

## OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28<sup>1</sup>

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written  
for our learning:  
Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,  
and inwardly digest them,  
that we may embrace and ever hold fast  
the blessed hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## MATTHEW 3<sup>2</sup> & 4

### The Proclamation of John the Baptist

3:1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”[a] 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.’”

4 Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 “I baptize you with[b] water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

### The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.

16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved,[d] with whom I am well pleased.”

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<sup>1</sup> Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

<sup>2</sup> All Bible quotations and footnotes are from the New Revised Standard Version at Biblegateway.com New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

### **The Temptation of Jesus**

4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3 The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,'  
and 'On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; 9 and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.'

11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

### **Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee**

12 Now when Jesus[a] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,  
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—  
16 the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death  
light has dawned."

17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." [b]

### **Jesus Calls the First Disciples**

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

### **Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People**

23 Jesus[c] went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news[d] of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Footnotes

Matthew 3:2 Or *is at hand*  
Matthew 3:11 Or *in*  
Matthew 3:11 Or *in*  
Matthew 3:17 Or *my beloved Son*  
Matthew 4:12 Gk *he*  
Matthew 4:17 Or *is at hand*  
Matthew 4:23 Gk *He*  
Matthew 4:23 Gk *gospel*

## OUTLINE

### Chapters 3-4, JohnBap, Baptism, Temptations, Ministry

- 1) The Proclamation of John the Baptist (3:1-12)
  - a) Role of JohnBap as a prophet
  - b) Criticism of people and system in power, not the Torah and the people of Israel
  - c) Baptism
    - i) Mikvah: ritual bathing
    - ii) Baptism: Isaiah 55:1; Genesis 1:1-5; Genesis 7:11-12; Exodus 14; Joshua 3; Ezekiel 36:24-28
  - d) Relationship with Jesus
- 2) The Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)
  - a) Difference with Mark
  - b) Christology
- 3) The Temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)
  - a) Temptation/Testing
  - b) Visionary experience
  - c) Jesus responds as a good observant Jew quoting OT scripture
  - d) Four layers of commentary
- 4) Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee (4:12-17)
  - a) Theological themes
    - i) Fulfilment of Scripture (4:14-16);
    - ii) The salvation of the Gentiles (4:15); and
    - iii) The announcement of the kingdom of God (4:17)
  - b) What is the Good News?
- 5) Jesus Calls the First Disciples, Ministry (4:18-25)
  - a) Call – “Fishing for people”
  - b) Discipleship
  - c) Ministry

**OVERVIEW<sup>3</sup>**

**Chapter 3**

**John the Baptist 3:1-12**

JohnBap has two characteristics in Matthew: he prepares Israel for Jesus' coming as an eschatological prophet like Elijah; and his life parallels and foreshadows Jesus' own life and death. JohnBap and Jesus both attack the Pharisees and Sadducees, appeal to the same generation to repent, act by the same authority, are thought of as prophets, and feared by their enemies. Both are seized and bound, sentenced by reluctant authorities, executed as criminals, and buried by their disciples/followers.

The prophecy of baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire has traditionally be taken in two ways: Either fire means the same thing as Spirit (Acts 2), in which case there is only one baptism, or it refers to an eschatological judgement, in which case there are two baptisms, one for the present and one for the future. Because elsewhere Matthew associates fire with judgement, the second interpretation is favored in Matthew.

**The Baptism of Jesus 3:13-17<sup>4</sup> Gospel Comparison:**

Mark 1:9-11	Matthew 3:13-17	Luke 3:21-22	John 1:29
9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.	13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.	21 Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying,	29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"
	14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.		30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel."
10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. 11 And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved;[h] with you I am well pleased."	16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from the heavens said, "This is my	the heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;[c] with you I am well pleased."[d]	32 And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the

<sup>3</sup> Sources include notes from Barton and Muddiman, Biblegateway.com, Brown, Raymond E., S.S., Harper Collins Study Bible, NRSV Version, France, R. T., Levine, Amy-Jill, and Marc Zvi Brettler Editors, Malina, Bruce J., and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, Morris, Leon, and Wright, N.T. (Tom).

