

**Tuesday 25 April 2023**

# St Mark



- About the life of St Mark
- About Mark's Gospel and brief commentary on its text
- About St Mark and his role in forming the Coptic Church

Miniature from the Saint Medard Gospels, Latin manuscript 8850 folio 81 verso, Soissons (Picardy) France. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

John Mark was Jewish. St Paul's Letter to the Colossians says his cousin was St Barnabas. Mark accompanied St Paul and St Barnabas to Cyprus then to Rome with Peter.

Mark wrote the first of our gospels, probably while in Rome, possibly with help from St Peter. Mark is a master writer so his gospel has immediacy and depth. He does not spare the apostles and shows their many weaknesses and lack of understanding.

Legend says the Holy Spirit prompted St Mark to go to Egypt after Pentecost where he founded the Coptic Church and introduced Christianity into Africa and was its first 'Pope'. That's why so many Church historians consider the Coptic Church to be the world's oldest Church denomination.

**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Liturgy and prayers of intercession** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

**HYMN** [When the saints go marching in](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

## **The welcome**

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

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## **The Preparation**

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

We run the race set before us,  
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.  
Therefore let us lay aside every weight,  
and the sin which clings so closely,  
bringing them to Jesus in penitence and faith.

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

## **The Gloria**

This version of the Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for its tune.

**All** Glory be to God in Heaven,  
Songs of joy and peace we bring,  
Thankful hearts and voices raising,  
To creation's Lord we sing.  
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,  
Glory be to God our King:  
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,  
Bore the load of this world's sin;  
Only Son of God the Father,  
You have brought us peace within.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,  
Now your glorious reign begin:  
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,  
You we praise with one accord.  
None in heav'n or earth is like you,  
Only you are Christ the Lord.  
With the Father and the Spirit,  
Ever worshipped and adored:  
Ever worshipped and adored.**

### **The Collect for St Mark**

Almighty God,  
who enlightened your holy Church  
through the inspired witness of your evangelist Saint Mark:  
grant that we, being firmly grounded in the truth of the gospel,  
may be faithful to its teaching both in word and deed;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

### **First reading**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many others, they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord. After some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

*Acts 15:35-41*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.' When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

*Ephesians 4:7-16*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said to Peter, James, John and Andrew: 'Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

'As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death;

and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.’

*Mark 13:5-13*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

At the risk of upsetting and startling some people, I must inform you that there is an impostor at large. Having studied the church in this country for some time, it's clear that the impostor is not only here now but has been for some time. He is an influential man, a man who is responsible for a subtle but very effective destruction of whole swathes of the church. This man's name is Jesus.

Do not be alarmed! This man pretends to be the Jesus of the Gospels and is all the more dangerous because some of the things he says are in fact true and many of the other things he says are plausible. But he is an impostor: he is not the Jesus of the Gospels.

Let me explain. In the Gospel reading today, we heard the authentic voice of the true Jesus—Jesus the Son of God. This Jesus—our Jesus—was an uncompromising man, who demanded absolute loyalty. He demanded absolute cleanliness of life. He demanded that we love God with everything we have. The impostor Jesus does not say things like that.

But the confusion occurs when we find that the real Jesus and the impostor Jesus say the same things. Both appear to be loving and both say a lot about God. What does the impostor say? He says that you must be gentle. Good! But he goes further and says that being a Christian is about being kind to people. It's true that a Christian will be kind because kindness is a fruit of the Spirit, but the kindness is a by-product of being a Christian, not its focus. The impostor Jesus says that a Christian is tolerant and even coined the phrase, 'Christian tolerance'. But when you look at the real Jesus, he said that there was only one way to Heaven—living with his life in us, 'I am the way, the truth and the life: no one can come to the Father except through me!' The real Jesus overturned the tables of the money-changers in the Temple, because they were dragging the reputation of God through the mud and stopping the access of ordinary people to God.

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus—the real Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels—said 'beware, because many people will come claiming to be me'. If we are to be obedient to the real Jesus, we must follow *HIM*. Jesus said follow me, not 'follow people called Jesus,' nor 'follow anyone who talks about God', not 'if the guy has Jesus in

his name then follow.’ No. Jesus said, ‘follow *me*’. So our first and most urgent task is to make sure we know who Jesus is.

