

Praying and Preaching

Mark 1:35-39

Rev. Brian Bill

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Introduction. Hold up a clear jar and say, “*This jar represents our day.*” [Pour sand into jar to depict the various things we fill our days with – eating, work, school, watching TV, time on Facebook, hanging with friends, sports, reading, etc.] When full put rocks on top.

Here’s our summary statement for the sermon today: *Prioritize a place for prayer and preach in all places.* We’re walking through the Gospel According to Mark. Grab your Bibles and turn to Mark 1:35-39. Let’s stand and read this passage together: “*And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’ And he said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.’ And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.*”

I see four fundamentals of faith demonstrated in the life of Jesus that you and I can apply to our lives.

1. Start your day with prayer. As we learned last weekend, Jesus had a very busy Saturday. He cast out an unclean spirit during a worship service in the morning and in the afternoon, he healed Peter’s mother-in-law. At night, the whole city gathered in front of Peter’s house and Jesus healed many who were sick and cast out many demons. I imagine that He was exhausted and it would have made perfect sense for Him to sleep in.

But that’s not what happened according to verse 35: “*And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark he departed and went out to a desolate place and there he prayed.*” In the gospels we see Jesus praying some 25 times.

We see three things about Jesus’ prayer life from this passage.

- **It was planned.** The phrase “*very early*” means, “*exceedingly early.*” The time reference that Mark uses places this time of prayer during the fourth watch of the night, which was between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m. There’s

precedent for early morning prayers in many other passages of Scripture. Psalm 5:3 says, “**O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice.**” Psalm 119:147: “**I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.**” Isaiah 50:4-5 says, “**Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.**” When we pray early we get our marching orders for our day.

- **It was private.** Notice that Jesus found a private place to pray. The word “*desolate*” is the same word used for the wilderness and means, “*lonely and deserted.*” Luke 5:16 says, “**But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.**” Do you have a private place for prayer? Jesus encourages us to find one in Matthew 6:6: “**But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**” Have you seen the *War Room* yet? The main point of the movie is that we’re called to do battle in prayer and that we should find a private place to do that.
- **It was prolonged.** The tense of the phrase, “*and there he prayed*” means that He “*continued in prayer.*” Luke 6:12 tells us that at times Jesus would pray all night long. This axiom is helpful: “*Little prayer, little blessing. Some prayer, some blessing. Much prayer, much blessing.*”

Have you heard the expression, “*Don’t just sit there, do something?*” Some of us need to hear that because we’re just sitting around. But most of us need to hear a twist on this phrase, “*Don’t just do something, sit there.*” BTW, one of our ABF classes has started a prayer time on Tuesday nights at 6:00 p.m. here in our facility and they’d love to have you join them.

Listen. Since the Lord Jesus Christ needed to pray, how much more do we? In John 5:19 Jesus declared His dependence on the Father, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord...**” Here’s a truth that has helped me over the years: “*Prayer is not about getting my will done in Heaven, but about getting God’s will done on earth.*”

Perhaps you think you’re too busy to pray. To borrow the title of a very helpful book, you’re too busy to *not* pray! D.L. Moody once said, “*We ought to see the face of God every morning before we see the face of man.*” If he were alive today, he might add, “*We ought to see the face of God before we see Facebook.*” Here’s a challenge. Before checking your Facebook feed, put your face in God’s book.

Early African converts to Christianity were earnest and regular in private devotions. Each one reportedly had a separate spot in the thicket where he would pour out his heart to God. Over time the paths to these places became well worn. As a result, if one of these believers began to neglect prayer, it was soon apparent to the others. They would kindly remind the negligent one, *“Brother, the grass grows on your path.”* Is grass growing on your path? *Start your day with prayer.*

2. Stamp your life with faithfulness, not popularity. Peter and his peers sense that Jesus has become a sensation so they panic when they find out that He had left the house. Look at verse 36: ***“And Simon and those who were with him searched for him.”*** The word for **“search”** is the idea of *“pursuing earnestly as when hunting.”*

Luke 4:42 says they ***“sought Him...and would have kept Him from leaving them.”*** The idea is that they think Jesus is making a big mistake and that it’s their job to bring him back to all the people who find him popular. It’s like they were snapping “selfies” with the Savior and wanted to show Him off some more. We see this in verse 37: ***“and they found Him and said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’”*** They’re amped up and even annoyed. They can’t understand why Jesus would be hiding out when everyone wanted Him to help them out.

