

Introduction

1. Do you have a daily quiet time with the Lord? I hope so.
 - a. Maybe you have it early in the morning or maybe before you go to bed? Maybe you do both?
 - b. When you have your time with the Lord is not as important as the fact that you have time with him.
 - c. If you have the option, morning may be the best time since it prepares you for the day ahead.
 - d. What you read and pray with the Father in the morning may be exactly what you need as you face a trial, a temptation, a decision, an obstacle, or an opportunity during the day.
 - e. Jesus knew the importance of prayer for revitalizing himself and for staying on mission.
2. **Read Mk 1:35-39.**

A. Jesus Prays Alone (35)

1. After a busy evening of healing that most likely went late into the night, Jesus got up early to pray.
 - a. The phrase “Very early in the morning” points out that Jesus was up and out before sunrise.
 - b. He needed the strengthening of prayer and time with his Father more than he needed sleep.
 - c. He also needed the solitude of prayer away from those in need, including his disciples.
2. Mark says that Jesus went to a “solitary place” (Gk., *eremon topon*) – The word translated here as “solitary” is the same word translated as “wilderness” in Mk 1:3, 4, 12, and 13.
 - a. There was no true “wilderness” near Capernaum, but Jesus went apart to a place where he could be alone with his thoughts and with his Father in prayer without worldly distractions.
 - b. Prayer in a solitary, dark, wilderness place draws our thoughts back to the time of Jesus’ temptation in the “wilderness” as recorded in Mk 1:12-13.
 - 1) Luke’s Gospel adds that after Jesus was tempted by Satan that the devil “. . . left him until an opportune time” (Lk 4:13).
 - 2) Jesus was tempted by the crush of jubilant crowds coming to him for healing. We can only imagine the praise and worship lavished on him by those whom he healed and by their families.
 - c. Warren Wiersbe is reminded of one of Isaiah’s Servant Psalms, prophetic poems that apply to Jesus as the Suffering Servant who died for our sins (Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 26).
 - 1) “The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed” (Isa 50:4).
 - 2) Jesus came on a mission to proclaim the good news of God. He needed the time with his Father to receive instruction and guidance on where and what to speak and do each day.
 - 3) If Jesus needed it, then how much more so do we need it?
3. Mark mentioned the prayer life of Jesus three times: at the beginning, middle, and end of his ministry.
 - a. Each time Jesus prayed to overcome temptation and to stay on the mission his Father had given him.
 - b. Daniel Akin well states, “The setting in each instance is darkness and solitude, recalling the wilderness and the cosmic conflict between our Lord and Satan. Here, Jesus finds strength in the solitude of prayer and intimate fellowship with His Father. What a valuable lesson that too many of us ignore” (Daniel L. Akin, *Christ-centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 35).
 - c. Here at the beginning of his ministry, he prayed not to fall to the temptation of pride and selfishness in the face of the adoring crowd. He also prayed for guidance on where to go next and what to do next in ministry.
 - d. At the middle of his ministry, just after feeding the 5000, Jesus faced another time of temptation.
 - 1) “Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray” (Mk 6:45-46).
 - 2) It was another moment like that one in Peter’s house only the crowd was larger and more vocal in their calls for Jesus to be king.
 - 3) John’s Gospel records these same events after the feeding of the 5000 this way: “Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself” (Jn 6:15).

- e. At the end of his ministry, Jesus faced a final time of temptation before the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane as he prayed with his soul “deeply distressed and troubled” and asked that the cup of suffering might be taken from him. However, he resisted the temptation to save himself and committed to the self-sacrificial completion of his mission as he said to his Father, “Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mk 14:32-41).
- f. James Brooks, commenting on the three times of solitary prayer recorded in Mark, says “All three were times of crisis when Jesus was tempted to take an easy way rather than that of suffering and death” (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, 53).

B. The Disciples Look for Jesus (36-37)

1. When the disciples woke up, they discovered that Jesus was not there. (36)
 - a. They went out looking for Jesus. In fact, there was an All-Points-Bulletin (APB) put out on him as the whole village began to look for him. Where is this miracle-worker man?
 - b. The verb “went to look for” (Gk., *katedioksen*) carries the implication of an agitated, frantic search.
 - 1) In my early years of ministry at Old Greenbrier Baptist Church I experienced a frantic search for Hannah, our daughter aged 5 at the time.
 - 2) After a church dinner and meeting, she was nowhere to be found in the church, the parsonage, or the grounds around the church.
 - 3) I and everyone else were in a frantic search for her and wondered what had happened to her.
 - 4) Ultimately, we found her asleep behind a door in the church fellowship hall. She was tired and had found a hiding place to take a nap.
 - 5) We were relieved, to say the least, to find her safe and sound.
 - 6) I can relate to the agitated, frantic search of Peter and the other disciples for the missing Jesus.
 - c. Eventually, the disciples found him.
2. When Peter found Jesus, he exclaimed “Everyone is looking for you!” (37)
 - a. This phrase comes across as a scolding rebuke. Where have you been, Jesus? Don’t you know everyone is looking frantically for you. We need you. You have too much to do to be out here by yourself.
 - b. Mark used a different verb here than in the previous verse to translate Peter’s words “looking for you” (Gk., *zetousin se*).
 - 1) This verb indicates that their search was done with an evil or at least inappropriate intention.
 - 2) The crowd was not concerned about Jesus and his safety as much as they were about the loss of this miracle-worker whom they needed to heal their diseases and to cast out demons.
 - c. Peter, the other disciples, and the people didn’t have a clue about Jesus’ real mission nor did they yet understand the importance of prayer in overcoming temptation and keeping on that mission.
 - d. The early church leader Martin Luther, when asked about how he could afford to spend so much time each morning in prayer, famously replied, “I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.” Luther, like Jesus, understood the importance of time in prayer with the Father to prepare for what lay ahead.

