

Prayer of Thanks for the Bible

In this bible month I give thanks for the bible and my freedom to read it. Thank you for those who wrote and transcribed, those who have translated and taught, enabling me to read your word today.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, I come in prayer to hold before you your world

May your kingdom come.

I pray for all who continue to track the spread of the pandemic, seeking to keep everyone safe across the world.

May your kingdom come.

I hold before you your worldwide and local church.

May your kingdom come.

I remember those who seek to spread your Kingdom

May your kingdom come.

I bring to you my community: carers and leaders, workforce and retired, unemployed and over-worked; key-worker and set-aside

Thank you that each is a loved part of your family. Amen

The Lord's Prayer **Our Father, who art in heaven**

Closing Hymn: StF 255 **The kingdom of God is justice and joy**

Blessing

May the Son of God bless you today.

May the Call of the Father embolden you today.

May the mission of God inspire you to action.

In all things may you know God's love and peace. Amen

Acknowledgements:

Inspiration for this service was taken from the Bible Month study guide

<https://www.preachweb.org/biblemonth>

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Worship at Home

Darlington District

Bible Month week 1 – Identity and Mission



Call to Worship

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news, who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.' (Isaiah 52: 7)

Hymn: StF 376 **Crashing waters at creation**

We join together in prayer

Eternal God I pause as I read

to acknowledge your reign over my life.

I pause to acknowledge that your Son is the Good News.

I pause to rejoice for you are the source of peace.

Jesus as I read your story once more

Open my eyes to truly see you as you are;

Open my mind to recognise your teaching;

Open my heart to believe and follow you.

Spirit of God, you descended on Jesus in his baptism.

Come upon us now, touch us with purifying fire

as we acknowledge our wrongdoings before you.

Come in peace to comfort and restore us in our vulnerabilities;

Embolden and empower us to go forth in confidence in your name.

Amen

Reading: [Mark chapters 1, 2, 3.](#)

If you cannot read all 3 chapters now, try to read them during this week. We will look at some highlights here

Reflection

Identity:

Mark always writes with a sense of urgency and launches straight in at [verse one](#) by telling us who Jesus is: the Son of God. At the same time he roots the account in the familiar text we know as the Old Testament, first echoing [Genesis 1: 1](#) 'The beginning' reminding us of God's supreme sovereignty in creation. Then by referencing Isaiah both directly and indirectly.

Mark moves rapidly to note Jesus's baptism and temptation. In his baptism Jesus was affirmed:

'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' Mk 1: 11

Mark is in no doubt about who Jesus is. Surprisingly though, it is an evil spirit who first proclaims his identity in Mark 1: 24: 'I know who you are, the Holy One of God'. Such unusual twists add a sense of authenticity to Mark's account.

In exploring Mark, it helps us to be reminded of the context. First, Jesus' ministry is conducted during Roman occupation, Mark's early readers (around AD70), live under the shadow of the Empire, but ordinary people do not generally hold Roman citizenship.

Second, for Jews the collective memory of exile and of a restoration that didn't turn out quite as expected, is rarely far from the surface. Some long for the day when the familiar prophesies will be fulfilled and God will dwell in the midst of his people once again.

Mark believes that this is the story of God and that Jesus is the fulfilment of God's rescue plan for his entire created order. In these early chapters, Mark establishes Jesus' identity and mission, and that of his followers.

Pause for thought:

Who is Jesus to the people you live and work with?

What is your testimony about who Jesus is?

Hymn: StF 462 **Come with me, come wander, come welcome**

Mission:

Jesus comes into this context announcing God's kingdom [Mark 1: 14-15](#). The time of waiting is over. God's decisive action is no longer just a distant hope; nor has it fully arrived. God is accomplishing his good purposes in and through Jesus Messiah. His impact is remarkable and often shocking. His authoritative teaching (Mark 1: 22) and healing begin to draw crowds (e.g. Mark 2: 2; 3: 7)

The good news is demonstrated through action as well as words. In [Mark 1:40-45](#), the leper is cleansed and restored to community. Jesus models compassion and anger at the marring of human community caused by exclusion. What does this say to us today? In [Mark 2:13-17](#), Jesus calls a despised tax-collector to follow him and dines with him and his friends. The Pharisees object: they define holiness as separation from impurity. But Jesus mixes with sinners. The significance of that can hardly be exaggerated. The broken and lost who repent and believe are transformed into God's holy people by the very presence of the Holy One.

Pause for thought:

Where do you see exclusion tarnishing community?

Which two stories from your experience might best illustrate the good news in action today?

Called:

Once Jesus announces the good news (Mark 1:13-15), he calls the first disciples (Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-14; 3:13-19). They are a disparate group of people not confined to the pure Jewish descent expected by the religious leaders. Jesus sums up who is welcome on his team: *'Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'* (Mark 3: 35) The choosing of an inner circle of 'twelve' evokes the memory of Israel before the exile. Jesus is creating the (re)new(ed) people of God. They are equipped for mission, but, significantly, they are to 'be with him'.

Pause for thought:

What does it mean for us 'to be with him' (Mark 3:14) so that we can be equipped for mission?