

**Mark 1:35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. 36 And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons. (NKJV)**

This morning's text from Mark has no backstory being told in the other Gospels, so we can delve right into it from our passage, knowing we have all that has been told about this period of Christ's life.

Now remember what happened last Sunday. The Sabbath came. Jesus was staying at Peter's mother in laws house, or maybe Peter's house. He ate with Peter and some of the other disciples. All was well after Christ healed Peter's mother in law. Then, after sunset, maybe there was a knock at the door...and then another...and another. A big crowd gathered outside and Jesus healed sicknesses and cast out demons.

It is very safe to assume that, if this ministry didn't start until, say 8pm, that the ministry would have gone late into the night. Jesus would have had a very taxing evening. Now if I were in this condition, I know exactly what I would think. I would think, worked late, sleep in.

But look what Christ did. Now Christ was in flesh, just like us. He would have liked sleep, just like us. It would be hard to rise early after working late, just like us. But he did.

So suppose he worked until midnight, which would not stretch the imagination. He gets up at probably 4 am, long before daylight, and quietly walks out of the house and hikes to the nearest remote spot. The word for solitary place is the same as the word used for where Christ was tempted. This would have been a spot that did not see a lot of human traffic. There would be no reason to go there.

Once there, He prayed. This was clearly His reason for going there.

If I were going to define discipline I think the way most of us experience it would be- "discipline is making our bodies do things that they do not want to do."

Discipline without true spirituality has its limitations. It may accomplish a lot, but it will not accomplish anything of lasting value. So discipline by itself is not a cure all.

But true spirituality without discipline will also be very limited in what it will accomplish. In fact, one of the demonstrations of the fruit of the Spirit is self control, which is essentially discipline.

Look at every great work of God in evangelism and you will find behind it a force of very disciplined and determined people. Their discipline didn't **create** the results, but **their work** was used by God in the **production of the results**.

All of us are somewhere on a continuum of discipline between being very disciplined and very lazy. We either best display **our control over flesh** or **flesh's control over us**. And we can often gauge it pretty quickly by asking the question what, in my heart of hearts, do I believe **I should be doing** as opposed to **what I am doing**? Think about that in your life. What **should you be doing** as opposed to **what you are doing**. I think, as far as application, we could stop here. If we just do this one thing, our lives will change for the better. So why not do it? Write the thing or things down that you really believe God wants you to do and come up with a plan to do it.

Another gauge in where we stand with discipline is the use of our time. This reflects the last question in tangible measurable terms. What portion of your time are you using as you believe it to be best used? And what portion of your time do you frankly just waste? Those questions help us to gauge our self control, our discipline.

Our goal should be to move up that continuum. We won't move from being absolutely lazy to being absolutely disciplined usually. Normally it is a process. But with this awareness, and the Holy Spirit in us empowering self control, we should be more about **the Kingdom's goals** tomorrow than today. A good application would be, what one thing could you add to your life this week that you know you should do but have been delaying it? Start it on Monday.

OK, back to our text. Christ knew praying was too important to miss. So he made his tired body get up after only a few hours sleep and go out to pray.

Now think about the situation. Christ had an amazingly powerful, and in some ways successful, ministry the night before. There are a bunch of people sleeping in their beds who are completely free from demon domination and sickness who the morning before had been completely at their mercy.

Why pray now? I would have thought Christ would have prayed prior to the previous day's events. But He prays afterward. Why?

I think the things he says to his disciples gives us a good indication. It looks like this prayer was for direction. It may even have been to prepare himself to say no to the temptation that is soon to come.

Look what Christ says in verse 38. He says, "**Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.**"

Remember what we saw in our study of John the Baptist? He was a person who understood his purpose and he stuck to his purpose rigidly. He was not distracted by anything.

Well the same is true of Christ, but even more so.

Christ knew what would come next. That wouldn't even require supernatural knowledge. Even a little knowledge of people would reveal that people were

going to flock to Him. And remember, Christ knew what was in men's hearts. So He knew **WHY** they were going to flock to Him. It was not going to be primarily for His preaching. They were likely going to flock around him for any of several fleshly reasons.

