

## **Fueled and Focused**

*Mark 1:35-45; January 31, 2021*

### **Introduction**

What we began to see and will continue to see today in Mark is that Jesus was a very busy man. Being busy isn't necessarily a bad thing but it can it does bring with it certain challenges. My guess is that many of you can relate to the challenges of a busy life. One of the main challenges is that we're tempted to skip and/or neglect things that we say are important in our lives.

The survey that we ran back in December affirms this:

- How important is daily Bible reading?
  - 86% of respondents said it was very or extremely important.
- How important is daily praying?
  - 91% of respondents said it was very or extremely important.

Yet, at the end of the survey when we asked which statements you can relate with, one of the statements was this:

- I want to read the Bible and pray but I'm too busy
- What do you think the responses were? 35.4% checked this box saying they can relate.

Today, we're going to see how Jesus prioritized and focused on what was most important even in the midst of a busy life.

As we read and work through our passage today, we want to ask:

- What does this passage teach us about Jesus?
- As a follower of Jesus, how should these truths shape my life?

### **Read Mark 1:32-45**

The first thing we see is that Jesus prioritized prayer.

### **I. Jesus Prioritized Prayer (36).**

Context:

- Jesus had just had a late, probably exhausting, night of teaching, healing and casting out demons and what does he do the next morning?

What does Jesus do?

- He gets up before the sunrise.
- He finds a place where he can be alone.
- He prays.

Does this sound familiar: focused, face to face time with God (2021 Vision).

What does this teach us? Why did Jesus spend time in prayer?

- The kingdom of God advances through prayer. Jesus knew that he could accomplish nothing apart from the empowerment and guidance that came from spending time with the Father.
- Through prayer, we are *strengthened* for all that life has for us. Think **power**.
  - Prayer empowered Jesus to be able to extend himself outward in compassion toward others.
  - Prayer fuels us for life.
- Through prayer, we are *guided* for all that God wants us to do. Think **purpose**.
  - Jesus does only what the Father tells him to do (John 5:19, 30; 8:28, 42).
- As a result of his time with God, he came away empowered for the ministry ahead with a clear sense of mission and direction from the Lord.

The argument is pretty clear: If Jesus needed focused, face to face, time with God in order to accomplish his purpose in life, how much more do we?

Tim Keller, in his book, *Prayer*, concludes his chapter on the necessity of prayer saying:

“Prayer is the only entryway into genuine self-knowledge. It is also the main way we experience deep change—the reordering of our loves....Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life. We must learn to pray. We have to” (Tim Keller).

Repeat: As followers of Jesus, we must learn to pray. We must prioritize prayer. We have to. Keller also says, concerning the hardness of prayer, “I can think of nothing great that is also easy.”

What’s your next step?

- When will you prioritize prayer?
- How will you learn how to pray?
  - Check out the devotional guide that gives you a framework for how to pray.
  - Check out the monthly prayer guides that we’re providing (app and website).
  - One of the best ways to learn how to pray is to spend time praying with others.
    - Community Groups
    - Fire Nights this Friday night from 7-8pm.
    - Pre-Service Prayer every Sunday at 9am.

*Transition: the second thing that we see about Jesus is that he knew his “why” and he lived with a clear sense of purpose and focus.*

## **II. Jesus Lived with Purpose and Focus (37-39).**

So while Jesus was spending focused, face to face time with the Father in prayer, Simon and the other disciples with him, searched for Jesus. Simon’s words to Jesus come across almost like a

rebuke. Combining some thoughts from various authors, it might have sounded something like this:

- “Jesus, what are you doing here? There’s work to do. You’re a smashing success. The crowds are lined up waiting for you to help them. We are building a following. This thing is really starting to gain some momentum. The crowd is getting restless. Come on! Let’s go! We’re all waiting for you. There’s no time to pray” (see Daniel Akin and Kevin DeYoung).
- Why do you think the crowds were looking for him? Look back at 1:34. They wanted healing and exorcism.