<sup>4</sup> 3:13-17 The order of the story is not logical. 3:13-15 imply that JohnBap knows who Jesus is before the baptism. But we are not told how. The Baptism confirms what JohnBap said about Jesus. The story told with the baptism first (16-17) and then the discussion (14-15) makes more logical sense. (Jennings)

	Son, the Beloved,[e] with whom I am well pleased.”		Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.
			34 And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Chosen One.”[j]

Of the four gospels, Matthew adds the discussion between JohnBap and Jesus over the appropriateness of JohnBap baptizing Jesus and makes God’s proclamation about Jesus something heard by others (as in John), rather than Jesus exclusively (as in Mark and Luke).

3:13-17 Matthew does not focus on the baptism of Jesus itself. JohnBap protests that Jesus should not be baptized by him. Because JohnBap’s baptism involves a confession of sins, Jesus’ submission is awkward. But Jesus proclaims that the act fulfills righteousness. 3:17 draws on Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. Jesus’ knowing the messianic prophecies, obediently fulfills them and thereby fulfills all righteousness. Because prophecy declares God’s will, to fulfill prophecy is to fulfil righteousness.

The symbolic dove could be that this is the beginning of a new creation. It characterizes the eschatological redemption: just as the Spirit once hovered over the waters, so too will the Spirit hover over the saints and strengthen them. The result is that Jesus is revealed to JohnBap and to those standing by as the Son of God and the suffering servant of Isaiah.

Here Son of God refers to Jesus’ special relationship to God the Father, but its connotations vary. It is associated with Israel typology (2:15; 4:1-11) and linked to Jesus’ status as a Davidic Messiah (16:13-20). Mark’s baptismal voice from God “You are my beloved Son” is heard by Jesus only. Matt’s voice “*This is my beloved Son*” is more widely directed. This story has a Proto-Trinitarian structure, God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all present.

#### Chapter 4 The Temptation 4:1-11

Mark 1:12-13	Matthew 4:1-11	Luke 4:1-13
12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.	1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.	4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.
13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.	3 The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”  4 But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”	3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”  4 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”
	5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 saying to	9 Then the devil[c] led him to Jerusalem and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God,

	<p>him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"</p> <p>7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"</p>	<p>throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11 and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' "</p> <p>12 Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "</p>
	<p>8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; 9 and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."</p> <p>10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"</p>	<p>5 Then the devil[a] led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil[b] said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."</p> <p>8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' "</p>
	<p>11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.</p>	<p>13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.</p>

The Temptation of Jesus in Matthew expands on Mark's story that told of Jesus being driven into the desert after his baptism by the Holy Spirit, where he is tempted by Satan. Matthew's temptation story is a visionary experience, with rapid scene changes. Jesus is recognized as the Son of God by Satan, but Jesus responds as an observant Jew quoting OT scripture. This is the main point of the story.<sup>5</sup>

There are at least five layers of commentary on 4:1-11 The Temptation:

1. Matthew is extending the Moses/People of Israel parallel begun Chapter 2:16-22;
2. Jesus as the model of discipleship and obedience;
3. Jesus is correcting false ideas about messiahship; and last,
4. That the temptations and Jesus' responses are then mirrored in the Lord's Prayer in Chapter 5, where we taught to pray for help against these same temptations.
5. The Temptation is a pastoral action story that allows a congregation to ask hard questions about sin and hubris, and how to respond to temptation as a servant of God.

Jesus' obedience as the Son of God in the face of temptation is first of all a statement about salvation history: the Son of God now recapitulates the experience of Israel in the desert (Deut 8:2-3); the end resembles the beginning. Like Israel, Jesus is tempted by hunger (Exodus 16:2-8), tempted to put God to the test (Exodus 17:1-4), and tempted to idolatry (Exodus 32). On each occasion he quotes Deuteronomy and does not give in to temptation.

<sup>5</sup> Temptation: in the OT meant putting someone to the test in order to determine the reliability of faithfulness of the one tested. (Source: Mercer Dictionary of the Bible)

Other ways to interpret the story include: Parenetic: Jesus as a model disciple; and Christological: in which Jesus rejects a false understanding of political messiahship. 40 days and night: may mirror the 40 years in the wilderness of the Israelites, and also Moses 40 day fast (Exodus 24:18).