- 1- Christ had good things to give them that they wanted. Who does not want to be healed? Who does not want free of demonic oppression?
- 2- Christ was the next big thing. They wanted to watch. It was good entertainment. They wanted to see the Jesus show. Remember there was no tv back then. What Jesus was doing would be more entertaining and sensational than anything else going on anywhere near Capernaum.
- 3- Christ was probably viewed as a political force. If the people viewed Christ as the Messiah, they probably attached their hopes that He would set them free from the rule of the Roman government. So He was going to make their lives better, and they wanted to be part of that movement. They wanted to follow their leader into battle.
- 4- Christ was interesting philosophically. His teaching was curious. This would have appealed to people who were intellectual who wanted to explore and evaluate this curiosity.

So Christ would have known the mob's motivations. Should he build on this platform? Should he accept the platitudes coming from his earthly popularity and use this to further His agenda? Think about it. He probably has gone from a few followers to thousands of followers in one day. What should he do about that?

It is no wonder He was praying.

For one, he needed to know the direction to do the next thing.

For another, He needed the resolve to do the next thing.

Remember what Christ taught His disciples to pray:

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

And they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Isn't that what we see happening here? We will return to this thought in a bit.

There is another application for us here. This is a quote from **Barnes' Notes on the New Testament**.

**If Jesus prayed, how much more important is it for us! If he did it in the morning, how much more important is it for us, before the world gets possession of our thoughts; before Satan fills us with unholy feelings; when we rise fresh from beds of repose, and while the world around us is still! David also thus prayed, [Psalms 5:3](#). He that wishes to enjoy religion will seek a place of secret prayer in the morning. If that is omitted, all will go wrong. Our piety will wither. The world will fill our thoughts. Temptations will be strong. And**

through the day we shall find it impossible to raise our feelings to a state of proper devotion. This will be found to be true, universally, *that the religious enjoyment through the day will be according to the state of the heart in the morning; and can, therefore be measured by our faithfulness in early secret prayer*, how different, too, was the conduct of the Saviour from those who spend the precious hours of the morning in sleep! He knew the value of the morning hours; he rose while the world was still; he saw when the light spread abroad in the east with fresh tokens of his Father's presence, and joined with the universal creation in offering praise to the everywhere present God.

What a simple application this is. And there is no doubt that it would change our lives. But who of us does it? Who of us wants to do it? If we were all to apply this to our lives and commit to doing this one thing, this sermon would probably accomplish more than all the sermons I have ever preached. It isn't the knowing that is hard. It is the doing that is hard.

Let's go back to the text.

**36 And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."**

Simon and those who were with him- notice it does not say "disciples". This may be because they were not acting much like disciples. And we have to notice that they felt no need to get up early to pray. They were likely very encouraged by the previous day's events. I certainly would have been. I think of all the years we worked in YFC to gather groups of kids that we could present the gospel to. This would have seemed like an amazing opportunity to expand what Christ was doing. So the disciples wake up, and they are all there, except Jesus.

Have you ever had something like this happen to you? The one you are following chooses a path that separates him from you, and he does not communicate why he is doing what he is doing to you.

I know first hand what my human reactions are to that sort of thing, and they are often not good. And then on top of that, he leaves you with an expectant crowd of supposed ministry results, looking to you for directions to finding Jesus.

This disciples are probably thinking, "We don't know what to do". We are out of our element. We need Christ and we need Him now. He should be here. These people expect Him to be here. We expect Him to be here.

So they searched for Him. The word searched is an interesting one. It means to track down, usually in the hostile sense. We can't make too much of this. But it is not difficult at all to imagine that Peter and his friends are irritated. And there are a bunch of levels on which their irritation rested. Why did Christ leave without saying anything? Why did He not come back in time to take care of the gathering crowd? Why did He leave the disciples to handle the crowds when they have no

idea what Christ wanted? Why did Christ not leave instructions? But all their irritation would have come from a preoccupation with self.