When I started my senior year in high school I made a decision that by the time I graduated, that everyone would like me. I wanted to be popular. When I was with the athletes, I talked sports. When I was with the burnouts (that’s what we called those who partied back then), I did what they did. The only group I struggled to connect with was the “brainiacs,” because my grades weren’t all that good. At the end of my senior year I remember thinking that as far as I knew, everyone liked me. While that sounds good, I had compromised in many ways such that I no longer knew who I was. I had put popularity above character.

We live in a culture like that, don’t we? We admire the popular people simply because they are popular. We celebrate the famous because they’re famous. The disciples liked that Jesus was admired. But Jesus didn’t care about being popular with people because He focused on faithfulness. Phillip Keller writes this about Jesus, *“He was more interested in the quality of the people’s response to Him than in the quantity of the crowd.”*

I don't really want Edgewood to be a hip and popular church. I long for us to be a Holy Spirit empowered church. We don't crave fame; we want to be faithful. In fact, by preaching the Word of God without compromise we won't be popular but instead will be persecuted. When people hear about Edgewood, I don't want them to say we're a "good church," I want them to say we're a "gospel church."

What about you? Are you trying to fit in with people or are you being faithful? Would you rather be popular than persevere in your faith? Will you stay committed or will you compromise when our culture comes at you? Will you bail or will you believe?

Start your day with prayer. Stamp your life with faithfulness, not popularity.

3. Strategize to reach other places. Don't you love how Jesus says and does things that totally strip their gears? They're expecting Christ to come back to Capernaum because it's the largest city in the area and there are many who want to see Him. Check out verse 38: ***"And He said to them, 'Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.'"*** Some of these towns were quite tiny and did not have the same importance as Capernaum. And yet, to Jesus, they were extremely important.

How many of you grew up in a small town or out in the country? I did too. How many of you live in a small town right now? If you're not sure, I came across a test this week called, *"You know you live in a small town when..."*

- It has an aquarium...stocked with live minnows.
- For fun on Saturday nights, people drive up and down Main Street.
- The only traffic jams are caused when a farmer drives down Main Street in his combine.
- The local phone book has only one yellow page.
- You don't use turn signals because everyone knows where you're going anyway.
- The New Year's baby was born in October.

If you don't live in one of the 4 big cities that make up the Quad Cities, do you ever feel left out or somehow inferior? I want to give props to some of these towns...you can cheer wildly if you hail from one of these hamlets.

Blue Grass

Buffalo
Eldridge
LeClaire
Long Grove
Walcott
Roscoe
Aledo
Andalusia
Cambridge
Carbon Cliff
Coal Valley
Colona
Cleveland
East Moline
Erie
Geneseo
Hampton
Illinois City
Lynn Center
Matherville
Milan
Orion
Port Byron
Preemption
Reynolds
Sherrard
Silvis
Taylor Ridge
Alexis
Alpha
New Windsor
Viola
Green Bay, Wisconsin (that slipped in there somehow)

If I missed your town, can you shout it out?

Jesus cares for every community because He loves every life. I get a kick out of how Pastor Ed welcomes guests to Second Winders. When a guest says he's from Coal Valley, Ed says, "*That's my favorite town!*" When the next guest says she's

from Colona, Ed says, *“That’s my favorite town.”* Listen. Wherever you live is Jesus’s favorite place because He loves you!

Capernaum has heard and now Jesus takes the gospel to other places. Jesus strategically moves to other towns and cities, and He wants us to do the same. This reminds me of what Oswald Smith wrote: *“No one has the right to hear the gospel twice, while there remains someone who has not heard it once.”* The Apostle Paul communicates this passion for other people when he writes to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 10:16: ***“So that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another’s area of influence.”***

I love that Jesus said, ***“Let us go...”*** Isn’t it cool that you and I are invited to join Him on mission? He does the work but His does His work *through* us. Our mission is to preach in all places and to reach all peoples. *We’re to prioritize a place for prayer and preach in all places.* To Jesus, this is not optional. His purpose in coming was to take the good news everywhere: ***“for that is why I came out.”*** Luke 4:43 captures this with even stronger words: ***“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”***

One way we can get the message of the gospel out is by getting behind a new initiative by Pregnancy Resources to raise funds for a mobile ultrasound unit that will travel to smaller towns around the QCA. Offering free pregnancy tests and free ultrasounds, this van will be strategically positioned to help women who are in crisis, without them having to travel to one of the centers in Davenport or Moline.

