

## **On Purpose – Mark 1:29-39**

*Parallel Passages: Luke 4:38-44; Matthew 8:14-17*

Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis

Union Baptist Church – 11/11/2018

### **INTRODUCTION**

As we begin today, I'd like to ask you to listen to a few words from an article I found and see if you can relate. The article is focused on applying principles from a booklet you've probably heard of – it's called *Tyranny of the Urgent* by Charles Hummel. So here we go:

“In [this booklet], Hummel argues that there is a regular tension between things that are urgent and things that are important—and far too often, the urgent wins.

In the business world, this means that demands of your boss, your client, or petty office relationships can often take priority over things that actually matter, like thoroughly completing a task before starting the next one, or building unity in a work team that would instill camaraderie and longevity. The urgent, though less important, is prioritized, and therefore the important is put on the back burner.

This is no different in home life. We focus on the urgent things in front of us more often than we intend, and by bedtime, the things we really care about—the important—were barely given a glance.”

([www.theartofsimple.net](http://www.theartofsimple.net), by Tsh Oxenreider)

Does that ever happen in your life? How often do we have the best intentions at the start of a day to keep focused on what's important and tackle what we know needs addressed, but then the day happens and the seemingly urgent demands of other people, or problems that pop up, or our own tendency to avoid the hard stuff sweep us away and what's truly important falls by the wayside? Has anybody been there?

Well, today you'll be glad to know we're not going to be studying the booklet, *Tyranny of the Urgent*. But instead, we're going to learn from Jesus some key truths about what is most important in life and how we can stay patiently focused on it even when the constant demands and problems of our daily lives aggressively seek to pull us away from it. Turn with me in your Bibles to Mark chapter 1, verses 29 to 39. We're picking up this historical account of Jesus' life and ministry just as he and his first 4 disciples are leaving the synagogue on a Sabbath day, after Jesus had astonished and amazed everyone there with the perfect and authoritative truth he was teaching them and his perfect power that required even the demons to obey his commands. Let's see what happens next as we read verses 29 to 39 of Mark chapter 1:

***29 And immediately [Jesus] left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.***

***32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed 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.***

***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. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 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." 39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.***

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word and open our hearts and minds to understand it.

As we begin our study today, you should be aware that I will also be using additional information about these same events provided for us in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. Those parallel passages, if you want to write them down, are Luke 4:38-44 and Matthew 8:14-17.

## JESUS AT HOME WITH FRIENDS

*Mark 1:29-31*

So let's begin with verses 29 to 31, which I've labeled in your notes: *Jesus at Home with Friends*. In these verses we get a picture of what looks a lot like ordinary life to us: *heading home with friends after "church."* Jesus is walking to Simon Peter's house with Andrew, James and John, while the people from the synagogue are rushing home to tell everyone they know about the amazing things Jesus has just done. However, as Jesus and his disciples enter Simon's house the daily struggles of life in a broken world appear: *Simon's mother-in-law is very sick with a high fever.* But the wonderful thing is, a "light bulb" seems to have come on in the disciples' minds.

Usually in a situation like this you'd probably just try to be quiet and not disturb mom, or you'd go ask her how she's doing, get her anything she needs, and then let her be. But this time the disciples realized something much greater could be done for mom, because the Healer and the Chain-breaker was in the house! Amen?! And they weren't afraid to ask him for help! The Luke account says **"...they appealed to [Jesus] on her behalf."** What a beautiful thing when we appeal to Jesus on behalf of others! Let's never be afraid to boldly ask for his miraculous work in us and on behalf of others!

But what if he says, "No," you might say? Then what? Well, certainly Jesus could have said, "No," to the disciples' request for healing here, and there's always the possibility he may say, "No," to us as well. He always has the bigger picture in view and we rarely do. But let's never let that keep us from asking. Sometimes Jesus does say, "No," or "Not yet," for reasons we struggle to understand. But even if that's his answer, we can know it's for a very good reason, and we can rest in the reality that he cares about us and our pain and will carry us through it.

Just look for a moment at the tenderness and compassion of Jesus as he interacted with Peter's mother-in-law. The full picture, incorporating all three gospel accounts, tells us Jesus went to her side, touched her hand, commanded the fever to leave, and then lifted her up. Instantly the fever was gone and she was back to her usual self. And though the answer this time was, "Yes," I can guarantee that Jesus is still just as close to our sides and just as full of compassion and just as committed to carrying us through and lifting us up even when for reasons beyond our understanding he says, "Not yet," to our complete, instantaneous healing.

May we never fall into that terrible trap of doubting his goodness, but instead keep this beautiful picture forever in our view of Jesus at our side lifting us up. Let's live in the true reality revealed to us in Psalm 23: that even in the valley of the shadow of death his goodness and his overflowing mercy will follow us! Why? Because he's always there with us and he himself is goodness and mercy embodied.

