Sermon – Bread for the Journey
Sunday January 11, 2026

How many of you are still thinking about your Christmas break?

Our family had a really good Christmas. Abby was back home from university. We went on road trips, enjoyed our favourite foods and spent time with family and friends. And for a little while, life felt lighter.

And now, we're back. Back to work, back to school, back to our responsibilities.

Many of you know what that's like. You get a short break during Christmas and then the busyness starts up again.

But for some of you, getting back to routine isn't just about busyness, it's about facing things you'd rather avoid. Over the holidays, some unexpected tensions came up for us. Not exactly things we're excited to deal with.

So let me ask you: **What's the thing in your life right now that you'd rather not have to deal with?**

- Maybe it's a tension in a relationship.
- Brokenness in your marriage.
- Financial pressure.
- A health challenge.
- Or the discouragement of doing the right thing, but still feeling worn down.

In these moments, you feel tired, hurt and if you're honest, you'd rather not have to deal with the situation altogether.

But here's the thing – the situation isn't going away.

So what do you do when you're facing something hard that you'd rather avoid?

That's where we find the Israelites today. It's been less than two months after their own break.

- They've been rescued from slavery.
- They've walked through the Red Sea on dry ground.
- They've witnessed God's power firsthand.

They even rested at an oasis where there were palm trees, fresh springs and protection. Life was good. And then God tells them to leave. He leads them out of the oasis and into… the wilderness.

The wilderness is a brutal place. There's no food or water, there's no shelter or protection. The terrain is dangerous and the journey is exhausting.

What makes this even more surprising is that God could have taken them along a different route that was shorter and easier.

So Why does God sometimes lead his people into the wilderness?

Sermon Series

We're in a sermon series called *The Way Through the Wilderness*.

Last year was a season of discernment for us. Together, we asked God, *Lord, where as you leading Cornerstone to next?* As we listened, we sensed God giving us 4 Guiding Priorities for our next chapter.

1. **Deeper and Wider Discipleship**
2. **Building Bridges Across Differences**
3. **Joining God in the Neighbourhood**
4. **Cornerstone Centre as a Hub for Community Connection and Belonging**

This year, we're continuing to discern the details, but we also sense that God is calling us to begin walking the way he's shown us.

And here's the thing. Whenever God calls his people, he doesn't just call them to the journey, he prepares then for it. How does he do that? Through wilderness training. Because in the Bible, the wilderness is a place of preparation.

- Moses spends 40 years in the wilderness before God calls him to lead.
- David flees into the wilderness to escape King Saul, where he is shaped to lead God's people.
- Even Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness where he's tested and prepared for ministry.

Whenever God calls his people, he uses the wilderness to prepare them for their calling.

Our hope for this series is that as we journey with Israel in the wilderness, we'll learn how God shapes his people and prepares us for the things he's called us to do.

In today's story, the Israelites have left the oasis in Elim and have started their journey in the wilderness. And it's at this point that they run into their first obstacle - they have no food.

Now remember, God has already delivered them.

- They're free.
- They're on their way to the Promised Land.
- They've God's special people – called to reflect his character and carry out his purposes in the world.

But at the first sign of trouble, what do they do?

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. [3] The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." (Exodus 16:2-3)

Notice what's happening.

- They're complaining.
- They're romanticizing the past.
- They're accusing their leaders of trying to kill them.

But notice what's missing. They don't acknowledge God. They've forgotten the God who delivered them, who parted the sea and who defeated their enemies.

At the first sign of trouble, what do they do? They slip back into their old patterns of thinking.

How many of you remember the movie *Crocodile Dundee?*

The main character, Mick Dundee spent his whole life living in the Australian bush. And the movie is about him visiting New York and on his first night, he's put up in a fancy hotel, complete with a huge, comfortable bed with clean sheets and soft pillows.

But do you remember where he sleeps? On the floor.

Why? It's not because the bed isn't good, it's because he doesn't know what to do with it. He's simply doing what he's used to.

That's what the Israelites are doing. They're doing what they're used to - thinking and acting like slaves.

You see, God got the people out of Egypt, but now he needs to get the Egypt out of the people.

And that's what the wilderness is for.

If I asked you, when did your faith grow the most? I think very few of us would point to the times in your life when things were going well.

Why? Because for reasons I don't fully understand, God does his best work in the wilderness. When your heart is broken. When your hopes are shattered. When your life feels heavy. That's where God teaches you:

- Trust instead of worry.
- Forgiveness instead of resentment.
- Perseverance instead of giving up.

God does his best work in the wilderness.

We noticed this as a church when God called us to build this facility. There were moments when we faced challenges.

- When the way forward wasn't clear.
- When we didn't have enough money.
- When there were different opinions about what to do.

But when we fixed our eyes on Jesus and moved forward in faith together, God used those moments to shape us.

- He grew our faith as we saw him provide time and time again.
- He deepened our commitment as we gave sacrificially to the mission.
- He strengthened our unity as we prayed together and served together.

And because of these seasons, we emerged stronger in faith, more united as a body and more committed to the mission God has given us. And as we look ahead, we're excited about how God will continue to shape his people here at Cornerstone in this new chapter.

Because God does his best work in the wilderness.

Now back to our story. The Israelites are complaining they don't have food. So what does God do? He doesn't punish them, he provides for them.

The LORD said to Moses, [12] "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread… (Exodus 16:11-12)

God meets their physical need but he's also doing something more. He's giving them bread not just to feed them but to train them.

