

A Day In the Life

Wayne Waibel – 02/04/2024

And so, we have Mark's version of a day in the life of Jesus Christ. If you'll recall last week's gospel lesson – Jesus encountered the demon-possessed man in the synagogue where He was teaching. Then, He and His four rookie disciples went to Simon's house.

There He healed Simon's mother-in-law, had a moment to relax with His disciples, and then stole away to a deserted place – a place of solitude, to pray. And this would be His routine all day, every day until His mission was accomplished.

As Christ's modern-day disciples, we of course emulate this life of servitude as much as possible given the constraints of our modern world. We tend, however, not to carve out enough or even any time for our deserted place. A place for us to recharge, review and renew our beleaguered spirit. Such is life in the twenty-first century.

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Back in first century Palestine there were plenty of places to find solitude. Hilltops, vast deserts, wilderness – heck – you could climb into a twelve-footer and press out into the Sea of Galilee if you wanted. The challenge then was as it is now – taking the time and making the effort.

The Jews of Isaiah's time were at a bit of a disadvantage when it came to finding their quiet spot what with being conquered by the Babylonians and all. A nation under occupation has its own trials to deal with, not the least of which being a tendency to believe your God has either deserted you, or the Babylonian gods are stronger than yours.

The prophets of antiquity really had their work cut out for them trying to instill hope among a people who felt their God had fallen silent. Their challenge then was not unlike ours now. How do you defend the goodness and omnipotence of God in the face of an evil world?

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The short answer is time in service – probably a lifetime. Even then you may not be able to put words to it. The magnitude and complexity of evil these days can be overwhelming. All the greater becomes the need to repair to our deserted place and commune with our God to regain our sensibility.

This world has made it increasingly difficult to trust in the notion that God will never fail. Despite the many obstacles in our path, and the seemingly endless examples of how dire our circumstances are – a basic truth remains – we worry because we don't trust God. I know that sounds ultra-simplistic, but it is no less true. You can either worry, or you can trust God. You can't do both.

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Let's step back to Mark for a moment. This day in the life of Jesus is not so much biography as it is theology. It certainly chronicles some aspects to the life of Christ, but the focus is on who He is and what He does. Primarily He invokes the grace of God.

And this grace is extended especially to the poor. He is very specific when Simon and the rest implore Him to come away from His solitude – His deserted place – and rejoin a community that awaits His healing and His teaching. "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

He had more disciples to commission, many more lessons to teach, and an entire world to save. That is not accomplished in the comfort of your own little village. His task was daunting indeed.

While Simon's mother-in-law immediately understood what Christ's charge was upon her healing and began to serve – becoming the very first deacon – the disciples themselves would fail to grasp their part in all this until after His resurrection.

And this is where we are easily confused when it comes to our understanding of Mission in this world. God's gift, Jesus' grace, transcends all the limits imposed by the dogma of religion. You don't have to wait until the sun sets on the Sabbath to heal or minister or simply show up.

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Enslavement to Christ, as Paul would couch it, is borne out through ministry to others. This is not such a radical concept really, but it is a way of life hard to accomplish in the post-modern world because of all the excesses and exaggerations; sometimes at the hands of organized religion itself.

True Christian freedom expresses itself in service. That service will eventually call you to your deserted place, where you can at least in part understand that God's wisdom is human foolishness and God's power is human weakness.

We, as an enlightened, informed, and commissioned community of faith are expected to carry that good news forward into a very broken and scary world. There is a lot at stake. Preaching exists that evil might not.

And we have to be at the top of our game, because for some people, we are the only Jesus they will ever meet. Christianity began not in a sacred space, but rather in daily life.

Paul reminds us that the task of Prophetic Theology is not a reason for arrogance or pride, but rather a reason for faithfully delivering a message. To that end – we need only emulate a day in the life of our Lord – every day. Amen.