

“Intentional”
Mark 1:29-39
5th Sunday After Epiphany
February 4, 2018
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Mark 1:29-39 (NRSV) Jesus Heals Many at Simon’s House

²⁹ As soon as they^[a] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” ³⁸ He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” ³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Do you ever feel like the “faster I go, the behind-er I get?”

I have friends who talk about how worn out they are after Christmas.

But that comes every year.

So do the “extra” tasks that come Easter.

But, what about when the “not on the calendar” events, like a funeral, happen.

Those can’t be planned. God’s timing says “when.”

And then we want those plans to run smoothly.

“Not on the calendar” events can drain us of energy and wellbeing.

Sometimes I know when it’s going to be a busy week.

And at those times, I truly feel that God IS calling me to do the tasks on my to-do list. I coax myself along with extra glasses of iced tea and adrenaline and find ways to get it all done.

In today’s reading, Jesus has been busy! ***Can you imagine!?***

In a VERY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, Jesus has been baptized, gone to the desert to be tempted, called his first disciples, began preaching in the synagogue (even casting out a demon that day,) and now, he’s crossed the street to Simon’s home finds out IMMEDIATELY that Simon’s mother-in-law was sick in bed.

Scripture says,

“He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.”

NOW can the guy rest?

Nope.

The verses imply the word is out, “Jesus is in town. You know, the guy who’s been healing others! He’s here!”

People are bringing him THEIR sick loved ones; or others with demons.

He’s touching and curing and touching and curing; sending disease AND demons OUT.

We’re not told how long Jesus did all that...JUST **THAT** NIGHT.

When I’m at seminary classes each summer, my schedule is WONKY.

There are friends to catch up with; classes and the library hours; online research;

keeping in touch with home; ohhhhhhhh and those papers are due WHICH DAY????

Long after my roommate had gone to bed, I’d rewrite and print and finally fall into bed; still on an adrenaline rush!

TOO SOON, the alarm would go off the next morning.

Tuckered out!

By the end of the 2 weeks I was pushing through (NOT unlike my classmates) in a blur.

Sometimes, others see it before I’ll admit it.

But, eventually on that kind of WONKY schedule, I have to give in before I get sick.

And I know, as I listen to and email with many of you, the same kind of “tuckered out” and run down happens to you, too.

We’d BETTER learn something from those experiences, right?

Extra iced tea (and chocolate 😊) and adrenaline **are not enough** to keep us fueled **enough** to do the work that we need **OR** want to do.

But, more importantly, Dear Ones, most of the time those “tricks” to stay alert and fueled up ARE NOT enough for us to do the work that **God is calling us to do.**

As today's reading continues, Jesus' "wonky" night of healing at Simon's house ends, but the very next morning he's going to begin traveling through Galilee, preaching and healing; "proclaiming the message" the Bible says.

There seems to be urgency to what Jesus was doing.

Mark writes the words "immediately" or "at once" for the pace Jesus is on.

Jesus is accomplishing IN A VERY SHORT period of time all that he sees needs to be done.

Like I "thought" I was doing last summer.

But Jesus does it a little bit differently.

In between the marathon night of healing...

...and the time when his disciples had to come hunting for him the next morning; scolding him: "Everyone is searching for you"...

Jesus stopped.

He got away.

And he prayed.

Jesus doesn't wait to burn out before he stops and takes care of himself.

He takes time away from what he is doing, so that he can be with God in prayer.

Jesus didn't try keep up the pace that we, too often, try to keep up in our own lives? Jesus knew that in order to continue to do the work that God had sent him to do, he needed to honor Sabbath time.

Sabbath is not some "out there" concept that exists because we've been told so many times that "God rested" on the seventh day of creation.

God, in His loving wisdom, even puts keeping Sabbath in the 10 Commandments.

Sabbath is a real, **holy** call from God; not to just MAKE AND KEEP a time to take a break, but also a call for us to seek out God **during** that time.

We all should try it more often.

Jesus didn't JUST try to sneak in a nap after breakfast.
That's one way to re-energize.
No, Jesus went to a quiet place so that he could pray.

The things in our lives, here on earth, that keep us going: caffeine, napping, exercising, and hobbies aren't enough.

Don't get me wrong; they're important and we need them, but we need to practice **and get better at** balancing our earthly efforts with an investment in more heavenly rejuvenation: Prayer and real Sabbath.

If we really want to be restored by (and to) God, then we need to set aside time to be **with** God.

There's nothing HERE that's anything like that.

We need to be more intentional about that time.
Sabbath is **not** just about "taking a break"

Exercise helps us be fit.
Healthier foods will nourish our bodies.
Taking naps WILL let us rest.
And hobbies help clear our heads.
But none of these things have **what God can do**.

We **know** that God does miraculous things; even when we don't get HOW they happen. So, with faith, believing SABBATH is a good thing...allowing God restore us while we step away from all the other things we THINK we have to do...to intentionally practice taking that break = we'll come to learn that it works!
We don't have to understand how, but we DO need to practice it!

Do you have to force yourself to stop? To focus on God?

Oh, boy, do we need to take a lesson from today's reading.

Think about it:

We can't assume that God can do **any kind** of restorative work in us if we don't actually make room (or time) for God to do that work.

Or that God will speak to us, answer our prayers, if we don't become QUIET enough to listen.

We need to be intentional about making Sabbath time.
And we need to be intentional about what we do during that time.
Remember: Scripture teaches that Jesus believed **taking his** Sabbath, his rest, to talk with his Heavenly Father was just as important as healing others.
Prayer wasn't just "something" Jesus added to his to-do list.
It was a central part of his ministry and who he was.

Setting aside time and focusing on God can't be a "when I get around to it" or at "it's on the list" item.

It needs to be central to our lives, too.

In some way, shape, or form, prayer needs to define our faith.

We need to allow God to be part of how we're made whole again when we run out of gas "doing" our lives.

It's something we need and is soooooo important to who we are as Christians.

Really think its caffeine?

Remember the old slogan, "COKE, its THE REAL THING"?

Well, maybe we need to rethink **WHAT'S REAL!**

'Cause, I think, that if we **REALLY** want our faith to be strengthened...

If we REALLY want to answer God's call on our lives, for ALL the work that we know God is telling us needs to be done in His kingdom...

...then we have to be more intentional, like Jesus was, about our time with God.

Will you, starting right now, consider making time with God a priority?

If we do, I think we'll begin to see how God is putting the pieces of our lives together; of our work, too; we'll be restored and better equipped to handle "whatever" comes our way.

And, if we place God at the center of our lives, then our lives will stop revolving around the things that break us down.

Caffeine and adrenaline aren't enough to sustain us to do the work that God is calling us to do as we serve our families and church and our community, we've got to have the energies to live God's call in our lives; to BE church and extend the love Jesus showed us...to try to make this world a better than it is.

BE intentional

Take a break from the "wonky" of life and set aside a time and a place for prayer.

Talk to God.

Ask God questions.

Write in a journal if you feel silly talking out loud.

And even if you have to let something go, to find the time, be intentional and commit yourself to it.

Time with God isn't a task; it's a gift empowering us to do the work that God is calling us to do.

To God be the glory!

Amen.

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Will you please join me, as we prepare to be restored with this Holy Meal, on page 7. Let's stand and declare our faith with the words of the Apostle's Creed.

I believe....