

Foreword

Welcome to this special edition of Mark's Gospel.

This account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his teaching represents the heart of the Christian story – a story that describes the gift of new life, offered to each one of us. Through the lens of Mark's account, we perceive a rich and compelling portrait of the person of Jesus. It is the shortest of the four Gospels and probably the earliest, but Mark captures a range of unique events and insights about Jesus. From his early public ministry to his calling of the disciples and the roles they will take in service to others, to Christ's powers as a healer and parable maker, to challenging the status quo in death and resurrection, we meet Jesus – fully God, fully man.

The words of this Gospel echo throughout the centuries precisely because the God who speaks continues to invite us to be transformed. He encourages us to be gradually conformed to the likeness of Christ who was the gift to others. These are not dead words on a page but a living message addressed to each of us personally.

I invite you now, in prayer, to discover again the gift of Christ through this sacred book. Allow yourself to be challenged and persuaded by Mark's strong and well-crafted, pacy account of the life of Jesus, who is the good news. Permit yourself to be refreshed and surprised. My prayer for you is that in reading Mark's account, you will once again discover the joy of the gospel, and – renewed in your faith – you will live that gospel message aloud in the world around you as a gift to all those whom you encounter.

+Peter

Peter M. Brignall, Bishop of Wrexham

Mark's Gospel

Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four Gospels but conveys a strong theology supported by scriptural allusion. (*First key theme: the good news is Jesus Christ.*) It is also the most action-packed. Right from the outset of his ministry, Jesus is working wonders. After choosing his first four followers – Simon, Andrew, James and John – Jesus then immediately performs several healing miracles for both individuals and crowds. He is very clear that his authority and power are from God. (*Second key theme: God's power.*)

As Jesus' ministry and influence unfold, the religious leaders begin to feel both threatened and suspicious of his authority. These undercurrents quickly become a plot by the leaders to kill him. While Jesus' popularity grows, Mark maintains that his most significant act is in his suffering and death. (*Third key theme: suffering and discipleship.*) Towards the very end of his Gospel (15.39), Mark reports of an unnamed Roman soldier who has seen Jesus die on the cross and who makes a profound statement of faith: 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Mark is writing primarily for a Gentile or non-Jewish audience, so he includes many explanations of Aramaic and Jewish customs to help his readers make sense of the narrative. Mark is keen to show us that Jesus is our Saviour and will save us from ill health and death as well as all kinds of demons and evil spirits. The cost of this saving grace is a life of service, but while it is not always easy, it is infinitely worthwhile. Mark ends his Gospel with three women being the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

In the second century, St Irenaeus famously began to associate specific symbols from Ezekiel 1.1–21 and Revelation 4.6–8 with each of the four Gospels. He suggested that the winged lion represented Mark because of Mark's use of the prophet Isaiah to begin his Gospel:

*The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ,
the Son of God.*

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

*'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;*

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

*"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight." (1.1–3, quoting Isaiah 40.3)*

Irenaeus states that 'the voice of one crying out ...' reminds one of a lion's roar, and the prophetic spirit descending to earth reminds one of a 'winged message'. The lion also signified royalty, an appropriate symbol for the Son of God. Jesus Christ perfectly models both real leadership and royalty.

Free poster

Download our free 'Fish with Mark' poster for schools and parishes and discover the key highlights of this Gospel in a creative and fun way.

To download the poster, go to our website godwhospeaks.uk and see what you will find when you fish with Mark in the lake at Galilee.

Ways to read the Bible

When we read a book of the Bible, whether from the Old or New Testament, there are a variety of ways in which we can do it. This is because the Bible consists of very different styles of writing – from history and law to wisdom and songs; from poetry and prophecies to letters and Gospel accounts.

We may wish to read a chapter or verse on its own and reflect on it slowly throughout the day. Or we may wish to read a whole story, poem, parable, letter or Gospel. Our reading from the Bible can be as long or as short as we feel is right at the time. Some people find it helpful to read about a particular person and their place in the Bible, not just the kings, prophets and leaders but the families, brothers and sisters or other more ordinary characters. Others are drawn to the rich array of the Psalms or specific historical events.

When we read or listen to the Bible, it is more than simply reading or hearing about people, places and events. It is an act of prayer and meditation. It is food for the soul which can nourish our faith and transform our lives. We can also engage with the Bible more widely through looking at paintings of Bible scenes, listening to music that honours and praises God and watching religious drama that retells the stories creatively.

