

LENT 2026

# 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY MARCH 8

God of the desert journey,  
You lead your people into wilderness places— dry places, uncertain places,  
places where faith feels thin as dust.

We know this road.

There are days when the ground beneath us feels cracked,  
when the future feels parched,  
when hope feels like a story meant for someone else.

And like your people long ago, we find ourselves asking the aching question:  
Is the Lord among us or not?

We ask it when prayers feel unanswered. When injustice seems stronger than mercy.  
When grief lingers longer than we expected. When the well runs dry.

Forgive us, God, not for asking the question,  
but for believing we must face the wilderness alone.

You heard the cries of thirsty people. You did not abandon them to their doubt.  
You told Moses to strike the rock— and water came where no water should be.

This is the dirty work of hope:

trusting that even in the hardest places something living can break through.

Hope is not pretending the desert is easy. Hope is striking the rock again.

Hope is gathering around small streams of grace when we thought none remained.

In this Lenten season, teach us to look for water in unlikely places—

in kindness that appears in hard times,

in courage that rises when we are tired,

in justice that begins with small acts.

When we are tempted to give up,  
remind us that deserts are not the end of the story.

When we ask, “Is God among us?”

open our eyes to the quiet evidence of your presence— in community,  
in compassion, in the stubborn resilience of love.

Turn our complaints into prayers. Turn our fear into trust.

Turn our dry places into wells of mercy.

And keep walking with us, even when we cannot yet see the water.

Through Christ, the living water for a thirsty world, Amen.

Journal Prompt – Water in the Wilderness

In Exodus 17, the people cry out in thirst and frustration and ask,  
“Is the Lord among us or not?” It is a question many faithful people have asked.

Take time to reflect:

- Where in your life right now does the landscape feel dry or uncertain?
- When have you found yourself asking, “Is God really here?”
- Where have you seen “water from the rock”—unexpected grace in a hard season?
- What small signs of God’s presence might you be overlooking today?

Write honestly about your questions and doubts.

Lent reminds us that asking the question does not mean we lack faith  
—it may be the very place where hope begins to flow.