

Theme: With Jesus in the Wilderness.

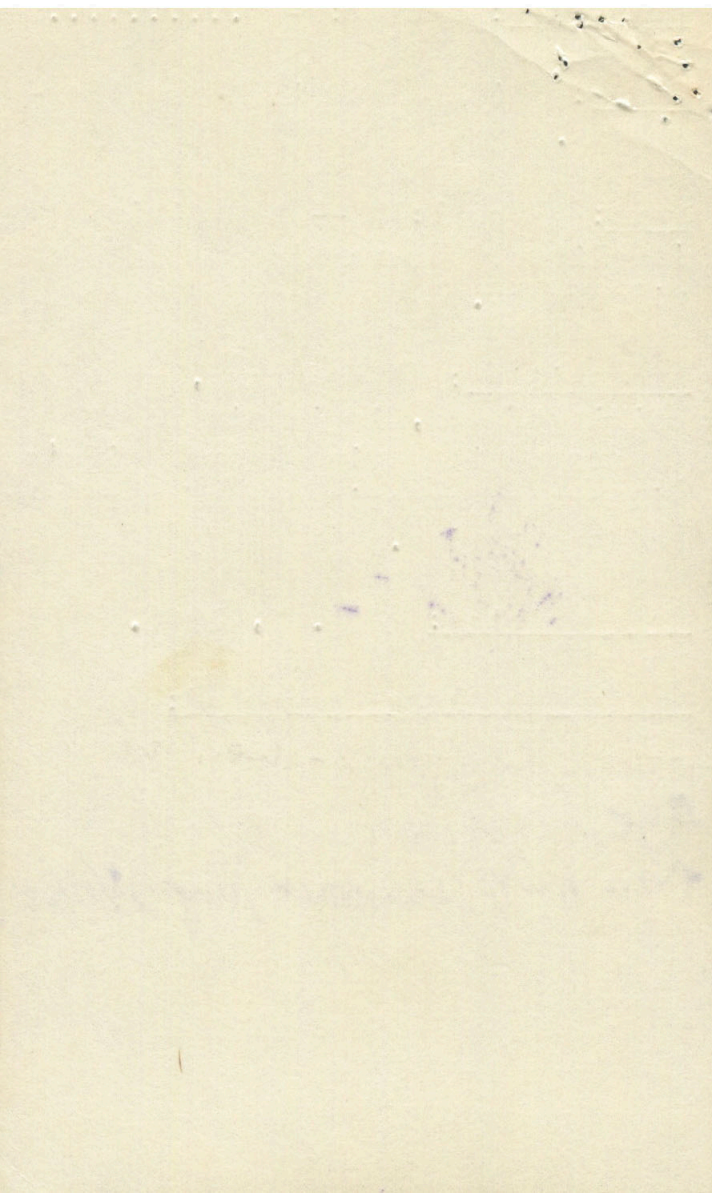
Text: Mark 1:12 - "The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness."

Proposition: When Jesus, or the Spirit of God, is in his heart a person will triumph over life's wilderness experiences of struggle and temptation.

Date written: Jan. 7, 1956.

Dates and places preached:

- Grace, Casper, Wyo., Jan 8, 56.
- NYC, N.Y., 9:30 a.m., July 15, 56
- RADIO KWYO, Steamboat, Wyo., 5/19/60.
- Montrose, Colo., Communion, 9 a.m. - 9/1/63



Introduction:

