

Come Out the Wilderness Afro-American Spiritual United Methodist Hymnal #416

Refrain:

I am leaning on the Lord, I am leaning on the Lord,
I am leaning on the Lord, who died on Calvary.

Leader: Tell me, how did you feel when you come out

All: Come out the wilderness, come out the wilderness, come out the wilderness?

L: Tell me, how did you feel when you come out

A: Come out the wilderness, leaning on the Lord?

Refrain:

L: Did you love everybody when you come out

A: Come out the wilderness, come out the wilderness, come out the wilderness?

L: Did you love everybody when you come out

A: Come out the wilderness, leaning on the Lord?

Refrain:

L: Did your soul feel happy when you come out

A: Come out the wilderness, come out the wilderness, come out the wilderness?

L: Did your soul feel happy when you come out

A: Come out the wilderness, leaning on the Lord?

Luke 4:1-13 “Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River, being urged by the Spirit out into the barren wastelands of Judea, where Satan tempted him for forty days. He ate nothing all that time and was very hungry. Satan said, “If you are God’s Son, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.” But Jesus replied, “It is written in the Scriptures, ‘Other things in life are much more important than bread!’” Then Satan took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time; and the devil told him, “I will give you all these splendid kingdoms and their glory—for they are mine to give to anyone I wish—if you will only get down on your knees and worship me.” Jesus replied, “We must worship God, and him alone. So it is written in the Scriptures.” Then Satan took him to Jerusalem to a high roof of the Temple and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say that God will send his angels to guard you and to keep you from crashing to the pavement below!” Jesus replied, “The Scriptures also say, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to a foolish test.’” When the devil had ended all the temptations, he left Jesus for a while and went away.” The Living Bible

Do you see sin as a time of wilderness? Explain.

Why do you think the song emphasizes “leaning on the Lord”? What does that mean to you?

“The dualism of the wilderness means it can be a place of refuge or a place to leave behind. It is the conversion experience of the wilderness that is most important. The wilderness is a place where one meets Jesus, and from that encounter with Christ, one’s life is forever changed.” (Darnell St Roman, History of Hymns February 2, 2017, umcdiscipleship.org)

This gives a different view of wilderness. How do you see the wilderness as a place of refuge? Is it a place of refuge from the world, or could it be a place to hide from God? Or possibly both? Why do you feel this way?

Have you ever experienced a time in the wilderness? Describe it. Did you meet Jesus there? How did that feel? How did it feel when the time was over?

Why do you think Jesus meets us in our wilderness?

If you are still in your wilderness, if haven’t met Jesus there, could you open your heart now and invite Jesus to meet you there?

“The wilderness experience has always been a popular motif in Black religious thought, often referring to the experience of the Hebrews and of Jesus. In either case the focus was on *leaving* the wilderness. This song is another example of the dualism in the Negro Spiritual. It reflected on the conversion experience as coming out of the wilderness of sin, and to the freedom experience of as coming out of the wilderness of bondage.” (Carlton R Young *Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal* Abingdon Press, 1993, page 296 citing William B McClain *Come Sunday, The Liturgy of Zion*, Abingdon Press, 1990)

Because of recent events, it is more important than ever to understand the experience of people of color – both today and historically. I invite you to take some time to imagine yourself in the life of a slave. If you can’t do that, I would encourage you to take some time to do some research to better understand the struggle, the pain, the loss that they experienced every day. When you can see yourself in that time and place, look around you and imagine the longing for freedom. See Jesus coming to you in that time and place. Rest in His presence. Feel that freedom. Then take a moment to pray that our sisters and brothers of color may find true freedom - in Christ and in the world.