

LECTIO DIVINA, FIRST SUNDAY OF THE LENT 2021

The Temptation of Jesus (Mark 1: 12-15)

12 The Spirit **immediately** (εὐθὺς) **drove** (ἐκβάλλει) Jesus out into the wilderness (ἐρήμῳ).

13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted (πειραζόμενος) by Satan (Σατανᾶ);

and he was with the wild animals; and the angels ministered (διηκόνουν) him.

14 After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, **proclaiming the good news** (εὐαγγελίῳ) of God,

15 and saying, “The **time** (καιρὸς) is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) has come near; **repent** (μετανοεῖτε), and **believe** (πιστεύετε) in the good news.”

CONTEXT

The Gospel reading for first Sunday of the Lent is always the temptation of Jesus. The parallels to Mark 1:12-13 are Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. Matthew treats the Temptation in 11 verses, Luke in 13 verses, Mark in only 2. Mark is the basis of the composition (original) of Matthew and Luke. The idea that Mark presents the original tradition, out of which the longer accounts of Matthew and Luke were elaborated. Initial events of the gospel are Baptism, temptation of Jesus and proclamation of his ministry and here the journey of Jesus starts. Thus, Lent is a journey of repentance and faith, beginning with Ash Wednesday.

EXEGESIS:

Immediately: At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, "At once," Immediately, straightway and directly after Jesus' baptism, he was driven by the H. Spirit. There is a close connection between two events Baptism and temptation. The Spirit doesn't give Jesus time to celebrate his baptism. The Spirit who had descended so gently on Jesus in baptism in the form of dove, now drives him out into the desert wilderness.

Immediately is a Mark's favourite word. Because in Mark's Gospel Jesus was portrayed as **Son of Man to serve**. God the Father sent Jesus the Son into the world to bring about the defeat of sin and death, and it is time to get on with the job. There will be time for celebration later—after the resurrection—when the job is finally done.

Drove (ekballei): (Most of the times, in the Gospel, this term was used to refer the exorcism of the devils; Jesus drove out or cast out devils, this stronger verb is not used in other gospels). The Holy Spirit, who had anointed Jesus for His work, is the subject of this experience in the desert. It doesn't mean that Jesus went against His own will. The Father was not tempted, nor the Holy Spirit, Only the incarnate Son was tempted. but it was willed by Father and driven by Spirit. The idea is not that Jesus was forced against His will, or that he was reluctant to go and thus had to be driven. There was a strong urge of the Spirit met the consent of Jesus. Jesus was brought into his by his Father's own Spirit. The divine Spirit is the **real initiator/protagonist** of the event and not the devil. Here, as elsewhere in the NT and in Judaism, the devil is not simply dualistically God's equal opponent. It is the plan of the Spirit that Jesus to be tempted by the devil, Spirit allows to be tempted by the devil.

Wilderness:

Throughout OT and particularly in Israel's history, the wilderness has been present. The Testing of Jesus in the New Testament and the testing of Israel in the Old Testament has a close link in Mark. Jesus spends **forty days** in the wilderness, as Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai, where he received the Law. Elijah walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb -with fasting into the desert. (1 Kings 19:8). Israel passed **forty years** in wilderness to reach the promised land. The wilderness is the testing period for the people of God. Israelites and Jesus have been tested in the wilderness. The difference between the two is in their response, for Jesus succeeds where Israel failed. Instead of grumbling, losing faith, and committing idolatry, he remains true to the word of God and proves his loyalty to the Father.

Tempted: Jesus is tempted by Satan. The Greek word *peirazo* can mean tempt or test. To tempt is to entice a person to do what is wrong; to test is to give a person the opportunity to choose what is right. To tempt is to hope for failure; to test is to hope for success. Testing has precedents in the Old Testament (see Genesis 22:1-19; Deuteronomy 8:2-5).

Satan: it is not diabolos; Satan is a Hebrew word which means adversary or opponent or enemy. Because of its usage in the Old Testament, it came to mean “the demonic archenemy of God”. “Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. (Gen 3:1) The Temptation of Jesus reminds one immediately of Genesis 3:15 and Luke 10:18. So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly... 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring[a] and hers; he will crush[b] your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Gen 3:15). In Mark’s Gospel, there is a specific Messianic secrecy, nobody knows the truth as Son of God, because it has to be secret. But only one knows better, the evil spirits. They know him. because he conquered them.

Jesus was with “wild animals” and “the angels were serving (diekonoun) him”. The angels that we expected following Jesus’ baptism finally come to wait on (diekonoun) him. Diekonoun is the word from which we get the word “deacon” and has to do with service. Prophet Elijah was making a journey of forty days and forty night, when he slept, the angel provided the bread and he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

The picture, then, is of two opposing camps: “On the one side, supporting Jesus, are the Spirit and the angels; on the other, Satan and the wild animals” (France, 83). Mark alludes Jesus as New Adam, Adam didn’t obey Father, but Jesus obeys and overcame the temptation of the devil.

The final clause of Mark 1:13 reads "and the angels were serving Him (Jesus)." This implies that Jesus conquered Satan when He was tempted. These angels were not sent to help Jesus in His temptation. Matthew 26:53-56 rules that idea out. Jesus could have asked the Father for the help of legions of angels. But He did not. He was tempted and suffered alone, all alone, in our stead. The Temptation of Jesus is a great comfort for us. He was tempted vicariously for all men, though He was sinless. Read Hebrews 2:14-18 and 4:14.15. He was tempted IN ALL THINGS JUST AS WE ARE TEMPTED but He was without sin. What a comfort!

The Son could be tempted, because he became man. . . He alone (of the three persons of the Trinity), by his human nature, was made dependent on His Father. . . Temptation was possible for Jesus only from the side of his human nature. . . The greatness of the strength tested changes nothing about the reality of the test to which it is subjected. The strain applied is just as real when the strength endures it, as when the strength is too weak to endure it. Jesus as the Stronger stood unmoved under all the force that Satan, the strong one, could bring to bear against him. . . The test or temptation was real in every way and no illusion. . . When the test was made, the outcome was not in doubt for a single moment. Yet the agony and the death were real, though Jesus bore them triumphantly.

Proclaiming the good news (εὐαγγελίῳ): Jesus used **Word of God is the sole** instrument (in Mt 4 and Lk 4) which we must use in our constant fight with Satan. People cannot win in their struggle with their own flesh and Satan unless they hear the Word of God and keep it. For Mark, the **Word of God is the good news/mission** that you preach through the person of Jesus.

Period of repentance (metanoia/shub)and belief: believing is not enough, it is a journey of changing one’s mind and heart towards the different direction. It is a spiritual U turn.

Synthesis: Jesus after Baptism, full of spirit, driven forcefully by the Spirit to the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil. He came not to be served but **to serve**, to give His life as a ransom for many, which means all. The sinless Son of God took my place when He was actually and severely tempted by Satan for forty days. Jesus proclaiming good news, time has come, time of salvation, time of the Kingdom of God. Our response is Repent and belief.