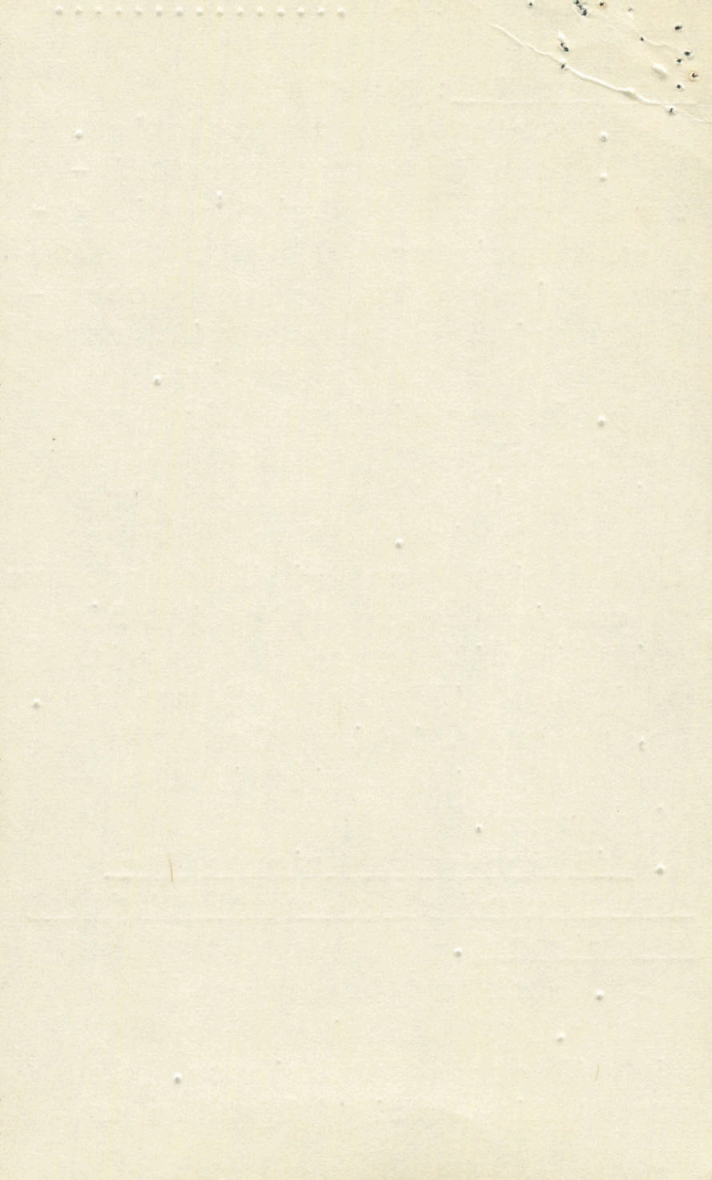
1. Scripture recapitulation.

2. It may be that our Scriptural account of Christ's wilderness experience holds for us some revelation of how we may successfully triumph over our wilderness of struggle and temptation.

3. In our living we frequently feel hopelessly lost and helpless amid life's wilderness of struggle and temptation. If we remember that Christ faced similar problems we can in thought walk with him amid his wilderness and he with us in the wilderness of our life. So, we are thinking along the theme of "With Christ in the wilderness."

I. Wilderness experiences are often preceded by great spiritual experiences.

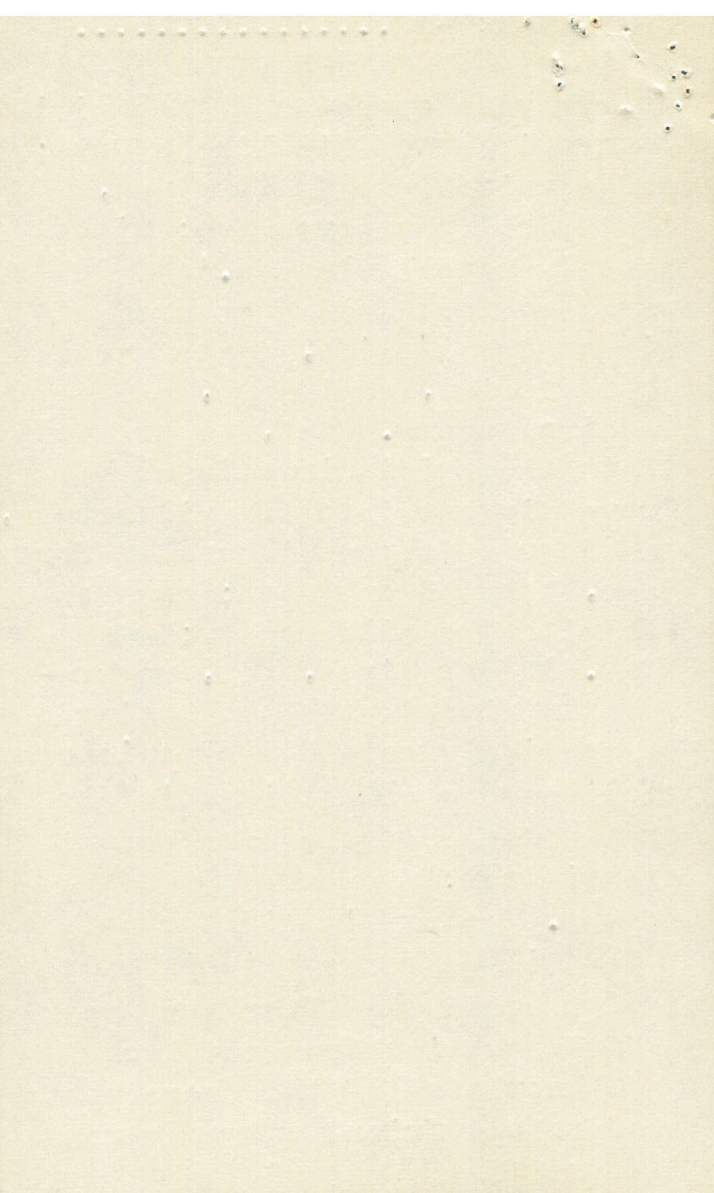
1. Such was the case with the Master. His baptism preceded his wilderness experience. It was at his baptism that "he saw



the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with Thee I am well pleased.' " It was here that he was assured of his status in life, a status that would thrill, challenge, and inspire anyone. Yet, we are told that "the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts;"

