Sermon: **The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.** (Matthew 3.1)

On 2 Sept 459CE, somewhere near Aleppo (in modern Syria) on a 15m high pillar with a 1m2 platform, Simeon Stylites died. He had been on a pillar for 37 years to pray. Extreme lengths to get peace and quiet!

Lent can put us off as often associated with negative things, like fasting, or not eating chocolate, or no flowers in church, or praying up a pillar! Not encouraging.

Some prefer a more positive action – giving blood, money to charity, Lent Course. TEXT.

Jesus went into the wilderness following his baptism (according to Matthew, Mark and Luke), so there must be value in it, even if it all sounds so negative – three temptations. What value did he find?

1. Jesus’ calling was to offer God, more than bread (though did offer bread too)
2. Jesus realised that the way to offer God is through God’s agenda not his.
3. Jesus discovered that God demonstrates his power and glory through service.

Lent – a time for voluntarily going into the wilderness. Though it sounds negative it is about re-examining our connection with God and our activity in support of God’s Kingdom.

Through it we may need to look at ourselves, relationships (God, others), fears as well as hopes.

We may feel dissatisfied with our lives, confused about what God wants from us – time for reflection.

1. Our calling is to offer God, more than bread (nothing wrong with Brown Bags)
2. We are to follow God’s agenda not ours (nothing wrong with Parish Council agendas).
3. God demonstrates his power and glory through service (nothing wrong with receiving service).

In each case as it is tempting to go a different way, the voluntary wilderness helps reorientation.

The Affordables Shop is closing after many years, and recent losses of over $10000. Nothing wrong with Affordables as such, but now God calls us differently, TEXT. Maybe we need a touch of wilderness to find out what that new call from God is.