

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Mark's gospel, everything happens very quickly, you'll immediately notice the repeated word. We heard it twice in today's short reading. This is because Mark wants to get to the crux of the story, the cross. This is a short gospel account, unlike Matthew and Luke who go into much more detail about Jesus' ministry and early life. Of the 3-year ministry that Mark records, he assigns 35% of the gospel to the last week of Jesus' life and 17% to the 24 hours leading to Jesus' death.

These events, the baptism, the temptation, and the early preaching are all summarised into a few verses so that we can get to Jesus' death and Resurrection. Therefore, we don't have all the details of the temptations, or the time in the wilderness. But we do see that this occurs at once after Jesus' baptism and the Holy Spirit is the one working to send Jesus into the wilderness.

What you should also notice is that all our readings pertain to baptism in some way. Peter's letter has the iconic phrase 'baptism now saves you!' and because he connects baptism to Noah and the saving through water, we also get to hear the story of Noah and the promise of the rainbow. But the promise of the rainbow is also reminiscent of the promise of baptism and the connection to Jesus' baptism and the dove on the ark.

Today we will focus on what happens after baptism, using all our readings. For we see that Jesus' baptism leads to three things and from Peter's letter I'm going to add a fourth. 'The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.' Mark 1:12–13 (ESV)

From this we see that Baptism leads to; Temptation, Isolation, and Provision, and the addition from Peter's letter is that baptism leads to Suffering

Pray

Baptism leads to Temptation.

We will begin with Noah, connect to Jesus, and apply to us. Firstly, we will have to comprehend that the New Testament connects Noah and his ark to baptism, Noah is baptised in the flood. If we remove the explanatory notes from Peter's text it reads like this

The ark... brought (8 persons) safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.
1 Peter 3:19–22 (ESV)

We shouldn't spend a great deal of time defending this claim, we only need to see that the ark, with Noah and his family on board, was the vessel God used to save him and therefore humanity. Just as baptism is the vessel God uses to save you, and both connect to Jesus Christ the Messiah.

What does Noah's baptism lead to? Moses records for us what happens soon after they leave the ark,

²⁰ Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”
26 He also said,
“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.
27 May God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant.” Genesis 9:20–27 (ESV)

God has just destroyed the earth and promised never to destroy it again by a worldwide flood, he has only saved 8 persons. Immediately, as Mark loves to highlight, temptation arises. Noah grows grapes, makes wine, and becomes drunk, temptation 1. Ham stumbles across drunk and naked Noah and instead of honouring his father, he dishonours him by telling the brothers to ridicule their father, temptation 2. Both are tempted and both fall into sin. It's like the garden all over again, it's repeated after Lot is saved from Sodom. After the act of saving comes, temptation. Noah and Ham both fall into sin.

Jesus also immediately confronts temptation about his baptism. Yet Jesus' temptation looks a little different from all other temptations in the scripture and throughout history. Jesus is tempted yet he does not sin. As the writer to the Hebrews tells us, ‘we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin’. Hebrews 4:15 (ESV) And Peter repeats, ‘He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.’ 1 Peter 2:22 (ESV) Even in the face of Satan's great temptations our saviour didn't fall! This is a repeated theme in the New Testament letters for John picks it up as well, it's crucial to Jesus' ability to save, ‘You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.’ 1 John 3:5 (ESV)

We also face temptation after baptism, perhaps even immediately after. This is when Satan wants to attack us most ferociously when we are resting in Christ. He wants to snatch us out of Jesus' hands, but Jesus won't allow that. Satan doesn't need to attack us when we are busy following the world, for we are already lost in our sin here, his work is easy. He wants to attack us when we think we should be closest to Jesus when we think we are safe. We must always be wary of this, that Satan loves to attack when we think we are safe. Our only hope is to cling to Jesus who resisted temptation for us. A little example from the mind of a pastor, often during a service many thoughts go through a pastor's mind, even when he is speaking, or moving, he's still thinking. Sometimes these thoughts are less than faithful and downright obscene. It especially occurs during communion distribution, as we try to focus on Christ's body and blood and speak and hear the words that deliver Christ's forgiveness, the devil is busy attempting to fill our minds with sinful thoughts and temptations. If you remember coming to church with young children you might remember that it can often be the most frustrating time of the week, a time when Satan tempts us to sin.

This is the pattern of the Christian life, and resistance and struggle with temptation on account of Christ's work for you can lead to great spiritual growth. Luther considered temptation a part of regular Christian spirituality, he said that reading the word or as he called it meditation (*meditatio*), led to prayer (*Oratio*) that always led to temptation (*tentatio*). He considered that each one led to the other in a constant circle of hearing, struggling and calling for help.

After baptism we are tempted for in baptism, we are united with Christ who after his baptism resisted temptation for us. But Jesus resisted temptation in a way that none of us can imagine for he is sent into Isolation for his temptation.

