

January

This second month of the Church Year again features a seasonal canticle that is one of the four great canticles from the Gospel account of St. Luke. In this case it is the “Benedictus,” Zacharias’ Divinely inspired first words after a long silence at the birth of his son, John the Baptizer. The canticle is called by its first word in Latin that we translate as “Blessed”. Note especially how this liturgical song, often used at Matins, emphasizes the themes of God coming to His people to redeem them and the relationship between salvation and forgiveness.

January picks up with the reading of St. Mark’s Gospel account where December left off. The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark may well have been the last of the Gospel accounts to have been written. While reading, note especially the identification of Jesus the God-Man with the Good News (what the word “Gospel” means) that St. Mark reports. Moreover, St. Mark’s account makes it clear that Jesus is both Christ and Son of God (note well the converted Centurion’s confession in Mark 15:39). The role of Christ is further elaborated as one both of the glorious Son of Man and of the Suffering Servant (about whom we read last month in Isaiah 53). Events are linked in quick succession, and St. Mark seems to focus more on Jesus’ deeds than words (even as we today focus on God’s Word combined with His sacramental actions).

As you near the middle of the month, be ready for an abrupt ending. Most ancient copies of this Gospel account end at Mark 16:8. (There are various theories as to why it might have ended there and as to from where vv.9-20 came.) Martin Luther had no qualms about these verses, as he used v.16 in his *Small Catechism*. Many newer editions of the Bible put some sort of separation between verses 8 and 9, but these text-critical issues should not disturb our faith, as there is nothing foundational to our faith in vv.9-20 that we do not find elsewhere in the Bible.

In the middle of January, we switch from the New Testament back to the Old, reading the book of Genesis and wrapping it up on the last day of the month. Genesis, commonly held to have been written down by Moses but previously passed from generation to generation by the faithful believers, tells of salvation history from the beginning to the last days of Joseph (from where Exodus, which we will read in February, picks up the story). Especially important is the account of humankind’s fall into sin in Genesis 3, which also contains the proto, or first, Gospel in Genesis 3:15: that the Seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, though the serpent would bruise His heel.

One writer says that “Genesis is foundational to the understanding of the rest of the Bible,” and no doubt it is true. Note well that in Genesis there is only one true God and that He opposes notions that there are other gods, no gods, or that everything is divine. Note, too, that subjects and themes of the first three chapters of Genesis are reflected in the final three chapters of Revelation. We must marvel at the literary genius of our God who is Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, and Who inspired holy men of God to record His revelation, thereby giving to that record the property of inerrancy (being without error). Something to consider when the topic of evolution arises.

1	Luke 1:68-79
	Mark 2
2	Psalm 30
	Mark 3
3	Psalm 31
	Mark 4
4	Psalm 32
	Mark 5
5	Psalm 33
	Mark 6
6	Psalm 34
	Mark 7
7	Psalm 35
	Mark 8
8	Psalm 36
	Mark 9
9	Psalm 37
	Mark 10
10	Psalm 38
	Mark 11
11	Psalm 39
	Mark 12
12	Psalm 40
	Mark 13
13	Psalm 41
	Mark 14
14	Psalm 42
	Mark 15-16
15	Psalm 43
	Genesis 1-3
16	Psalm 44
	Genesis 4-6
17	Psalm 45
	Genesis 7-9
18	Psalm 46
	Genesis 10-12
19	Psalm 47
	Genesis 13-15
20	Psalm 48
	Genesis 16-18
21	Psalm 49
	Genesis 19-21
22	Psalm 50
	Genesis 22-24
23	Psalm 51
	Genesis 25-27
24	Psalm 52
	Genesis 28-30
25	Psalm 53
	Genesis 31-33
26	Psalm 54
	Genesis 34-36
27	Psalm 55
	Genesis 37-39
28	Psalm 56
	Genesis 40-42
29	Psalm 57
	Genesis 43-45
30	Psalm 58
	Genesis 46-48
31	Luke 1:68-79
	Genesis 49-50