

Keep awake

53% of Mark is duplicated in Luke. In aggregate, only 31 of the 661 verses of Mark were not reproduced in either Matthew or in Luke.

Matthew and Luke added additional data from:

- (1) a now lost collection of parables that both authors shared, a work dated ± 50 AD. Scholars call this common source *Q* from *quelle*, the German word for source, and
- (2) new material they had each collected in person from eyewitnesses.

Later, John wrote about 90 AD, preserving stories that, except for the major events like the Baptism of Christ, the cleansing of the Temple and Christ's death and Resurrection, are largely lacking in the other Gospels.

Rather than write a biography (which we would have appreciated) Mark developed a written collection of some 30 days of Christ's life to **demonstrate that Christ is the Messiah**. The 3 other writers add perhaps another 30 days furthering the Biblical demonstration that Jesus is the Christ. As John says at the end of the 20th chapter, "...these (things) are written that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing in him, you may have life."

What we read from the Gospels (remember, the word means *good news*) is the testimony of the many who knew the Lord face to face. We read the *Good News* that the Messiah has come and we are saved.

The Evangelist St. Mark, the developer of this sacred literary form, has finally been given his due in our readings. And again, *finally*, the fullness of the four Gospels is held up for our devotion and our commitment to the Christ who saves us.

The Advent Blessing

May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Jesus Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin.. **AMEN.**

May he whose second coming in power and great glory we await, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love. **AMEN.**

May you, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life. **AMEN.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **AMEN.**

Please prepare St. Mark 1:1-8 for next Sunday.

The First Sunday of Advent



Second Coming of Christ With Two Gospel Miracles

By Alexey Pismenny

The Gospel Miracles:

Left: Healing of the Blind Man. Right: healing of the Gerasene demoniac.

Oil on canvas, 40" x 30" (102 cm x 76 cm) 2007

Today's Gospel St. Mark 13: 24-37 [Year B, Advent 1]

✠ 'IN THOSE DAYS, AFTER THAT SUFFERING, THE SUN WILL BE darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. 'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass

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away, but my words will not pass away. 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake — for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.' [© NRSV]

A Double Season

Advent is so overshadowed by our anticipation of Christmas (*Christ Mass*) that we often forget the second of this short season's two great themes, themes that many churches symbolize with the Advent Wreath.

1) Christ came once. And (*Hey there, keep awake !*)

2) Christ will come again¹.

In earlier times Advent began in mid-November and ran for some 6 weeks. (A few tiny, separated, eastern churches still do so). It was referred to as "Little Lent" and was kept with the penitential austerities that we are encouraged to practice during Lent's 40 days. The attention of the Church was balanced between the two themes. Again, in the popular mind the second theme is largely forgotten. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that the Church reminds of the Second Coming in our Eucharistic Prayers:

For example we pray:

Prayer A	Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.
Prayer B	We remember his death, We proclaim his resurrection, We await his coming in glory;
Prayer C	We celebrate his death and resurrection,

¹ These dual themes are stressed in the Advent blessing. See page 4.

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as we await the day of his coming..

Christians must remember and act upon the sobering thought that Christ shall come and we shall be judged. **for the powers of the heavens will be shaken and you know that the kingdom of God is near.**

Saint Mark: Founder of a Sacred Literary Form

Until the 1970's we read from Mark's Gospel on only 4 Sundays each year. We were following a lectionary that had changed little in over 1,200 years, a lectionary that nearly "cut out" the inventor of the literary form. We call it *Gospel*, meaning *Good News*. In that old lectionary we read a bit more from John, just 12 lessons. There were 18 from Luke, and 19 from Matthew. The total was 53 lessons from the Gospels (which took under consideration that some years there are 53 Sundays). Even when we count the lessons for the saints' days most of the Gospel's teachings were ignored

Our current lectionary, the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) includes the lion's share of the each of the 4 Gospels. The lessons are spread out so that we read Matthew, Mark and Luke completely over a 3 year period, filling in certain spaces with lessons from John. This year when we read Mark's short Gospel, we'll read several lessons from John in late Summer. We'll also read from John during Lent and Eastertide. The RCL gives us 159 Gospel selections, plus the same number each of Old Testament, Psalm and Epistle readings. That's 636 Lessons, Only a few festival passages are heard more than once every 3 years.

The Writing of Mark

Scholars believe that Mark was written ±65 AD and probably written in Rome, about the time that Peter is believed to have been martyred. Mark recorded and preserved first person memories of Christ's life. In Mark's day the surviving people who knew Jesus were then near death from persecution or from old age. Mark was just in time to preserve their testimony. Bible scholars suggest that Mark interviewed eyewitnesses, especially St. Peter, putting their material into a sometimes arbitrary chronological order. Matthew (±75 AD) and Luke (±85) used Mark's outline and much of his material: 51% of Mark's Gospel is copied into Matthew, and