That’s also why we partner with 90 missionaries and ministries strategically positioned all over the globe. It’s part of the mission that Christ has given to His church in Matthew 28:16-20: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”*** It’s called the Great “Co-Mission” because we are called to make disciples in partnership with Him. Sunday night we have the privilege of hearing from Ruth King, our missionary to Japan. Phil and Pattie Eager, our missionaries to Mexico, will be interviewed on Sunday night, November 8th. If you want to learn more about our missionaries, check out the e-media screen in the lobby.

Missionaries to Burkina Faso, and former Edgewood interns, Mike and Pam Hillhouse, will be here next weekend for our Missions Festival. Our theme is “Glorious.” Mike posted some exciting news this past week about what God is

doing in Burkina: *“The church in Somgande had 11 children saved in their VBS!! The church in Tanghin had 258 kids present and 27 accepted Christ as their Savior!! Among those present were the children of the ringleader of the Muslim squatters who gave us such a hard time on our land!!!!”*

God is at work around the globe! For example, I just heard that 238 AWANA clubs have started up in Pakistan in the last three months!

That’s why we invest so much into our children and youth and young adults at Edgewood. We’re called to reach the next generation with the gospel. We’ll be having a special business meeting on Sunday, November 8th after the evening service to give an update on our next steps for our youth and young adults ministry. God is really working in this area! The Ignite Singles ministry will be doing yard work for a widow next Saturday and the high schoolers have a retreat next month and Wintertainment in December. On Wednesday night, I attended a Fellowship of Christian Athletes rally in Silvis where one of our high schoolers, Mason Laud, a sophomore at UT, did a great job sharing his testimony. Last Sunday morning there were 30 high schoolers in the ABF class and 25 came to a bonfire last Sunday night.

Jesus calls us to prioritize a place for prayer and to preach in all places.

On a personal level, that’s why I write a column for the Dispatch/Argus and serve as the chaplain for the Quad Cities Missing Person Network. That’s why we post our sermons online and share baptism videos on Facebook. We’re determined to take advantage of every opportunity possible to get the gospel out in as many places as possible to as many people as possible as quickly as possible. The Apostle Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 9:22-23: ***“I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel...”***

Here’s what we’ve learned so far. First, *start your day with prayer*. Second, *stamp your life with faithfulness, not popularity*. Third, *strategize to reach other places*. That leads to the final fundamental of faith.

4. Stand on gospel preaching. Wherever Jesus went, He was committed to preach the gospel. While He performed miracles, according to verse 39, the main reason He came was to get the message of the good news out: ***“And He went***

throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.
It's likely that this peaching tour lasted weeks and maybe even months.

The message is more important than miracles. Those in the first century were shallow, self-centered and focused on the sensational and they were interested in Jesus only when He could do something for them. Sounds similar to our society today, doesn't it?

The message of the good news matters more than anything else. Romans 1:16: ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”*** It's the preaching of the gospel that saves people according to 1 Corinthians 1:21: ***“It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.”***

I heard a sad story this week that the Church of England is considering only opening their churches on Easter and Christmas because they have lost so many members. The church buildings are quickly becoming museums because they stopped preaching the message of the gospel years ago.