### **How does Jesus respond?**

- “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”
- His response astonishes me. He said “no” to people who had diseases which he could have healed instantly.
- Why did Jesus say no? “For”
  - “For that is why I came out.”
- Luke’s Gospel makes it even clearer:

but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” (Lk. 4:43 ESV)

### **What does this teach us about Jesus?**

- Jesus was not driven by fame or popularity.
- Jesus wasn’t a people-pleaser.
- Jesus wasn’t driven by the needs of the urgent.
  - Though he often stopped to help hurting people and cared deeply for the lost and the broken.
- Rather, Jesus lived with focus on his God-given mission and purpose in life.

### **Now do you see why it was so important that he was up early spending time with God?**

- How do you think Jesus was able to respond to Simon with such clarity and confidence?
- Time with God fuels a focused life.
  - When my approval in life is coming from God, it frees me from seeking the approval of others.
  - I am more confident in saying no to the crowds because God has made what’s most important clear to me that I need to say yes to.
- Application:
  - God helps you discern what you’re supposed to say “yes” or “no” to in any given moment.
  - God helps you to discern when it’s time to say, “Let’s go to the next town.”

### **What was Jesus’ purpose?**

- “That I may preach there also” (Mark 1:38).
- “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well” (Luke

- 4:43).
- A focus on preaching
    - The kingdom advances through preaching.
    - His primary purpose was to call people to respond to the gospel of the kingdom with repentance and faith (see 1:14-15, 22).
    - This isn't to minimize physical healing.
      - Jesus' pattern of ministry was a combination of word and deed (see 1:39).
      - Deeds of mercy and healing pointed to the complete redemption to come at the consummation of the kingdom.
      - ...but it's only temporary. We're not told in the Scriptures, but the assumption is that everyone whom Jesus healed eventually died.
      - A right relationship with God is forever and results in spiritual, and one day, physical wholeness.
  - A focus on "the next towns" or "other towns"
    - His ministry wasn't isolated in one particular place.

**Do you know what your purpose in life is?**

- I preached a sermon on this text on 10/13/2019 where I unpack in more detail how to know and live out your purpose in life. Go listen to that sermon as my comments here will be brief.
- Without a strong and clear sense of mission and purpose in life, you will have a hard time setting priorities for your life and will most likely be driven by the urgent over the important.

**3 encouragements for living out your God-given purpose with focus like Jesus:**

1. Acknowledge that you can't do everything.
2. Prioritize what you *must* do over all that you *could* do.
  - Where are you pushing aside the very things you say *are* your actual priorities?
3. Reduce or eliminate everything that doesn't align with your purpose.
  - Are you saying "yes" and "no" to the right things and right people?

*Transition: in this last section, we see Jesus' power and disposition to cleanse and restore.*

**III. Jesus Cleanses and Restores (40-45).**

There are a number of shocking elements in this story:

**1. The audacious courage of the leper.**

What do we know about leprosy?

- This is a term for various kinds of skin diseases that were highly contagious.
- It was one of the most dreaded diseases and was regarded as practically incurable (so R.

- T. France). Curing it would've been on par with raising the dead.
- Go read Leviticus 13-14 this week.

The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp. (Lev. 13:45-46 ESV)

- The physical pain was just the tip of the iceberg. Can you imagine the emotional and relational suffering?
  - A leper would've been an outcast by the culture. They had to live alone and keep themselves from everyone. These rules were in place to protect the health of the community from such a contagious disease (I would assume similar to COVID... but almost like an unending quarantine and isolation).
  - This disease robbed you of your health, occupation, family...you name it.
- Having this disease was like a sentence on your life. Lepers were referred to as "the living dead" (cf. Num. 12:12; 2 Kings 5:7; Job 18:13). They were no different than a corpse (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 3.264).

What's so audacious and courageous about what this leper does?