It is always inspirational to read about God's plan for salvation, our Lord Jesus Christ's life and teachings, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

During the Mass, we hear plenty of Bible readings throughout the year, due to the structure of our Lectionary. In the Lectionary cycle, the readings selected from the Old Testament, the Psalms and the epistles or letters always relate to the four Gospels, so that there is a coherent revelation being given. In this way, God's plans for humanity are seen as being fulfilled in Christ – thus the Gospels are the light through which we read and understand the Old Testament.

The God who Speaks: Our Catholic Campaign

In partnership with Bible Society, this exciting initiative focuses on celebrating, living and sharing God's word throughout the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The year 2020 sees the tenth anniversary of *Verbum Domini*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI on *The Word of the Lord*.

The year 2020 is also the 1,600th anniversary of St Jerome's death. St Jerome was above all a Scripture scholar, translating the Old and New Testaments from the Hebrew and Greek into the Latin Vulgate. He wrote many commentaries and letters which are a great source of scriptural inspiration for us today. Saint Augustine said of him, 'What Jerome is ignorant of, no mortal has ever known.'

These are strong reasons for us to embark at this time on a creative and deeper engagement with the Holy Scriptures across the life of each diocese.

Our Vision

Scripture is foundational to the life of the Catholic Church and so we want to enable deeper scriptural engagement in every diocese.

We want to create new and renewed encounters with Christ through the Scriptures. We want to achieve transformation in the faith and life of our Church and in the public arena through evangelisation, education, creative arts and social action.

Our Themes

- **Celebrating God's Word** – enriching our worshipping and spiritual community.

In discovering and renewing a genuine love for the word of God, we nurture our relationship with Christ. Through the Bible, we meet Christ who is alive in his word. We can listen to him speaking to us and guiding us in our daily lives.

- **Living God's Word** – enriching our social action and outreach.

Scripture teaches us how to live in society, to respect the wonder of creation, especially each human being, and to work towards the common good. The Scriptures inspire us to put faith into action, living God's word and doing God's word.

- **Sharing God's Word** – enriching our formation, proclamation and evangelisation.

The Bible has inspired, and continues to inspire, learning, culture, art, music and literature. It enables science and faith to build up mutual understanding through dialogue. It challenges technology and social media to open up new ways to encounter and share Christ in the world.

Through our vision and themes, we have a unique opportunity to nurture and inspire our faith through attentiveness to the Bible and the great riches of our spiritual history and traditions.

For more information about this campaign, go to godwhospeaks.uk

The Gospel According to Mark

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the good news^a of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.^b

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,^c

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,^d
who will prepare your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight” ’,

⁴John the baptizer appeared^e in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with^f water; but he will baptize you with^g the Holy Spirit.’

a Or *gospel* **b** Other ancient authorities lack *the Son of God*

c Other ancient authorities read *in the prophets* **d** Gk *before your face* **e** Other ancient authorities read *John was baptizing* **f** Or *in* **g** Or *in*



**CELEBRATING
GOD'S WORD**

The first disciples
Mark 1.14–20

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved;^h with you I am well pleased.’

The Temptation of Jesus

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good newsⁱ of God,^j ¹⁵and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;^k repent, and believe in the good news.’^l

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The Man with an Unclean Spirit

²¹They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They

h Or *my beloved Son* **i** Or *gospel* **j** Other ancient authorities read *of the kingdom* **k** Or *is at hand* **l** Or *gospel*

were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, ‘What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.’ ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’ ²⁶And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, ‘What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He^m commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.’ ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Jesus Heals Many at Simon’s House

²⁹As soon as theyⁿ left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, ‘Everyone is searching for you.’ ³⁸He answered, ‘Let

m Or *A new teaching! With authority he* **n** Other ancient authorities read *he*

us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.’³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

⁴⁰A leper^o came to him begging him, and kneeling^p he said to him, ‘If you choose, you can make me clean.’⁴¹ Moved with pity,^q Jesus^r stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I do choose. Be made clean!’⁴² Immediately the leprosy^s left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, ⁴⁴saying to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’⁴⁵ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus^t could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

2 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. ³Then some people^u came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. ⁴And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵When Jesus saw

o The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

p Other ancient authorities lack *kneeling* **q** Other ancient authorities read *anger* **r** Gk *he* **s** The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases **t** Gk *he* **u** Gk *they*