

**LENT 1**  
**Sermon**  
Year B 2021

**Mark 1:9-15**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And 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. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

**Prayer:**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

- AMEN

**Sermon:**

On this 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent,

Some of us will begin a time of fasting and reflection.

At least we'll *think about fasting and reflection!*

*(And that's a start!)*

*Lent last 40 days, like Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness.*

I bet that's not a coincidence!

Jesus' 40 days in the desert matter. A lot!

We've all had our 40 days.

Sometimes they feel like a lifetime, don't they?

We've all heard about Jesus' temptations.

Temptations is as familiar to us, today,

as it was to folks 2,000 years ago.

Technology and tools change, but people are people.

In one generation after another,

the human race faces the same sins and challenges.

It's really hard to resist temptation.

Living in this land of plenty, we can't help but be tempted.

The straight and narrow aint' easy. It's hard. *Really hard.*

The list of easier options is endless.

St. Thomas Aquinas was one smart guy.

He thought Jesus choose to be tempted in the Wilderness,

So that he could show us how to resist.<sup>i</sup>

We all know that Jesus endured worldly temptations,  
in the Wilderness.

We all know about Jesus' 40 day fast.

AND, we all know that he triumphed over all that!

Jesus won out over the sins of the World.

And, with his help, so can we!

It's important to keep events in the right order.

Jesus' 40 days in the desert only happened after

His Baptism in the icy cold Jordan River.<sup>ii</sup>

*Jesus' triumph over temptation,*

*matters most, because he was baptized first.*

Mark's Gospel is a little bit less literate in Greek, than the others.

Mark wrote only a little about the 40 days ...

but he wrote a lot about Jesus' baptism.

Mark didn't do fancy Greek, like Luke, the scholar and physician.

Mark, "cuts to the chase". He gets to the main points.

Boom. Boom. Boom.

- Jesus steps on the Jordan, and right away steps back out;
- The heavens are torn open;
- The Spirit descends; and
- God announces: "The time is fulfilled...."

Boom. Boom. Boom.

The Kingdom is here, Mark says.

Now is the time, the Voice said.

The matter is at issue. The game's afoot.<sup>iii</sup>

The trial has begun. These are the days.<sup>iv</sup>

*The Kingdom project began when Jesus came up out of the Jordan.*

*They had work to do then ...*

*And We still have work to do today! <sup>v</sup>*

The Kingdom wasn't launched in Jerusalem ...  
that grand temple City.

God's Kingdom project began in Bethlehem. A little nowhere town.

And God's Kingdom flowered in Nazareth... Jesus' hometown...  
and the Dustbowl of the Ancient Near East.<sup>vi</sup>

Those Dust Bowl towns were poor soil.  
Enriched by the Holy Spirit!

Mark's Gospel isn't fancy.

He wrote that the heavens were torn apart  
and the Holy Spirit descended *upon* Jesus, like a dove.

His Greek word, usually into English as "upon", is "*eis*"<sup>vii</sup>

The Greek word "*eis*"<sup>viii</sup> can mean "*upon*",

But it can also easily mean "*into*".<sup>ix</sup>

And I think that's a better translation.

I think that's what Mark meant.

I think that the Holy Spirit, on that sacred Baptism day,  
came *into* Jesus. They became One.

The Spirit became Jesus' empowering and enabling Holy Force.

God's Holy Spirit also enters into us, at our baptism.

The Holy Spirit drove Jesus' ministry and his life.

The Spirit will drive ours too ... if we say, "Yes".

And, if we say "Yes", like Jesus did,

The Spirit will be our friend, our Holy Comforter.

She will be our Guide and our enabling force.

Jesus said "Yes", and we can too.

Whoever we are. Wherever we are from.

Whatever we have or don't have.

Jesus has a vision for each of us, and a purpose for our life's work.

Jesus has a vision for you and Jesus has a vision for me.

Each of us matters. *None of us is an accident.*

Let the Holy Spirit fill you this holy Lent.

Ask the Lord for his Vision. You'll be glad that you did!

**-AMEN**

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<sup>i</sup> See, Hebrews 4:15: “We have not a high-priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.”  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temptation\\_of\\_Christ#Gospel\\_of\\_Mark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temptation_of_Christ#Gospel_of_Mark)

<sup>ii</sup> Mark’s Gospel speak only briefly as to those 40 days, while Matthew and Luke give us more details about the temptations that Jesus suffered.

<sup>iii</sup> i.e., the process has begun.

<sup>iv</sup> One might persuasively argue that the phrase, “It happened in those days” (v. 9a). is eschatological -- related to the end of time. See ,e.g., Jeremiah 31:33; Joel 3:1; Zechariah 8:23; Matthew 7:22; 9:15; Mark 13:17, 19, 24. See, <https://sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/mark-19-15/>

<sup>v</sup> The Kingdom is here... but it’s not yet fulfilled ... No, not quite yet!

<sup>vi</sup> “... such an obscure village it is not mentioned in the Old Testament, Josephus, or rabbinic literature” (Brooks, 42). <https://sermonwriter.com> ... supra.

<sup>vii</sup> The Greek word εἰς (say “ice” with inflection) is best understood, in this phrase, to mean “into”; the same term is used when Jesus drives a demon on out of a person into whom that a demon had entered. See, Mark 9:2. This term suggests a complete union between Jesus and Spirit.

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<sup>ix</sup> The Spirit did not descend on Jesus; if it had the author arguably would have chosen another word, such as the Greek word ἐπί (say, epí, ep-ee)