Isn't that nearly always the case. At the heart of our irritation with others is our sensitivity regarding how their actions reflect our importance to them. And we are amazingly adept at finding insults in the smallest actions. And the more self absorbed we are, or maybe the more insecure we are, the more the actions of others will be an insult, an irritation. But if we were to gain objectivity, if we were to simply see things as they really are, the actions are **just actions** much of the time. Here Christ had very important reasons for doing what He knew needed done. We might ascribe all kinds of things to His actions. We might say He was inconsiderate of his followers. We might say that He was selfish for leaving like that to be alone with His Father. We might react in lots of irritable ways, but every one of them would be wrong. Christ was doing exactly what He should have been doing. And just because people may have been offended, does not mean that their irritation carried any authority.

Usually all our irritation with others shows us is our own sense self importance. Our irritation with others doesn't usually verify what is **wrong with others**. It reveals **what is wrong with us**. If we regarded it as such, we would live much happier lives and we would harbor considerably fewer grievances.

### **37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."**

It doesn't take a lot of imagination, given the surroundings, to see how this likely went down. Peter was likely telling Christ what He needs to be doing based on public opinion, based on the expectation of the masses.

Peter could have said a lot of other things to Christ. He could have said, it is so good to find you. We wanted your help but didn't know where you were. So now, can you help us?

But I really don't think he was in that frame of mind. It was more like, Jesus, you have a crowd looking for you and they are irritated and we are irritated, so I would really appreciate it if you would get down there and take care of your responsibilities. The obvious implied message is that the people looking for you creates an obligation on you.

Doesn't that just happen all the time? We get the idea that if a fiddle tune is playing, we better get to dancing. If someone has an **expectation of me**, that becomes an **obligation to me**. As if people's expectations hold any authority over my life.

Christ proves here to be an excellent example of how we are to make decisions under that kind of pressure.

### **38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."**

The “but” at the beginning of the sentence isn’t real helpful to us because it could also mean “and, also, even so” and a bunch of other things. But the but seems to me to be the most reasonable choice given the context. The disciples are appealing to Christ to make his decision based on the **expectation of the crowd**. BUT Christ is going to act based on the **overarching will of His Father**. Maybe He got that direction in prayer. Maybe he hardened His resolve through prayer. We can’t know the details. But we can see why He did what He did.

**God is never at the mercy of the expectation of His followers**, any more than a good father is at the mercy of his three year old son.

Christ addressed this at one point.

**Matthew 11: 16 But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, 17 and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament' 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."** (NKJV)

The Jews criticism of Christ is that He would not get with their program. He would not perform according to their expectations. And they were not willing to accept anyone that did not perform according to their expectations. They would condemn them for one thing or another. Jesus attributes this result to their unwillingness to hear the truth, to really hear it.

When I read this I think of a quote from the character of Anne Shirley in the novel Anne of Green Gables. She is talking of an obnoxious woman who expresses her venomous opinions about people.

Anne says: “I don't think Mrs. Barry is a well bred woman. I don't believe God himself would entirely meet with her approval.”

I think that is true of every human at some point. We often disapprove of God because while we think our expectations are reasonable, they often are not. They are more like traps for people to fall into.

Our expectations do not always serve to condemn those who don’t meet them. Sometimes they just show how evil we are for having them. This was true of the Jewish leaders and it can easily be true of us.

Jesus serves as a perfect example to us. He shows us how to live our lives in the face of competing expectations.

Who of us has never faced that bind?

There is no shortage of people who think they know how our lives should be lived. And the only thing **they all have in common** is that **none of them** will answer to God for our choices. Only we will.

Look how compelling this crowd's desire could have been to Christ. I would venture to guess that none of us have had thousands of people clambering for our attention. But we have all faced someone telling us what we should and should not do. We have all faced expectations from family members and friends and co-workers and even enemies. And many of these expectations come with consequences based on our decision. Sometimes we are offered a compelling reward for doing something we believe to be wrong. Sometimes we are threatened with something we despise for doing something we believe to be right. It is difficult for us not to weigh those things in and compromise. But Christ shows us the perfect example here.

