

“The Priority of Prayer”
Mark 1:33-39
(Preached at Trinity, August 12, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verse 21** we found Jesus arriving at Capernaum which became His home after leaving Nazareth. The first Sabbath after arriving He entered into the synagogue and taught. All who were present were amazed at the authority by which He spoke.
Mark 1:22 – “And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”
2. After they left the synagogue they entered into the house of Peter and Andrew so that they might share a meal together and rest.
Verse 29 – “And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.”
 - A. The word for “forthwith” means immediately.
This is one of Marks favorite words. He uses it over 40 times.
 - B. Mark most often uses this word to stress the sense of purpose – the high mission. Everything Jesus did was with purpose; everything was by Divine design.
 - C. Do you see your life this way? Do you live with a sense of purpose, of urgency. Do you see your entire life as focused on three great goals
 1. To live to the glory of God.
1 Corinthians 10:31 – “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”
 2. To be conformed more and more to the image of Christ. God has saved us unto holiness
 3. To do the work of evangelism – this is your commission
 4. All of your activities, all of your relationships, all of your responsibilities – everything that God has Providentially made of your life falls into these purposes.
3. The final two years of Jesus’ were grueling. It seems that everyday was filled with activity. He had little time for rest. Often He didn’t even have time to eat. In **Chapter 3** Mark relates that some of Jesus’ family thought He’d lost His mind.
Mark 3:20-21 – “And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. ²¹ And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.”
4. We see some of that here.
Mark 1:32-33 – “And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. ³³ And all the city was gathered together at the door.”
 - A. While this should be seen as hyperbole or an overstatement we should imagine that hundreds had gathered at His door. They had waited anxiously for the Sabbath to end. As soon as darkness fell they flocked to the door of Christ.
 - B. He must have ministered to them into the late hours before the crowded finally dispersed.

- C. This would be good cause to sleep in the next morning. Surely He must have been exhausted. But this wasn't His plan. This wasn't His priority.
Mark 1:35 – “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”
5. Some have often been confused over the prayers of Christ. If Jesus is God and the Father is God does this not put Jesus praying to Himself?
- A. First we have to understand the personhood of God. God is one God but He exists in three distinct persons. This means there can be communion within the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always been in communion with one another.
- B. Second, we have to understand the ontological nature of Christ in His incarnation or the nature of His being. Jesus was two natures in one person. He was both human and Divine. The two natures cannot be divided. He was a single person. The full expression of each nature was manifest in Christ. He was fully human. As a man He needed prayer as much as any man.
- C. His prayers would have followed the patten set forth for all men with one exception. Our prayer life should include worship, confession, thanksgiving, and petition. Jesus would have surely worshipped the Father in adoration, we know He offered prayers of thanksgiving, and He continually prayed for Himself and His disciples. But there were no prayers of confession – He was sinless.
- D. Jesus understood more than any man the importance of prayer and He made it a top priority in His life.
6. This morning I want to set before you the priority of prayer.
- I. There were several things that drove Jesus to prayer
- A. He knew His Father was infinite in power and wisdom and ruled all things
1. He knew that all power rested with the Father
 2. In His incarnation Jesus was continually dependent upon the Father and knew that the Father would grant His requests
Matthew 26:53 – “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”
 3. Jesus taught His disciples that God would also hear their prayers
John 16:23 – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you.”
- B. He had a great desire for the direction of His Father
1. From early childhood Jesus' focus was upon the things of His Father
Luke 2:49 – “wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”
 2. His first business after His baptism was to go into the wilderness for 40 days of prayer and fasting.
 3. His great purpose was to glorify the Father
John 17:4 – “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”
 4. His will was to do the Father's will
Matthew 26:42 – “He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”

John 5:19 – “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”