**Matthew 4:1–11 & 6:9–13. Desert Testing / Temptation & the Lord’s Prayer<sup>6 7</sup>**

The question of whether the Temptation story is pastoral is possibly answered in Chapter 6, the Lord’s Prayer:

Temptation/Testing (Ch. 4)	The Lord’s Prayer (Ch. 6)
was led (1)	do not bring us (4)
forty days (2)	each day, daily (3)
he was tempted	to the time of trial (4)
by the devil	evil, the evil one
a loaf of bread (3)	bread (3)
all the kingdoms (5)	your kingdom come (2)
the Lord your God (6)	Father

The three temptations contain a spatial progression:

From the low place in the desert, to the pinnacle of the Temple and then to the mountain top. This mountain top provides an *inclusio* with the mountain in 28:16-20. On the first mountain the devil offers to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if he will worship the devil. On the last mountain top, where Jesus is worshipped by others, Jesus declares that he has been given all authority on earth and heaven. The mountains represent the beginning and end of Jesus’ labors. He rejects the devil’s temptations and chooses to travel the hard road of obedient sonship that brings in the end exaltation.

The devil is the same Satan (4:10; 12:26; 16:23) and Beelzebub (10:25; 12:24; 12:27) – he is the “enemy” (13:39) who is tempting Jesus. In Matthew, Satan and his disciples are defeated repeatedly. He does not win anywhere in Matthew against Jesus. In Matthew the powers of evil are limited.

**Ministry in Galilee 4:12-17**

Jesus goes to Galilee to begin his ministry and to call his first four disciples to become “fishers of men”. (4:22) There are three underlying theological themes: the fulfilment of Scripture (4:14-16); the salvation of the Gentiles (4:15); and the announcement of the kingdom of God (4:17). The kingdom message repeats the words of JohnBap (3:2) and stands over the entire public ministry as a central theme.

The “fish for people” (4:19) echoes Jeremiah 16:15-16<sup>8</sup> “I am now sending for many fishermen, says the Lord, and they shall catch them,” Where Jeremiah is to bring back the lost tribes of Israel.

**The Call of the Disciples and Ministry 4:18-25**

Unlike Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings 19:19-21, on which this passage may be based, Jesus does not allow time to say farewell to family or put affairs in order. It is meant to serve as a broader context of the call to Christian discipleship, which requires wholehearted obedience to Christ. (4:18-22)

The summary adapted from Mark emphasizes that Jesus fame spread throughout Syria, a non-Jewish, Gentile region.

<sup>6</sup> The wording in each case is from the NRSV.

<sup>7</sup> Lemcio, Eugene E. *The King Who Teaches: St. Matthew’s Royal Curriculum. A Pedagogical Aid* (unpublished typescript), 2022

<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah 16 :15-16 “As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.” For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their ancestors. 16 I am now sending for many fishermen, says the Lord, and they shall catch them, and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill and out of the clefts of the rocks.

## REFLECTION

How am I tempted? To hunger, to put God to the test, and to idolatry.

How do I hear the call to Christian discipleship and obedience to Christ?

What is my ministry as a disciple of Christ?

## CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you, heavenly Father,  
 for the witness of your apostle and evangelist,  
 Matthew, to the Gospel of Beatitude and Grace  
 which you have given us in your Son, our Savior;  
 and we pray that, after his example,  
 we may with ready wills and hearts obey  
 the calling of our Lord to follow him;  
 through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you  
 and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

*The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun*

## GOSPEL COMPARISON<sup>9</sup>

Pericope <sup>10</sup>	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
John the Baptist	3:1-6	1:2-6	3:1-6	1:19-23
John's Preaching of Repentance	3:7-10		3:7-9	
John's Messianic Preaching	3:11-12	1:7-8	3:15-18	1:24-28
The Baptism of Jesus	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	1:29-34
The Temptation	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
The Journey into Galilee	4:12	1:14a	4:14a	4:1-3
Ministry in Galilee	4:13-17	1:14b-15	4:14b-15	4:43-46a
The Call of the Disciples	4:18-22	1:16-20		
First Preaching Tour in Galilee	4:23	1:39	4:44	
Jesus Heals Multitudes by the Sea	4:24-25	3:7-12	6:17-19	

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/>

<sup>10</sup> an extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible, "a book of pericopes"

## SLOW RELIGION: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW



*The Inspiration of St. Matthew,*  
Caravaggio, 1602

Slow Religion, The Gospel According to Matthew is a lay person-led adult education weekly series for Christians and seekers. Slow Religion uses a literary and historical approach to the ancient texts to identify and apply insights from the Gospel to today's world.

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