Baptism leads to isolation.

Noah too is isolated after his baptism. There is literally no one left, just him, his 3 sons and their 4 wives. The whole of humanity and all the animals are extinct! Baptism leads to isolation.

We sometimes experience this isolation after baptism, for we are separated from the world around us. We may be separated from family or friends who are of the world as we no longer belong with them, we belong to God. More on this in the gospels over the coming weeks.

Jesus is driven into the wilderness, all he has is animals and angels. He is isolated from all people. Just as the Israelites were baptised in the Red Sea as they were extracted from Egypt, they were separated from all other peoples as they wandered around the wilderness. They wandered for 40 years, Noah was separated by 40 days of rain, and Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. Our separation is lifelong, yet we are not alone, for all those who are separated have something else in common. God provides for them.

Baptism leads to provision from God.

Jesus has the angels and animals providing for him. The Greek here is that they are ministering, they are serving him. They are not providing food, for we know from the other gospels that he fasted and was hungry. They are serving him by praying with and for him. What a picture to consider angels and animals serving and providing spiritual care to our Saviour in the wilderness, just as animals are key players at his birth. We also have connections here to the Old Testament, in 1 Kings 17 we learn of Elijah's promised drought and God's provision: 'The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. 1 Kings 17:6 (ESV) And the second connection is back to the ark, where the animals are exterminated except those God had Noah include on the ark, they too are saved by the water and become the provision for Noah and his family after their baptism. One animal, in particular, shows up both on the ark and in Jesus' baptism, the dove.

Peter reminds us in his letter that it is now Jesus who is ministering to us.¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, **that he might bring us to God**, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit 1 Peter 3:18 (ESV) Jesus ministers to us by bringing us to God. He provides for us in temptation, isolation and suffering, for he has been through all of them for us. Hebrews harps on this point for us, 'because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:18 (ESV) and 'we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' Hebrews 4:15–16 (ESV)

God provides for us in his word and his sacraments, especially the sacrament of the altar. Here in these means of grace, Jesus ministers to us, forgiving us, restoring our souls, making us new in him, dwelling in us as he had animals and angels dwelling with him.

Baptism for Jesus leads to temptation, isolation and provision. By our connection to him in our baptism we are bound to follow in his footsteps and here we turn to Peter's letter and see what else comes with following Jesus through baptism. Baptism leads to suffering. 'For Christ also suffered once for sins' 1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)

Baptism leads to suffering.

Suffering is the theme of Peter's first letter. 12 usages over the short letter. The theme is twofold; one, Christians are bound to suffer, and two, Christ also suffered. It is not a threat or scare tactic, it is written

as a comfort. That Christ also suffered is a comfort to those who are already suffering, they are suffering through isolation and temptation. They are isolated because they no longer belong to this world and Peter's first hearers knew this full well as they lived through state-sponsored persecution. They were isolated because they battled temptation in Christ's power rather than submit to the sins that tempt us all. The comfort Peter offers is that their suffering does not remove them from God's love, nor does it take Christ away from them, but instead it brings them closer to Christ as they are united into his suffering. This connects to what Paul tells the Romans, that in baptism we are united into Jesus' death, Jesus has shared our earthly suffering.

You will notice that those who wrote the psalms were often suffering. They were in fear for their life, they were persecuted by enemies, and they called out to God for mercy. They knew this was part of the faithful life, to suffer.

We are also bound to suffer many and various things after we have come to faith. But we must not use our suffering as a measure of God's faithfulness as if when we suffer God has abandoned us. Paul goes the other way and claims that his suffering is a sign that he has God's love. His list is long in 2 Corinthians 11, and he claims his suffering is a mark of his faithfulness to God and a sign of God's mercy. For it is in our suffering that we are stripped bare of our ability to help ourselves and are reminded that everything we have comes from God and all we can do is call out to him for help. Remember our Psalm, O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Psalm 25:2 (ESV)

We should not shy away from suffering as if it leaves us cursed by God. Instead, we should embrace our suffering as an opportunity to call to God and see his paths and steadfast love and faithfulness to us. Suffering comes after baptism, after faith for the same reason that temptation comes after baptism because in suffering Satan thinks he can weaken or destroy our faith. But our Saviour also suffered much, and he suffered much on our behalf and in our stead so that he could save us.

Baptism leads to temptation, isolation, provision, and suffering. We should expect all of these along with the benefits that we are promised in baptism; that we are made children of God, that our sins are washed away, and we are given a clean conscience because we are united with Christ Jesus. Finally, we should see that baptism leads to a great promise, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and we are called to repent and believe this good news for us. That Jesus Christ has cleansed our conscience and has ascended into heaven and that God will never again flood the earth but will indeed come and save us, and he cannot forget this for he is reminded each time he leaves a rainbow in the sky.

'When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. **And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.** ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.'" Genesis 9:14-16 (ESV)

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.