- C. He had a hunger for fellowship with His Father – He knew that His Father was near in prayer
1. On this earth prayer is the means of communion with God. That alone should drive God’s people to their knees
 2. True prayer is first of all an act of worship before God. It is forgetting self and putting our full focus upon God.
This is different from what most people think about prayer. It is all about self. Listen to the priority in the Lord’s prayer. “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”
 3. Jesus knew that the Father always heard when He prayed
Before raising Lazarus from the dead Jesus prayed, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always” (John 11:41-42)
 4. In His darkest hour Jesus went to the Father in prayer
Matthew 26:36-39 – “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. ³⁷ And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. ³⁸ Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. ³⁹ And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.”
- D. Jesus knew prayer was essential for Him to conduct His ministry
1. Remember, Jesus was human in every way we are
 2. He was filled with the Holy Spirit when He was baptized
 3. He demonstrated by His life that prayer was the very foundation of His life and work

II. If Jesus saw prayer as essential in His life how much more is it essential for us?

- A. Paul included prayer as an essential part of our Christian armor
Ephesians 6:18 – “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
1. We are to pray always with all prayer
1 Thessalonians 5:17 – “Pray without ceasing.”
 2. All prayer means all types of prayer
 - a. Every occasion public and private
 - b. All types: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication
- B. A busy schedule is no excuse for not praying
1. Paul’s life was incredibly busy
 - a. Paul had to make a living working with his hands
He often refused support from the churches
 - b. Paul went on several major missionary journeys.

- c. He was responsible for planting dozens of churches and had oversight over dozens more.
2 Corinthians 11:28 – “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”
 - d. He had numerous pastors under his watchful care.
He wrote to Timothy and Titus as his own sons in the faith
He gathered the elders of Ephesus and rehearsed the care he had given to them.
Acts 20:20 – “*And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,”
 - e. In spite of this amazing schedule, Paul was a man who spent hours in prayer.
2 Timothy 1:3 – “I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;”
2. This is true of all who are pious
1 Timothy 5:5 – “Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.”
 3. We often think of great people of prayer as being people with much free time
 - a. We think of prayer warriors as being little old ladies strong in the faith who give themselves to much prayer.
 - b. It is easy to brush off our limited prayer to having such a busy life
We have work and children and so many responsibilities.
 - c. The truth is some of the busiest people have been the greatest prayer warriors.
 - d. Luther: “I have so much business I cannot get along without spending three hours daily in prayer.”
- C. We must make prayer a priority
1. It must be a discipline
We must make it part of our chief business
Luther: As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.”
 2. Prayer is one of the most difficult things we do in the Christian life
Colossians 4:12 – “Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”
 3. We must pray throughout the day but we must set aside times to pray. We must plan to pray.
 - a. This is what we find in the life of Christ
Mark 1:35 – “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”

Luke 5:16 – “And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.”

- b. We must allot time for prayer. We must not allow other things to interfere.

Acts 6:2 – “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.”

Acts 6:4 – “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

4. We don't pray because it is not a priority – we must make it a priority
Edward McKendree (E.M.) Bounds - Charles Simeon devoted four hours each morning to prayer. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. It is said that John Fletcher stained the walls with the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. Said he, “I would not rise from my seat without lifting my heart to God.” Martin Luther said. “If I fail to spend three hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day.” Joseph Alleine arose at four o'clock for his business of praying until eight. Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. David Brainerd, the mighty missionary to the Indians, said, “I love to be alone in my cottage where I can spend much time in prayer.” Adoniram Judson said, “Arrange thy affairs, if possible, so that thou canst leisurely devote two hours every day, not merely to devotional exercise, but to the very act of secret prayer and communion with God ... to be resolute in His cause. Make all practical sacrifices to maintain it.”
5. You may not have 2-3 hours each day to spend in prayer and a prayer's value is not necessarily measured by its length but is prayer a priority. Are you willing to sacrifice a little sleep to pray?
 Pray for your church. Pray for your pastor. For power in the preaching.
 Pray for lost family and friends. Pray for your children.
 Pray for your nation – for your leaders.
 In everything give thanks.
 In every way praise and adore God.
 Continue unceasing in your confession before God.