- The leper breaks both law and custom at the chance of being healed by Jesus.
- He came to Jesus with courage, humility and faith.
- He doesn't question Jesus' ability, only his willingness to heal.
- "If you will, you can make me clean."

## 2. The compassionate response of Jesus.

- One commentator notes, "Surprisingly, the response of Jesus is no less scandalous than the leper's audacity" (James Edwards).
- Jesus was "moved with pity" or "compassion."
  - He was moved deeply by this man's plight.
  - Jesus is not indifferent to the suffering that we face in this world.
- Jesus "stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, 'I will (am willing); be clean'"
  - WOW!!! No one touched a leper. In fact, who knows when the last time was that this leper was touched by someone else.
  - Jesus doesn't back away or turn away from the leper in disgust. Rather, he draws near to him and touches him.
  - Jesus draws near and moves towards those most rejected by others (and so should we).
- Here's the irony:
  - Based on the law, by touching the leper, Jesus would've become both ceremonially unclean.

- Jesus doesn't become unclean but rather the leper becomes clean.
  - Jesus' purity is more powerful than the leper's uncleanness.
  - Jesus wasn't the one at risk. Leprosy was the one at risk.
- This healing is equivalent to raising the dead. This healing shows that Jesus' authority is different than what any priest possess. He truly is the Son of God. He's doing something no one else has done.
- Jesus then gives him two orders:
  - "Go and show yourself to the priest"
    - This is following the protocols of the law (see Lev. 13-14).
    - It's in this man's own interest to do this so that he can have formal proof and be allowed back into society.
    - We're not told if he went to the priest, but he clearly doesn't follow Jesus' first command. As a result, Jesus' ministry was hampered and he had to withdraw to desolate places.
  - "Say nothing to anyone"
    - Why does Jesus tell him to be quiet?
      - Jesus doesn't want the miracles to become a distraction. He doesn't want people who come to him merely seeking miracles. He wants followers to seek him for who he is.
      - The timing isn't right yet.
        - The Jewish leaders will notice him even more, growing in their jealousy.
        - Everyone will become confused about what kind of messiah Jesus is.
        - Jesus has more than he needs to do and accomplish.
    - It's no coincidence that five controversies are about to occur after this account. Jesus' healing forced a recognition that God was at work through Jesus in a special and unique kind of way.

### **How does this story end?**

- Jesus is out in desolate places while the leper, who was once an outcast, has new life and has been restored to community. The leper and Jesus have traded places.
- This is a picture of the gospel:
  - On the cross, Jesus bears the weight of all of our sin and face rejection and isolation like no one has ever faced. Jesus takes our sickness, our shame, our sorrow, our curse, our defilement and our sin.
  - You may feel very unclean today. You may be overwhelmed with shame. This might be the result of something you've done or because you are on the receiving end of human evil and what someone else has done to you leaving you with a sense of being unclean.
  - When you turn to Jesus, he takes your messiness, your dirtiness, your filthiness and in return he cleanses, forgives, declares righteous, restores and makes you whole.

“Jesus’s cleanness is a far more powerful contagion than any dirt we can bring to him. There is always more that’s right in Jesus than there is what’s wrong in us, more grace in him than offense in us, more forgiveness in him than sin in us. The very worst in us cannot compete with the best in Christ. We can’t sully him. He can only purify us. However deep our mess goes, his holiness goes deeper. We will never exhaust it” (Sam Allberry).

Have you come to Jesus with the same courage, humility and faith of this leper?  
Have you received the cleansing and restoration that Jesus came to bring?

Let me tie together all we’ve looked at today.

**The Point: Having been cleansed, draw near to God in prayer to fuel a life of purpose and focus.**

Don’t let busyness distract you from what’s most important or crowd out your heart from being able to see and respond to the greatness of God in Jesus Christ. Rather, like Jesus, let’s live lives fueled and focused for all God wants and has for us.