Albert Mohler adds his perceptive insight, *“It has to do with the inevitable results of the secularization of a society and of a church losing its distinctive theological identity, more specifically, losing its grasp of the gospel.”* One bishop, referring to a major report about the future of the 16,000 Anglican places of worship in England suggests these buildings be preserved because they are “an unparalleled part of our country's heritage.” I like how Mohler responds to this: *“If buildings...are supposedly most valuable because they remind us merely of heritage, then that's not going to last...It has to be a living faith in which it is understood that nothing less than life and death for eternity are at stake...A community heritage may explain why buildings are preserved, but a commitment to heritage alone will never keep a church alive. Museums are about heritage. Churches are about living faith and living witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”*

While God has given Edgewood some beautiful buildings, and the trustees and custodial team do a fantastic job maintaining them, what brings life to Edgewood is the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ! We stand on gospel preaching because Jesus did. That's why we focus on expository preaching where the main point of the passage is the main point of the sermon. 2 Timothy 4:2 says, ***“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”***

On Tuesday night, Beth and I, along with three other couples, were invited to join Jason and Suzie Crosby's Life Group to take part in a panel discussion about faith and family matters. It was a blast being with these young couples and to see how God is at work in each of them. If you're not in a Life Group or part of a Sunday morning Adult Bible Fellowship, can I encourage you to join one?

After we finished, Beth and I started talking to a young couple that is new to Edgewood and brand new in the Life Group. While Beth was talking to the woman, she found out that she just got saved on September 17th after hearing the gospel presented during *Entrusted with a Child's Heart*. Beth was overjoyed and thrilled to hear this.

The husband and I were listening at this point and then I turned to him and asked if he had ever been saved. He answered and said, "No, I haven't." I then explained the gospel to him and asked if he understood it. He said, "Yes." I proceeded to ask him if he was ready to get saved and he said he was. I was led to ask if he wanted to do it right then and there and he said, "Sure." While everyone else was eating dessert and talking in the kitchen and living room, he bowed his head, repented and asked Jesus to save him from his sins.

When he was finished I called everyone over and asked the wife to share her news first. She did so and everyone started cheering. And then the husband told the group that he just got saved a minute ago and people started high-fiving and hugging. I thought a revival was going to break out. What happened? The gospel broke through. The gospel of Jesus Christ changes lives!

Jesus calls us to prioritize a place for prayer and to preach in all places. Here are the four fundamentals of faith that we've seen modeled in Jesus.

- 1. Start your day with prayer.**
- 2. Stamp your life with faithfulness, not popularity.**
- 3. Strategize to reach other places.**
- 4. Stand on gospel preaching.**

Here's what I think. We prioritize what we care about. Or to say it another way: *we do what we want to do*. To say we don't have time to put the fundamentals of faith into practice is really to say that we value other things more. Here then are a few action steps to take this sermon from preaching to practice.

Action Steps

1. Have a Quiet Time every day with the Lord. Simply put, you will not grow if you do not develop the discipline of a daily time of Bible reading and prayer. We've seen a lot of people get saved recently so it strikes me that some may not know how to do this. There are two big things to accomplish in a daily appointment with Christ – talk to God through prayer and hear from God through His Word. It's helpful to follow a Bible reading plan and we have some available in the lobby. Or you could read a chapter from the Gospel of Mark every day. Determine to do it. Schedule it now. If you don't, it won't happen. If you wait to do it when you have the time, you won't find the time. Remember this: *time spent with God is time well spent.*

Psalm 143:8: ***“Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.”*** When we dial in with God we receive direction for our days.

Adrian Rogers has written a very helpful post called, “How to Have a Meaningful Quiet Time.” I've posted a link on the sermon extras tab on our website and have also made a number of copies available on the Resource Table in the lobby. I especially like the questions he suggests to help guide our Bible reading time:

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a lesson to learn?
- Is there a new truth to carry with me?

2. Decide to give locally and globally as part of your Christmas giving. We want to encourage as many as can to give towards the mobile ultrasound unit for Pregnancy Resources *and* to participate in Operation Christmas Child. Maybe you could give one less gift to your family this year so you can give generously to these two projects.

3. Strive to have one gospel conversation every day. Look for ways to talk about Christ with your family, your neighbors, your classmates, and your co-workers.

Conclusion. [Hold up the second glass jar and put the big rocks in first]. These rocks represent God's priorities in your life - prayer and Bible reading, gathering, growing, giving and going. Here's the deal. If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all. [Then pour in the sand to show that there's room for everything else after you first put the most important things in].

When it all comes down to it, Jesus is calling each of us to follow Him. Are you ready to do that right now?

*Where You go I'll go
Where You stay I'll stay
When You move I'll move
I will follow*

Invitation: **"I Will Follow"**