

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

By the Rev. Dr. Harry Wendt, Founder of Crossways International
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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 1:14-20

Year B - Epiphany 3, Text: Mark 1:14-20
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After his baptism, where Jesus was anointed into office as the long-awaited King and the nature of His Kingship was defined, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness for forty days, to be tested and tried by Satan.

Mark's temptation narrative consists of only three words, "tempted by Satan" (1:12). In their respective narratives, Matthew (4:1–11) and Luke (4:1–13) list three confrontations between Jesus and Satan. From this point on, throughout His ministry, Jesus engages in a non-stop battle with Satan — and finally conquers him when He gives away His life at Calvary.

Verses 1:14–15: After his time in the wilderness, Mark tells us the John the Baptist was arrested, Jesus then returns to Galilee to launch His public ministry. He begins it by proclaiming a message that causes many Jewish hearts to beat wildly with excitement: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). The two words repent (*metanoieitē*), and believe (*pisteuetē*) will be repeated many times in the gospels, as the heart of Jesus' message.

We might summarize Jesus' message as follows: The age that you and your ancestors have longed for has finally arrived — in Me. Your dreams are about to be fulfilled. The Kingdom of God has broken into history! Change your whole way of thinking and living. Rejoice! Embrace the Good News of the Messianic Age in all that you believe, think, say, and do.

Some Jewish expectations about the dawning of the Messianic Age were extravagant. However, the setting for Jesus' opening statement is anything but spectacular. There is no display of cosmic fireworks when Jesus speaks. Jesus' audience sees no halo around His head, no regal clothing, no retinue of servants or royal guards, no pomp, and no splendor.

Indeed, the setting and Jesus' appearance are anticlimactic to the Jews. To the best of their knowledge, Jesus is the son of Joseph the carpenter and his wife

Mary. Even so, the claims the New Testament makes about who Jesus is, and the implications of His opening statement, are profound.

When Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God was breaking into history with Him, He was doing something that was politically dangerous. To announce any kingdom was to challenge the power of the Herods — and behind the Herods were the Roman authorities and emperor.

Verses 1:16–20: On the coastline of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus begins to gather about Himself a new people. He confronts Peter and Andrew, James and John, — two sets of brothers — and says, "Follow Me!" (1:17). They follow!

Jesus conducts no test to ascertain whether they are worthy of being in His company. He makes no study of their family background to check out their pedigree; see 2:13–17. He issues only an urgent summons (2:13–14). A little later, the Twelve are set aside as the nucleus of the New Israel that is being formed (3:13–18). The Messianic ministry is getting under way, and the Messianic community is being formed.

In dealing with this latter section, note that in Jesus' day a teacher did not choose his students; students chose their teacher. Jesus reverses things. He calls the disciples to follow Him! Note well: We belong to Jesus, not because we chose Him, but because He chose and called us!