C. Jesus Preaches and Heals throughout Galilee (38-39)

1. Jesus responded to Peter and the others by declaring, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come” (38).
 - a. After his time of solitary prayer, Jesus was ready to leave the area of Capernaum.
 - b. The people there had responded to his healing powers but not so much to his calls for repentance and faith.
 - c. I can imagine Peter’s surprise at Jesus’ words. Can’t you just hear Peter saying, “But Jesus”
2. The last part of Jesus’ words—“This is why I have come (Gk., *ekselthon*)”—is somewhat ambiguous.
 - a. Does Jesus mean that he has come out from Capernaum to the wilderness on his way to the nearby villages, or is there a deeper meaning here?
 - b. Jesus had already declared his purpose in coming in his earlier preaching: “The time has come . . . The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mk 1:15)

- c. I believe that Jesus referred to the larger issue of his coming from heaven to earth on a God-given mission, specifically the inauguration of God's kingdom and the redemption of humanity.
 - 1) The demons knew who Jesus was and where he had come from (cf., Mk 1:24).
 - 2) Luke recorded the words of Jesus this way, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent (Gk., *apestalen*)" (Lk 4:43).
 - 3) Peter most likely spoke to Jesus in Aramaic. So, the particular Greek verb used by Mark and the one chosen by Luke are different in their gospels, but I believe the ultimate meaning is the same.
 - 4) Luke's verb is the verb form of our word apostle and literally means "one sent out."
 - d. I believe that Jesus referred here to his larger mission as one sent out from the Father in heaven with a message for all people rather than to the more mundane fact that he had come out of Capernaum.
 - e. Jesus came with a message for the whole world, and he was ready now to move on to share that message more widely in Galilee.
3. Jesus never lost sight of his main mission.
- a. He travelled throughout Galilee "preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons" (39).
 - b. Like me, do you find it curious that there is no mention here of physical healing?
 - 1) Remember that Jesus' mission was to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God.
 - a) By preaching he spoke the word of God and announced the arrival of God's kingdom.
 - b) By casting out demons, he demonstrated the power of God's kingdom vested in him that was superior to the power of Satan and his demons.
 - c) In both preaching and exorcism, Jesus gave evidence that the kingdom of God had come.
 - 2) Jesus' mission was to be a redeemer not a miracle worker.
 - a) Of course, redemption of sinful humans is a miracle in itself, but it not the tangible miracle of healing physical diseases that the people wanted or understood at that moment.
 - b) Jesus was focused on proclaiming the word of God and the coming of God's kingdom.
 - c) The people were focused on Jesus' miraculous healing power. They wanted to see and experience a miracle but were not as interested in the word of God. They were fine with being healed but not so sure about the "repent and believe" part of Jesus' teaching.
 - d) William Lane summarizes, "Healing is an aspect of the redemption but it demonstrates Jesus' confrontation with Satan less graphically than the restoration to wholeness of those who had been possessed by demons" (William L Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 83).
 - c. Jesus knew why he had come. He kept the main thing the main thing.
 - d. Remember Jesus' answer to Satan's first temptation regarding physical needs over spiritual needs. "Man shall not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Dt 8:3 quoted in Lk 4:4) – The spiritual need trumps the physical need. Jesus proclaimed the word of God first.
4. In summary, Lane writes, "Jesus' answer indicates their failure to understand him or his mission. Acts of healing and expulsion of demons, as much as proclamation, entailed a disclosure of the nature of the kingdom of God and constituted a demand for decision. By his decision a person was qualified for participation in the kingdom or marked for judgment. The crowds that gathered in Capernaum had made their decision, but it could not be the appropriate one because it involved not the repentance but attraction to Jesus as a performer of miracles. That is why Jesus interrupts the miracles to go elsewhere to proclaim 'the gospel of God.' His purpose is not to heal as many people as possible as a manifestation of the kingdom of God drawn near in his person, but to confront men with the demand for decision in the perspective of God's absolute claim upon their person'" (Lane, 82).
5. So what can we learn from this narrative?
- a. Having a daily quiet time, at the beginning of our day if possible, is an essential part of life with God.
 - b. Do we too often look for the easy way out when faced with a ministry or life challenge? Are we willing to make sacrifices, even personally costly ones, to do the will of God?
 - c. When we feel tempted to abandon the ways of God and his plan for life, we must run to the Father for strength and direction.
 - d. Do we quickly run to Jesus for healing, but are we slow to come to him in repentance and faith?
 - e. Are we active members serving in God's kingdom or are we passive participants sitting back with the expectation that God and others will serve us and meet our needs?
 - f. How can we go out with the good news of the kingdom to those in our area who need to hear?