



Luke 4:1

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Reflection

Today's passage is just one single verse from Luke's Gospel, right at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Let me read it to you, Luke 4:1,

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left

the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Just moments earlier, out in the wilderness of Judea, Jesus was baptised somewhat reluctantly by John the Baptist. Full immersion in the Jordan river, the only person never to sin receiving John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Why? So that Jesus could express solidarity with us, with sinful humankind; so that he might be 'numbered with the transgressors' (Isa 53:12), be truly counted as one of us, qualifying him to exchange his sinless life for ours on the cross. John's baptism marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and as Jesus rose out of the waters of the Jordan we read in John 3:21–22,

heaven was opened²² and the Holy

Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

There could be no greater endorsement of Jesus' identity or mission than this. God the Father announcing God the Son and anointing him with God the Spirit. The Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Spirit acting together, publicly and powerfully inaugurating their plan of salvation for all humankind in Jesus. The Triune God – three persons Father, Son and Spirit yet one God – at work together, enacting their plan of salvation. At the Father's will the beloved Son steps down out of heaven becoming one of us. And obedient to his Father the Son is empowered and directed by the Spirit as he goes about his mission on

earth.

Many people divide Scripture along the lines of the Trinity. They look to the Old Testament era to understand the nature and character of God the Father. They look to the Gospels and the beginning of the first century to understand Jesus, God the Son. And then they look to Acts, the New Testament letters, the early church and the new covenant era to understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit. But ultimately these distinctions are artificial. Not only can we learn about each person of the Trinity right throughout the length and breadth of Scripture we must also acknowledge (even though it bends our minds) that our God is one (Deut 6:4). When we look at Jesus we are seeing the one true God. When we think about the

Holy Spirit we are contemplating God. And when we consider the Father, we must acknowledge that he too is inseparable from Son and Spirit. And so to keep God in proper perspective (as he has revealed himself to us) it is crucial that we don't over or underemphasize one member of the Trinity over against the others. As much as it is up to us (and conceding that we live in the age of the Holy Spirit, living as we do in the period after Pentecost in which the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all people) it is still crucial that we view and relate to God in the proportions and ratios that he has revealed himself to us in his word.

And this of course means that we make much of Jesus who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), bearing the ex-

act imprint of his nature (Heb 1:3). God has chosen to reveal himself most clearly and comprehensively to us in the person of Jesus. We also have great swathes of Old Testament revelation sketching in fine detail the character of God with a leaning towards God the Father. And then in the New Testament, under the new covenant, the new way of relating to God, the Holy Spirit bursts onto the scene revealing in greater detail than ever this third lens into God's character. And today's passage is an excellent example of this,

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Jesus, the Son of God, is filled by the Holy Spirit and is led by the Holy Spirit. And so

for today, as we see God the Holy Spirit at work: Who is the Holy Spirit? And what does it mean to be filled by and led by the Holy Spirit?

Firstly, who is the Holy Spirit? The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the power and presence of God. He's life-giving power, universe-creating power, heart-convicting power, faith-bringing, life-transforming power. And he's the presence of God, God's active power in the world now taken up residence in our hearts through the work of the Jesus. By him we both know and experience the presence of the Jesus in our life and are empowered to continue his work in our world. Which makes the Holy Spirit 'truth experienced' and the key to everything.

The Holy Spirit isn't some impersonal force, but a highly personal 'he'. The Bible says that he hears, and speaks, and witnesses, and convinces; he shows, leads, guides, teaches, commands and he forbids. He desires, he gives speech, gives gifts and he helps; he intercedes with groans, he can be lied to, and he can be grieved. He's a person, he's personal, he's the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God, the third member of the Trinity, he is our God.

Paul said 'all Scripture is God-breathed', he means God-spirited, because the Holy Spirit authored the Bible. Through him we recognise in our hearts that the Bible is the Word of God, that these divine realities are true. He illuminates God's word, he helps us understand it, he helps us to remember it, he recalls it to our minds. He's

working in our hearts to apply the Scriptures right now in this room, he's bringing them to life for us, he animates us, and he empowers us to respond to God's word in faith, and in worship and in obedience and in love and in adoration.

Jesus gave him to us, in his place, as another helper after him, he came after his death and will stay until his return. He's our helper, our strengthener, our supporter, our adviser, our advocate, our ally, our encourager – he's our God, we're his temple.

He's at work inside us, keeping us in the faith, maintaining our fellowship with the Father and Son, he's transforming us, and reshaping us, and remaking us into the likeness of Christ, he's equipping us for

worship and prayer and praise, he's convicting us of sin, he's the longing in us for heaven, and the certainty that heaven will come.

Think & Pray

That is who the Holy Spirit is. But what does it mean to be filled by him and led by him? Aren't we filled by, don't we receive the Holy Spirit when we become a Christian?

The answer is yes. When we become a Christian, every Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. We're born again, born from above (John 3), the Holy Spirit breaks into our lives, convicts us of our sin (John 16), introduces us to our saviour and then takes up residence in our hearts

(2 Cor 1; 1 Cor 3) so that we can grow in relationship with Jesus, and be increasingly transformed into his likeness so that he can continue his ministry on earth through us (John 14). And so, the gift of the Holy Spirit, when we come to faith is an initial and universal blessing, a once-for-all gift, that is not repeatable and cannot be lost. The Bible calls this initial experience of the Holy Spirit being baptized by the Holy Spirit, a time when we first receive the gift Holy Spirit. But when we speak of the fullness of the Spirit, or being filled by the Spirit, we are acknowledging that this initial gift needs to be regularly drawn down on, continuously and increasingly appropriated in the Christian life. Now that we've received the Holy Spirit we need to be increasingly filled by him. And that's what it means to be filled by the Holy Spirit and

subsequently led by him.

Pray today that you might be increasingly filled and led by the Holy Spirit and through him experience the presence and power of God, and deeper relationship with both Father and Son through his work in your life. May you and I both be increasingly filled by and led by the the same Spirit who empowered and directed the ministry of Jesus as we continue Jesus' ministry on earth through him.