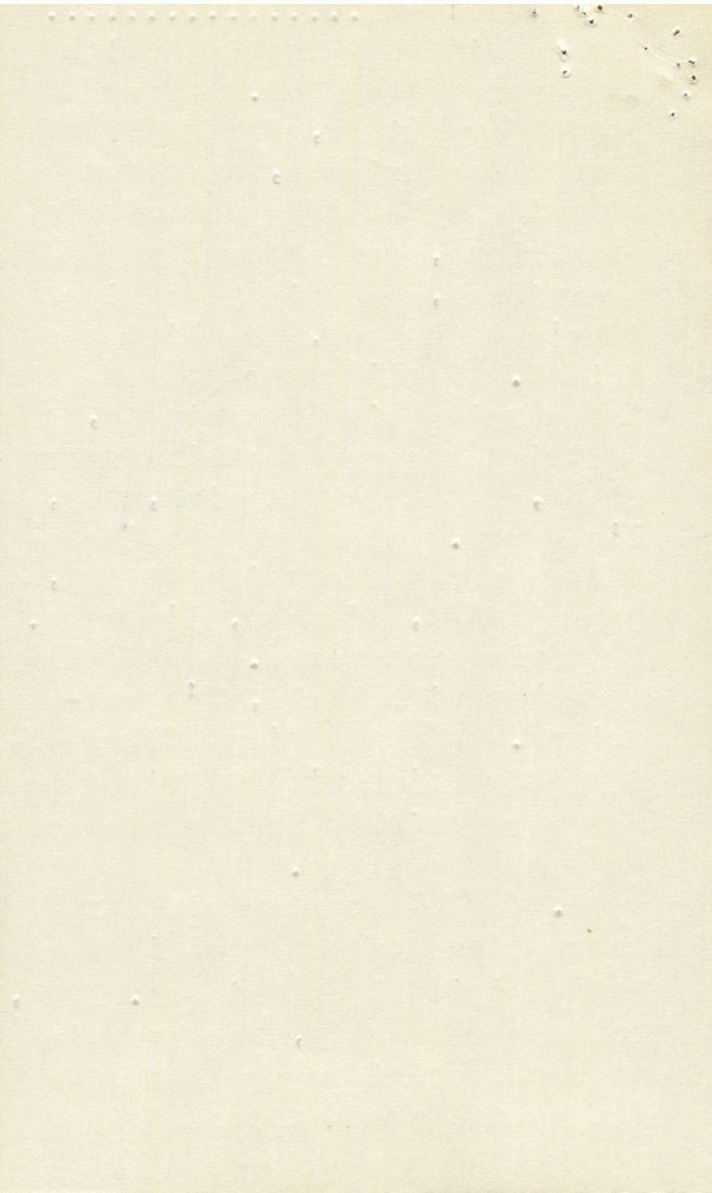
2. In our lives, too, we frequently find that the tempting or seemingly hopeless experiences of life come almost immediately on the heels of the fine and good experiences:

a. A story in lighter vein that illustrates this is that of the man who after many years of separation from and lack of knowledge of the whereabouts of an old friend suddenly ran



across him at a meeting which they were attending. After the joyful greetings, for they had been close friends, he began catching up on the past of his old friend, and naturally questioned, "How is your wife?" "She's in heaven," replied the friend. Feeling the joy of the reunion dimming quickly, he tried to say something appropriate, and came out with, "Oh, I'm sorry." Then he realized that was not the thing to say, so he added, "I mean, I'm glad." That was even worse. He finally came out with "Well, I'm surprised." From a first flush of joy at reunion with a friend he was very quickly in a confused and unhappy state.

