heart that you died in my place, and because of that, I can know today that I can be forgiven of all the wrong that I have done.

And I confess with my mouth that from this day forward, you are the Lord of my life. I won't govern my own life by my own thoughts anymore. I'll go into your word, and your word will begin to guide me.

And you will become my God, and you will give me that life that I heard about today. If that's in your heart, please just pray this prayer with me. Let's all pray it together for the sake of those who want to pray it today and those who are online as well who need to surrender to Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me. Thank you for dying on a cross for me and coming to get me in the place where I am. Today, I open my heart to you.

I invite you into my life to be my God and my Savior. I confess you as the Lord of my life. From this day forward, I will follow you.

Thank you for loving me. Thank you for saving me. And now I thank you for keeping me.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Praise God.

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