From this story, we learn three lessons God teaches his people in the wilderness.

First, **Trust God to provide one day at a time.**

Now if we're honest, we don't want to live day by day. We want enough to last weeks, months and even years. Not because we're greedy, but because having more food, more money or more of anything else - gives us a sense of control.

But does God give Israel a warehouse of food to last a whole year? No, he gives them manna— just enough for the day**.**

Why does God do that?

In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. (Exodus 16:4)

You see, God is teaching his people to trust him daily.

Now most of us don't have to worry about having enough food for today. But most of us do worry about what will happen tomorrow.

- Will I have enough money?
- Will my kids be okay?
- Will I manage my work?

We want a five-year plan from God, but God's plan is to give us bread for today.

That's why Jesus teaches us to pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread."* Not our weekly bread. Not our five-year bread. Daily bread.

- Maybe you have tension in a relationship.
- Maybe you have a work problem you can't figure out.
- Maybe you have a ministry challenge that feels too big to solve.

What would it look like – not to have everything figured out – but to trust that God will give you enough for today?

Enough grace, enough wisdom, enough strength for today. Then tomorrow, he'll give you what you need then.

Trust God to provide one day at a time.

The second lesson is this. **Feed on God's Word every day**.

You see, manna was never just about physical food. God tells us later what he's really teaching his people.

Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (Deuteronomy 8:3)

In other words, in the same way food nourishes our body, God's word nourishes our lives. It sustains us, strengthens us and keeps us alive.

But just like food, God's Word only nourishes us when we actually take it in. We can't just like the idea of it. We need to feed on it, chew on it and reflect on it. We need to sit with it long enough for it to shape how we think, feel and live.

And just like food, God's Word sustains us best when it becomes part of our daily rhythm, not just something we consume occasionally.

For me, this practice has been so essential—especially in harder seasons. I've seen how daily time in God's Word steadies my heart, clarifies my thinking and keeps me grounded in God's truth even when things feel uncertain.

Every morning, I'll make a cappuccino and then I'll read some scripture, I'll sit with it and ask, *God, what are you saying to me today?* I'll write down anything that stands out, pray through it and linger with God.

And when I feel like God is really speaking to me through a verse, I'll write it down on an index card or a sticky note. And I'll carry it with me so I can keep feeding on it throughout the day.

As we begin this new year:

- What rhythms do you have around God's Word?
- Is there a reading plan you could commit to?
- A devotional you could walk through?
- A verse or passage God might be inviting you to memorize and hold on to?

We all have different schedules and seasons of life. But the question isn't *whether* you have time—it's, *How will you use your time to make God's Word part of your regular rhythm?*

Finally, the third lesson is: **Recognize that Jesus is all you need.**

The manna the Israelites gathered each day was never the end goal. It was always pointing forward to something else – or rather Someone else.

Jesus later makes this explicit.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry… (John 6:35)

So often we go to God asking him for what we think we need. We look to approval, security or success to give us life and we ask God to bless us with these things. And to be clear, these aren't bad things - they're good things. But as Pastor Tim Keller reminds us, idolatry is when we take good things and turn them into ultimate things.

And the problem with idols is this. They promise us life, but they never truly satisfy. And sooner or later, they can taken away.

So why does God use the wilderness to shape us?

Maybe it's because the wilderness has a way of stripping everything away. Because…

- When your relationships fall apart,
- when people disappoint you,
- when your plans fail,
- when your money runs out,
- when your health deteriorates,
- when your hopes are shattered
- when you don't know what to do…

…in those moments, you discover what's left. And when everything else is gone, and all you have is God, you'll discover something that will change your life - He is enough.

- Everything else can be taken from you. But Jesus never can.
- Everything else will eventually let you down. But Jesus never will.

And when Jesus is your all-in-all—you will finally be free. Because when He is all you have, you'll discover that He is all you need.

So let me ask you:

- What are you looking to right now to give you life?
- Where in your life have good things become ultimate things?
- Where are you asking God to give you something, when what He really wants to give you is himself?

Maybe some of you are in a wilderness season right now. You feel overwhelmed, anxious and hurting. If that's you, know this – the wilderness isn't a punishment. It's the place where God wants to meet you right where you are so that he can give you just what you need.

And this isn't just true for us as individuals. As a church, we're also in a season of preparation. God has called Cornerstone into a new chapter. He's shaping us as we pursue the mission He's given us, teaching us to trust him for what we need, to feed on His Word, and to depend on Jesus as our source and our strength.

So wherever you are, I want to invite you to bow your head and close your eyes as we pray.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with open hearts. You are our provider, our sustainer, and the one who never fails.

Some of us are in a wilderness season right now. Thank you Jesus that you do your best work in the wilderness.

Teach us to trust You one day at a time. Help us to rely on Your daily provision. Feed us with Your Word, using it to nourish our hearts, shape our minds, and guide our steps, that we would live as the people You have called us to be.

Jesus, You are the bread of life. In this season, may we discover that You are enough. When our plans fail, when our relationships disappoint, when our resources feel insufficient, may we find You to be our all in all.

And Jesus, we lift up Cornerstone to you. We know You are preparing us for what's ahead. Shape us, teach us, and strengthen us in this season of preparation. Help us to fix our eyes on you and walk faithfully into the mission You've called us to, walking with you every step of the way.

We pray all this for the sake of your mission.

Amen