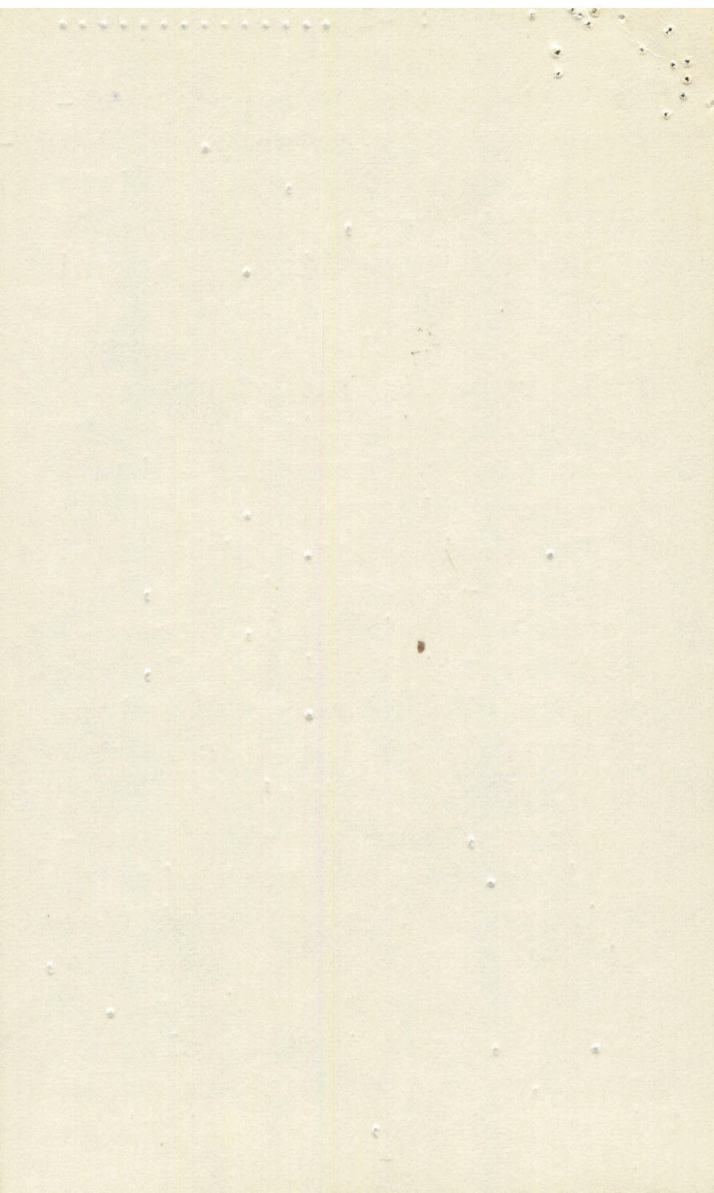
b. Joyful reunion with a dear friend of the past is a real spiritual experience. But, going more deeply, we can point to such occasions as that of the young persons attending for



the first time a church week-long assembly or camp. The program is excellent, the spiritual uplift is real, and the youth finds God a reality. Returning home at the end of the week he finds temptation and struggle all around in ~~his~~ effort to apply to daily living the great concepts and presence which he has just discovered.

c. So it goes. Life has its mountain-top experiences, when we know God is real, when enjoyment is at its peak, when we are all aglow. But quickly there follows the descent to the valley of life's everyday ~~xpr~~ problems, struggles and temptations. By contrast with the heights just experienced these dips into the valley seem low, dreary and hopeless indeed.

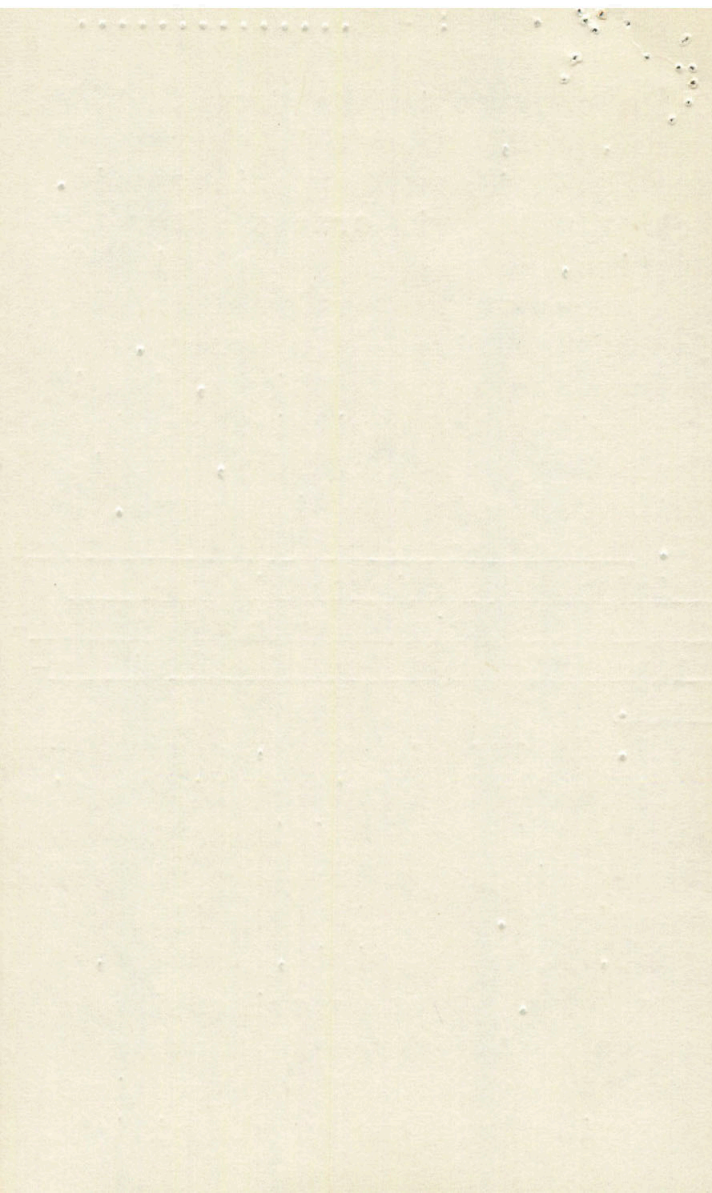
3. Yet, even in the "slough of despond," as the poet has named this experience, the christian



