


The Gospel of Mark
Part 8
The Priority of Prayer

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

2024.1.7



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a “transforming church”. We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Since “Talking Points, Walking Points” is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to “dive deep” too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled “Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time”, are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Pastor Doug noted that it might have been natural for us to sleep in after such a busy day of ministry, but instead Jesus got up before dawn to commune with his Father. What did he know that we don't?
- Review the **Sermon Summary** to refresh your recollection of what Pastor Doug observed...
 - ① **Jesus craved fellowship with God more than he craved sleep.**
 - ② **Jesus chose to begin his day with prayer.**
 - ③ **Jesus sought to avoid distractions so that he could pray.**

...then evaluate how you're doing on each of those issues, marking ①, ② & ③ on the following scale.



What action steps do you think you should make in order to move a bit to the right?
How can we, as a group, help you achieve this?

Jesus would probably say that your first step is to pray about it! **Go to: tcc.org > Grow > Prayer.**

- Read Mark 1:40-41. What do you find most remarkable about this account?

How do you think you can grow more compassionate? (And don't forget the role prayer should play!)

Sermon Summary

Mark 1:35-45 opens with Jesus in prayer—nothing surprising there—but what's most interesting is the circumstances of His praying. Jesus had just completed the busiest day of ministry as recorded in the gospels (v. 34). Jesus must have been exhausted, yet he rose early, while it was still dark, to seek a solitary place where he might pray. We can learn several important things from this incident.

❶ **Jesus craved fellowship with his Heavenly Father more than he craved extra sleep.** After such a long day, I think that I would have slept in—but not Jesus. I suspect that he thanked his Father for the busy day of ministry he had just completed, as well as prayed for lasting fruit in the individuals to whom he'd ministered. He'd also seek God's direction and power for the day of ministry which lay ahead. For Jesus, spending extra time in prayer was more important than extra time in bed.

❷ **Jesus chose to begin his day with prayer.** Rather than rushing into the many responsibilities each day brought, he spent time with his heavenly Father. He only did what his Father directed. Too often we try to get God to approve our agenda, rather than seeking to align ourselves with His. Our responsibility is to be faithful and obedient to what we believe God wants us to do, so why not make it your goal to begin each day in prayer—and then continue that attitude all day long?

❸ **In order to get maximum benefit out of his prayer time, Jesus sought to avoid distractions.** Jesus selected a time and a place where distractions would be minimized. He chose, at least on this occasion, the early morning hours because everyone else was sleeping. No one up to bother him. Then, he chose a secluded place. No crowds asking for His attention. We would do well to follow Jesus' example. (This is tough for young moms—the only secluded spot may be the master bathroom before others awake. Husbands—help your wives find a time to meet alone with God.) Then, tell God what's on your mind, thank him for his blessings, and ask him to lead and empower you throughout the day. And—as happened with Jesus—don't be surprised or deterred when you are interrupted (v. 36-37).

Ask God to help you build redemptive relationships with others. Jesus went about preaching and casting out demons (v. 39). In v. 40 we come to one of the most moving accounts in Mark's gospel: a leper fell on his knees before Jesus, beseeching him, saying, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Leprosy was tragic and disastrous in Jesus' day. A strange appearance on your skin would strike terror into your heart. If the priest determined that it was leprosy it was the worst possible news you could hear. There was no cure; lepers had to be isolated from the rest of society, including their own family. You weren't allowed to come within fifty paces of another human being. If you saw anyone else approaching, you had to cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" The leper in today's account clearly believed Jesus had the power to heal him. What he doubted was whether or not Jesus was willing to do so. Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed" (v. 41). The Lord Jesus, the sinless one, who lived to fulfill all righteousness (John 4:34; Matthew 3:15), violated the Old Testament ceremonial law which forbade lepers and non-lepers to touch. Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him! This was radical; this just didn't happen! But Jesus, as Lord of the Law, had the authority to set aside the Law for His own redemptive purposes. This was probably the first human contact this man had experienced in a very long time. In a single moment, this man got his life back. Jesus gave it back to him. Jesus hates the disease, and he cares deeply for those afflicted by it.

As he so often did, Jesus told this man to keep quiet about his healing so that his fame would not hamper his ability to fulfill his true mission. Jesus didn't seek public acclaim; he sought private devotion. He wanted faith, not applause. He wanted disciples, not groupies. And, as so often happened, this man told everyone what Jesus had done for him. (FYI—Jesus no longer wants us to keep his identity on the down low. It's alright to tell others what Jesus has done for you!) We should be as excited about our cleansing from sin as the leper was about his cleansing from leprosy. Today, in response to our salvation, Jesus tells us to go out and tell everyone, and what do we do? We don't tell anybody. Church, there is something really wrong with that! Jesus commands us to tell the world what he's done for us.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

After the busiest day of ministry recorded in the gospels, Mark's gospel records that...

"In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there." (Mark 1:35)

Obviously, Jesus knew something about prayer that none of us do!
What can we learn from the following prayers recorded in the Bible?

Monday—Ephesians 1:15-23

- List all of the **things** Paul prayed for.
- List the **result** in our lives when these things come to pass.

Tuesday—Ephesians 3:14-21

- List the ways God (Father, Son, or Spirit) are **described** in this passage.
- Map out the **progression** found in verses 16-19.

Wednesday—Colossians 1:9-12

- **For what** did Paul pray in v. 9?
- What **impact** do v. 10-12 say it would have in your life if you were “filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”?

Thursday—Philippians 1:3-11

- **Why** was Paul thankful for the Philippian believers? Specifically, what does that **mean**?
- **Pray** v. 9-11 for yourself.

Friday—Acts 4:23-31

- In v. 24-28, **contrast** God and his opponents.
- Can you **honestly** pray what the disciples did in v. 29? Why or why not?

Saturday—Jude 1:24-25

- How is God **described** in these two verses?
- What is the **outcome** for those who have such a God as their own?