**38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."**

Christ starts at the perfect place in His decision. The question is, what does God want? What is God's purpose? What is God's purpose for me? That is all Christ needs to know. He then makes a very clear decision and it flies in the face of everyone's expectations for Him.

I was trying to think of an example from my life that would illustrate the point. As I thought about it, I thought of Mike. I have never met a person, before or since, that would commit himself so wholeheartedly, even recklessly, to any path that he believed to be God's will. Nor have I met a person who refused to care what anyone thought of that decision or what price tag accompanied it more than he did. Mike was planning to be a dentist I believe. I could be wrong about that, but it was a job that would have made a great deal of money. At some point he perceived that God was calling him into full time ministry. At that point he dropped his other plan and devoted himself to a path that would ensure he would live at a poverty level. Then he brought me on in Youth for Christ and pretty soon was working two jobs so he could pay me more than he was being paid. He faced a lot of hardships by living a life based primarily on what God wanted from him instead of what people wanted from him. But he was an excellent example to all who really knew that part of him.

For application, we come back to a point we hit with John the Baptist. What are we here for? What is our purpose? Why does God have you breathing His air? What is your life for?

Before you can wisely make any decision in your life, you must know the answer to this. There are several things we know about **all of us**. We are in Christ for the glory of God. And our mission is to live our lives with a constant eye to evangelism and discipleship in everything that we do. We have lots of scripture

that helps us determine what we should do. Doing the right thing for the right reason always glorifies God. And there are things that clearly please God in all of our realms of responsibility. So we have lots of opportunity to obey and glorify God.

And we are surrounded by people who are intended to aid our growth and decision making. So it isn't that we should stand in opposition to all the counsel we receive that is intended to guide us. But we should only receive counsel that is from God **as having any authority**. As brothers and sisters apply God's word to our lives, that advice is invaluable. It is as necessary as air for our survival. But when the advice and expectations come from flesh, they become a real danger to us.

Following Christ has costs. Sometimes following Christ will be vastly misunderstood by those who are closest to us, sometimes those who should understand don't. It doesn't matter. We must follow Christ.

In our text, the Fathers will for Christ is that he evangelize other towns. The word for towns denotes small or large groups but not those having walls. So Christ was not talking about the largest cities yet.

Notice that He is focusing on preaching. That is the priority. A commentator was making the point, based on this passage, that the miracles Christ did were largely intended to back the preaching. It was not the other way around. The priority was preaching. Because it is only with the proclamation of truth that people are saved. They are not saved eternally by being healed. They are not saved eternally by having demons cast out. They will only live forever by hearing the Gospel and responding to it.

In Luke Jesus says he must preach the Kingdom of God to these other cities.

Clearly Jesus is preaching a message full of expectation. He is preaching a message that is to get people ready to respond to the Messiah and to receive Him as Lord, even after they see how it ends up. This kingdom of God is going to be a lot different than the Jewish audiences expect. And like Isaiah's passage- who will believe such a report? But Jesus must preach it.

We see in the next verse what happens.

**." 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons. (NKJV)**

So Jesus went about doing exactly what he said. He risked the crowd at Capernaum being angry and disillusioned with Christ. After all, they might say, he abandoned us. Flesh will always justify any rejection of God. But Jesus did what His Father wanted Him to do. He was spreading the net to catch the people His Father wanted caught. And they would not be caught by the dramatics. Although the dramatics may be used as proof that the message was true to those who were truly called of God.



We see here that he stuck to Galilee at first. And took advantage of the opportunity presented every Sabbath at the local synagogue. And what does it say? He cast out demons. We know that he did more than that and that he preached in more places than just the synagogue. But this report displays that He was preaching to the Jews, and casting out demons probably displayed the most visible results of the power of His ministry accompanied by the power of His message. We have no lack of application faced in front of us from this text.

Implementing those things in our lives that we believe we should do using self control.

Looking at our irritations **with others** to see what is wrong **with us**.

Adding, or guarding, our daily time in prayer.

Learning to live according to what God wants and not what people want.

Not allowing our expectation of others, or even God, to have any authority in our lives.

May God grant us the mercy to implement the changes that are needed in our lives.