finds comfort in the fact that Jesus, too, knew this characteristic truth of life and experienced it. Not only the wilderness after the baptism, but he knew the pain of the cross very shortly after the joy of the first Palm Sunday. When ~~he~~ remembers these things, in his own trials the christian can indeed feel that he has company, and is "with Jesus in the wilderness."

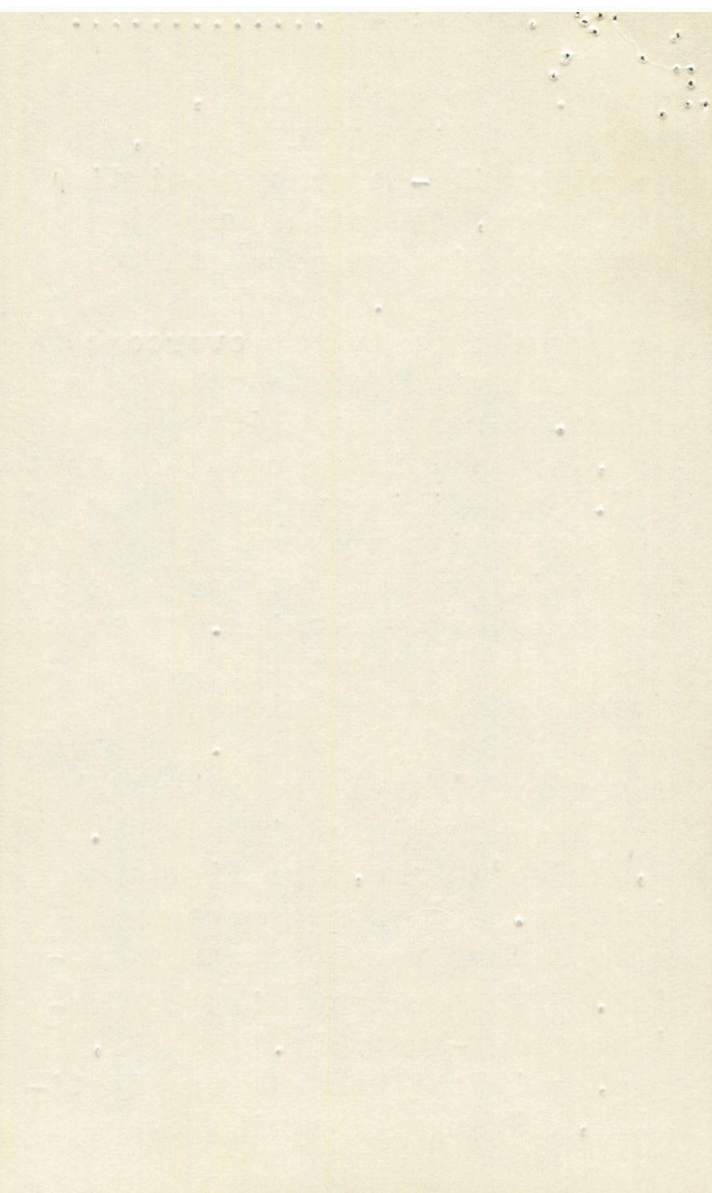
II. The power that caused the great spiritual experiences is the one that helps triumph over the temptations and struggles of the wilderness.

1. In our Scripture, Jesus experienced the Spirit at his baptism. It was this same Spirit that caused him to undergo the wilderness experience. But in the wilderness Satan, not the Spirit, tempted, says Mark. Mark describes the source of the strength that enabled Jesus to overcome the temptation by saying "and the angels ministered



to him." In other words, though God wanted him to be tested, to exercise willpower by resisting temptation, God still gave him companionship and strength to meet the ordeal. Jesus needed only the earnest desire to overcome the temptation and to make a real effort. From that point on he had help, or so I interpret the events.

