

Gospel reflections

Mark 1:9-15 The first Sunday in Lent

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark gets straight to it, possibly passing on the message he heard straight from Peter. The writing is spare, minimalist, essential, good news. The morning notices of the gospel message. There is no nativity in Mark's gospel. Instead, the prelude is old and new prophesy – Isaiah and John the Baptist – preparing the way (v1-8).

The adult Jesus comes from Galilee but it feels like he's just appeared. He shows up to be baptised and introduced. We know that God made flesh is being introduced to us because the Holy Spirit descends to him, God announces him, Satan recognises him, animals keep him company and angels care for him. Heaven, hell and earth all declare who Jesus is. Jesus starts his ministry with authority.

We can look towards Easter from this passage.

God announces his Son, whom he loves, and sends animals and angels to tend to Jesus in the wilderness. On Good Friday, we will hear Jesus cry to his father, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Satan seeks out Jesus to test him. Soon Jesus will go into hell and defeat death.

After Jesus rises from the dead and ascends to heaven, the Holy Spirit will appear again.

All of this is for us, from the God who loves us so much he will suffer and die for us.

The time has come. It's time. Mark's gospel reads as if in a rush, just as your days in your school or early childhood service might hurtle along, this way and that. But this week is the start of Lent, a time to prepare our hearts for Easter. Time to repent and believe the good news.

1 Come to Calvary's holy mountain,
Sinners, ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain
Flows to you, to me, to all,
In a full, perpetual tide,
Opened when our Saviour died.

3 Come in sorrow and contrition,
Wounded, impotent, and blind;
Here the guilty, free remission,
Here the troubled, peace may find.
Health this fountain will restore;
They that drink shall thirst no more.

2 Come in poverty and meanness,
Come defiled, without, within;
From infection and uncleanness,
From the leprosy of sin,
Wash your robes and make them white;
Ye shall walk with God in light.

4 They that drink shall live forever;
'Tis a soul-renewing flood.
God is faithful; God will never
Break His covenant of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died,
Sealed when He was glorified.

LHS 71

Lisa

Mark out loud

[The Gospel According to Mark read by David Suchet](#)

[St. Mark's Gospel recited theatrically by Alec McCowen](#)