But why is it so important to expose this impostor; and why do we need to understand what the real Jesus is like? The answer comes from John’s Gospel (at the start of chapter 10) where Jesus points out in the parable of the good shepherd that the sheep follow him *because they know him*. In other words, we see that following is the correct response to knowing Jesus; and that we will only follow Jesus insofar as we know him. If we do not know him, we will not follow. or if we do follow, we will follow the Jesus we think him to be—which is surely guaranteed failure.

The focus of our problem is one of the greatest and most urgent tasks to face a Christian: how to *know* God, rather than knowing *about* God. As Jesus said (John 14) anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, so if we want to know God, we must also know Jesus.

If we assume that we *can* know who the real Jesus is, we *must* follow him: it’s an order. But who is this Jesus? Can I recommend that you read one of the Gospels through from end to end, preferably at a single sitting. That way, we get the ‘full flavour’ of the type of man he is. As we perform this exercise, it is difficult to take anything out of context; and we will see that Jesus—the *real* Jesus—is always uncompromisingly for God, always uncompromisingly against sin, the world and the devil. Can I recommend that following Jesus involves three aspects? each is illustrated from our Gospel reading from Mark.

We are to be disciples of Jesus, the Jesus who says ‘Follow *me*’. Our first task is to make sure we know him in order that we follow the real Jesus. And as we find out who he is, we see that he demands that we go where he tells us to go. He demands that we must pray regularly, and we must be single minded and keep Jesus in our sights at all times.

Jesus said, ‘Follow *me!*’ Will we?

## Prayer in Mark’s Gospel

In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and prayed there. *Mark 1:35*

After bidding them farewell, he left for the mountain to pray. *Mark 6:46*

Jesus said, ‘I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you’. *Mark 11:24*

While they were [at the Last Supper], Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is my body.’

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them.'

*Mark 14:23-25*

Jesus went into Galilee [saying], 'The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'

*Mark 1:14-15*

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' prayed 'Abba! [which is Aramaic for 'Father']. Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.'

*Mark 14:36*

### **Prayers of intercession**

Encouraged by our fellowship with all the saints,  
let us make our prayers to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Father, your Son called men and women to leave the past behind  
them and to follow him as his disciples in the way of the cross.  
Look with mercy upon those whom he calls today,  
marks with the cross  
and makes his disciples within the Church ...  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Christ, have mercy.**

Your Son told his disciples not to be afraid and at Easter breathed on  
them his gift of peace. Look with mercy upon the world into which  
he sent them out, and give it that peace for which it longs ...  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Christ, have mercy.**

Your Son formed around him a company who were no longer  
servants but friends, and he called all those who obeyed him his  
brother and sister and mother. Look with mercy upon our families  
and our friends and upon the communities in which we share ...  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Christ, have mercy.**

Your Son sent out disciples to preach and heal the sick. Look with  
mercy on all those who yearn to hear the good news of salvation,  
and renew among your people the gifts of healing ...  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Christ, have mercy.**



Your Son promised to those who followed him that they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel and would share the banquet of the kingdom. According to your promise, look with mercy on those who have walked with Christ in this life and now have passed through death ...

Lord, have mercy.

**All Christ, have mercy.**

Almighty God,  
Grant that your Church  
may faithfully hold and make known  
the faith that has come to us through the apostles,  
that with them and all your saints  
we may inherit the glories of eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Amen.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## **The peace**

We are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God,  
through Christ our Lord, who came and preached peace  
to those who were far off and those who were near.

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

**All And also with you.**

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

Jesus said, 'I have made your name known to those you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.'

*John 17:6-9*

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,  
who has transformed those we remember today,  
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy  
that we should always sing of your glory,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

For you are the hope of the nations,  
the builder of the city that is to come.

Your love made visible in Jesus Christ  
brings home the lost,

restores the sinner

and gives dignity to the despised.

In his face your light shines out,  
flooding lives with goodness and truth,

gathering into one in your kingdom  
a divided and broken humanity.

Therefore with all who can give voice in your creation  
we glorify your name,

for ever praising you and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,**

**God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,

through Jesus Christ, our Lord;

and as we obey his command,

send your Holy Spirit,

that broken bread and wine outpoured

may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with St Mark and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## **Breaking of the Bread**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### Prayer after Communion

Almighty God,  
who on the day of Pentecost  
sent your Holy Spirit to the disciples  
with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame,  
filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel:  
by the power of the same Spirit  
strengthen us to witness to your truth  
and to draw everyone to the fire of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out  
in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory. Amen.