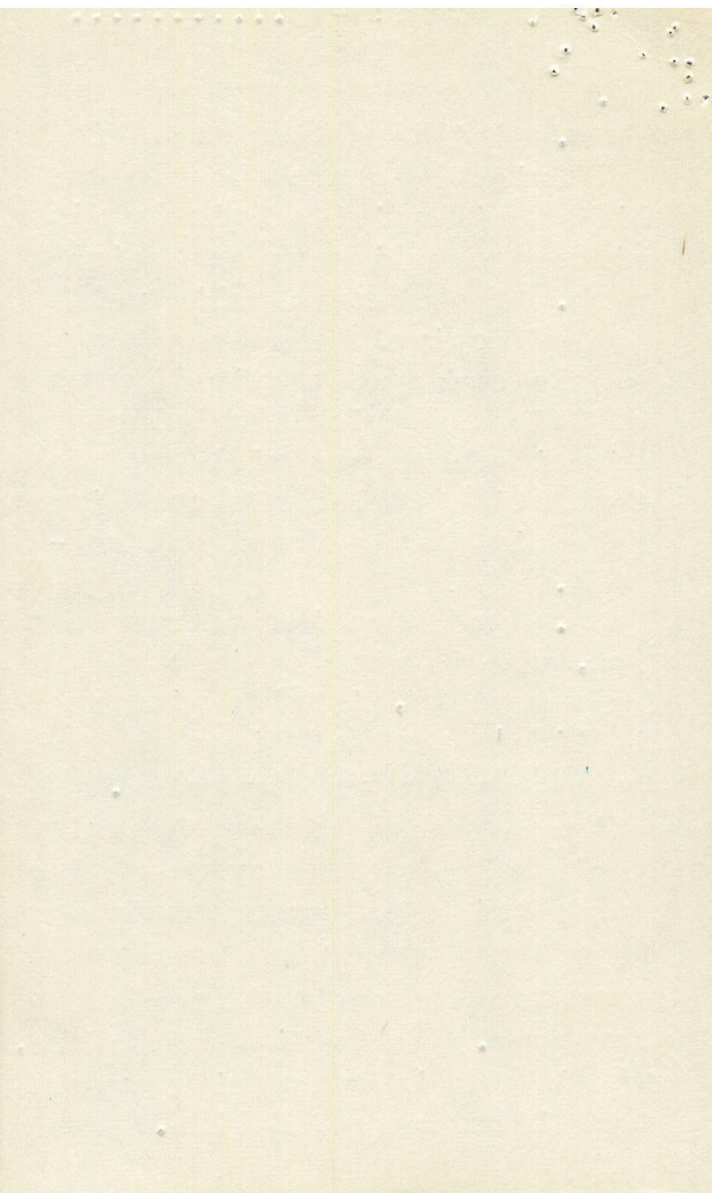
2. An admiring woman member of a congregation stopped to speak to the minister at the close of service one Sunday morning. "Reverend I thought you ought to know that I come to these services only because of your sermons. They are so wonderful that you ought to have them published in a book." "O, I don't know," replied the minister. "I am not sure my sermons deserve that much attention. Perhaps they will be published post-humously." "Well, then," said the woman enthusiastically, "I hope that will be real



soon."

a. Ministers know that kind and friendly church people can lift their spirits quickly with sincere compliments on their work. ^{A minister} ~~They~~ knows equally well how effectively the same good people can sympathetically but efficiently prick the balloon of pride ~~when~~ ^{he} yields to the temptation to let the compliments make him unduly proud and pompous.

b. Much more is it true that God, who is with us in our best moments, is also with us in life's darkest times and most tempestuous struggles. Often he seems to use these low periods to help us overcome the false pride and wrong attitudes we often assume when we have too much success and too few reverses. He is with us before, within and in conquering over the wildernesses of life.



3. Just as God was with Jesus in his baptism and in his wilderness experience, so God in Jesus is with us in all of life's experiences, if we will but let him be.

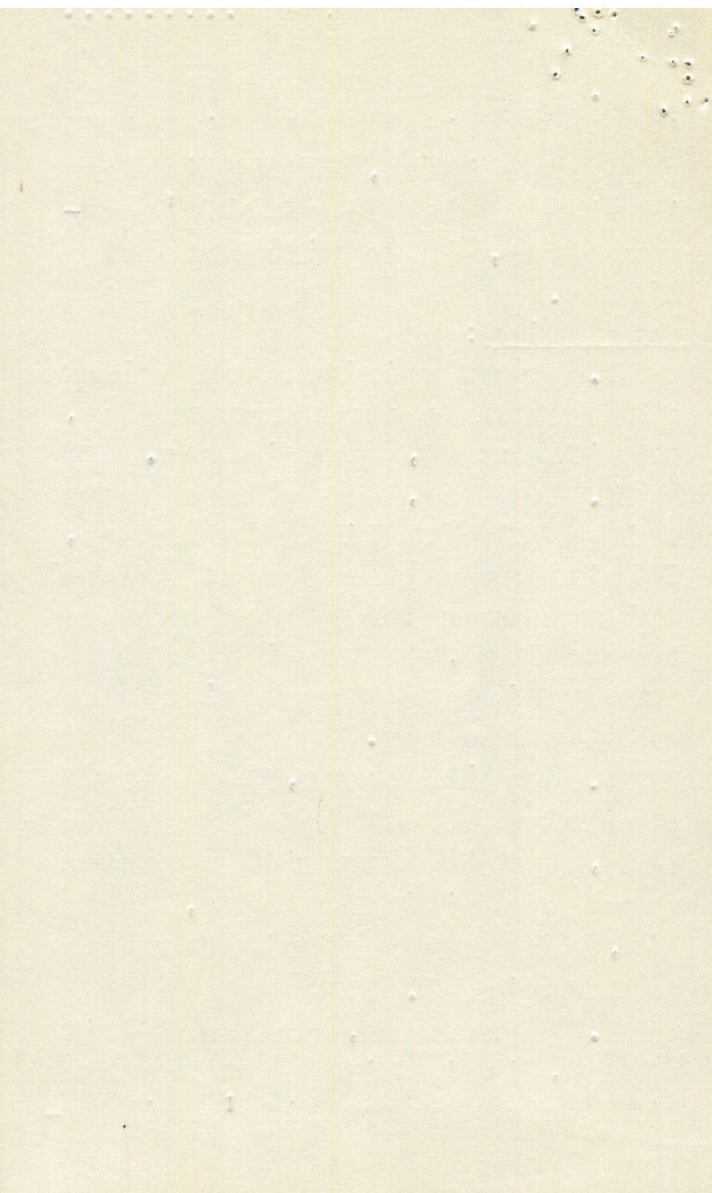
Conclusion:

1. Great spiritual experiences often precede our worst valley, or wilderness, experiences.

2. But God, who allows these things of both kinds to happen, is with us as the Christ and helps triumph over the struggles and temptations, if we will just accept him and make a sincere effort ourselves.

3. As with Jesus, the Spirit may drive us out into the wilderness, but it also will send the angels to minister to us, as to him, the angels of righteousness and happiness.

4. When Jesus, or the Spirit of God, is in his heart a person will triumph over life's wilderness exp



ness experiences of struggle or temptation.

a. This doesn't mean ^{that} you will be relieved of either struggle or temptation, but that ~~you~~ you will find a way to meet them confidently and joyously, not yielding to them. Jesus is with you in the wildernesses of life.

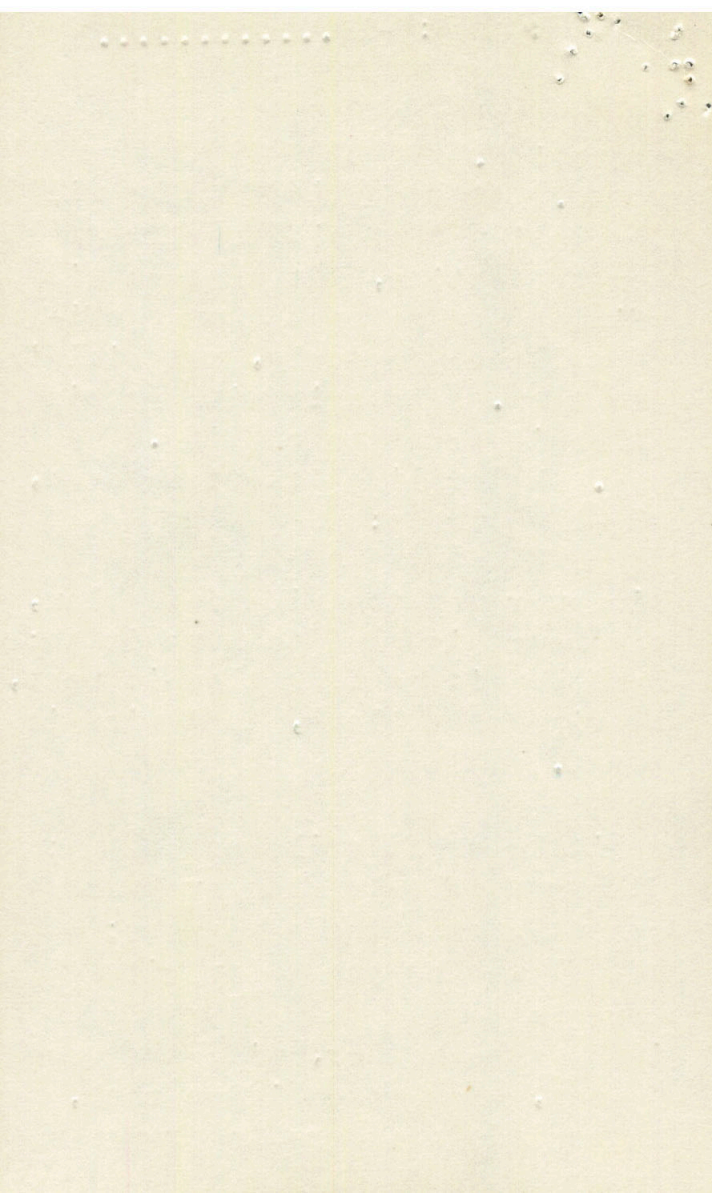
5. As Caroline Atherton Mason, 1823-1890 wrote:

GOD KNOWS BEST

Whichever way the wind doth blow,
Some heart is glad to have it so;
Then blow it east or blow it west,
The wind that blows, that wind is
best.

My little craft sails not alone;
A thousand fleets from every zone
Are out upon a thousand seas;
What blows for one a favorite
breeze

Might dash another, with the shock
Of doom, upon some hidden rock,
And so I do not dare to pray

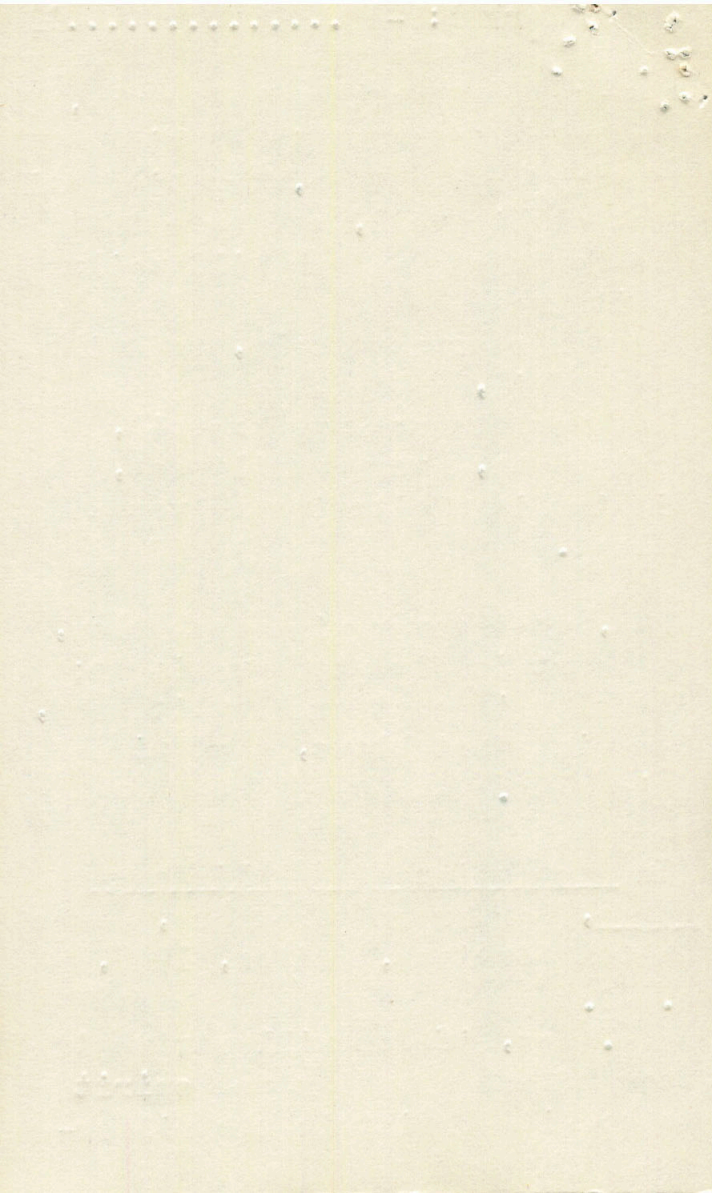


For winds to waft me on my way,
 But leave it to a Higher Will
 To stay or speed me, trusting still
 That all is well, and sure that He
 Who launched my bark will sail
 with me
 Through storm and calm, and will
 not fail,
 Whatever breezes may prevail,
 To land me, every peril past,
 Within His sheltering heaven at
 last.

Then, whatsoever wind doth blow,
 My heart is glad to have it so;
 And blow it east or blow it west,
 The wind that blows, that wind
 is best.

(In Masterpieces of Religious Verse, Harper and Brothers, James Dalton Morrison, editor, 1948, p. 80.)

6. Yes, if you will strive in thought and sympathy and **spirit** to be with Christ in the wilder-



nesses of His life, you will become aware that He is with you in the wildernesses ~~experiences~~ experiences of your life, helping you conquer over them.