### **JESUS OUTSIDE WITH CROWDS**

*Mark 1:32-34*

Well, after this miraculous healing of Peter's mother-in-law, the afternoon seems to have gone along as usual as they probably ate something for lunch and enjoyed each other's company. But as the sun set and the Sabbath came to a close, the quiet afternoon was over and a not-so-quiet evening was about to begin at the door of Peter's home. Let's spend some time now on verses 32 to 34, which I've called: *Jesus Outside with Crowds*. Perhaps someone knocked at the door or perhaps they heard the sound of people talking, but Jesus and his disciples soon discovered that the whole city, having heard what Jesus had done in the synagogue, had now gathered at the door bringing everyone they knew who was sick, diseased or oppressed by demons. What a sight that must have been! Can you picture it? Would you agree that Jesus in person in action had a dramatic effect on people? His authority, wisdom and power were unmistakable and there's been no one who's even come close since. What a privilege for us to be invited to live in his presence and walk through life with him!

Well, as the door opened and the crowd of sick, diseased and demon-possessed was revealed, Jesus didn't say, "Come back in the morning and I'll see what we

can do. I need my rest.” No. He had compassion and mercy and in the power of the Spirit he rose to the occasion, laying his hands on the sick and casting out demons with the power of his word. Again we see on display the deep, deep love and compassion of Jesus. He’s willing to physically touch diseased people, people everyone else keeps a distance from. And he’s willing to set free those who’ve dabbled in the devil and been caught in his trap. No one is beyond his love or beyond his power to heal and set free. The Healer and Chain-breaker is *outside the house* as well, rubbing shoulders with the lost and meeting them in their need!

And notice that again here, we see people appealing to Jesus on behalf of other people...interceding for them...asking Jesus to do something for another person they love. The Luke passage says: “**...all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him.**” Bringing the needs of others to Jesus and asking for his miraculous work is a wonderful thing, and in doing so we’re acting like our Savior and the Holy Spirit who are both interceding on our behalf constantly. Let’s never minimize the importance and the power of interceding in prayer on behalf of others. God works through and responds to the prayers of his people!

Well interestingly, outside Peter’s house in Capernaum, as Jesus followed the Spirit into an evening of healing and casting out demons, lo and behold, a very old prophecy about the Christ was being fulfilled from Isaiah 53. Matthew makes sure nobody misses it in the parallel passage of Matthew 8:17. He writes:

***This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."*** (Cited from Isaiah 53:4)

The hand of God was written all over this one-of-a-kind evening in Capernaum, and Jesus was just getting started!

## **JESUS ALONE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SPIRIT**

*Mark 1:35*

Well, at some point Jesus must have ended the evening and sent everyone home, because next we find him rising early the next morning while it was still dark. And if he was rising, he must have been laying down at some point that night. So let’s

look at verse 35, which I've labeled: *Jesus Alone with the Father and the Spirit*. So far we've seen him at home with friends and then outside with crowds, meeting needs and fulfilling requests in both places. But now we find him doing something he does over and over again throughout the gospels even in the face of the unrelenting and seemingly urgent demands of needy people. This all important activity Jesus returns to again and again is *solitude for the purpose of prayer*...finding a quiet place away from other people where he could talk with, listen to and enjoy the fellowship of the Father and the Spirit, and where he could intercede on behalf of others. And the amazing thing is that this activity was even more important to Jesus than sleep and food and whatever the pressing demands of the day might be. Verse 35 says this: ***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.***

Could it be that regular solitude and prayer was central to the unhurried, focused, Spirit-led way Jesus patiently walked through life with his eyes on mission, not trying to fix every problem in the world or fulfill every demand or expectation put upon him by other people? Truly, there has been no one who has more fully conquered the "tyranny of the urgent" than Jesus Christ. Here in our passage today we see endless need – a whole city gathered with great needs that evidently weren't fully met because they were back in the morning for more. And yet Jesus went to bed and didn't try to pull an all-nighter so he could get everything taken care of right now. And then in the morning we see him carefully avoiding the crowds to find a quiet place for solitude and prayer rather than jumping right up to get back to healing.

To see if your thinking is aligned with Jesus on the priority of solitude and prayer, consider what you would think of me if I went off by myself to pray in the woods when someone was sick in the hospital and really wanted me to come visit them. You would probably think I was pretty darn selfish and unloving, wouldn't you? Well, I would argue that that's very much like what Jesus did here. And it was not because Jesus didn't deeply care about the people and their needs. Instead, I'm convinced it was his sense of how deeply he needed his fellowship with the Father and the Spirit and their guidance, direction, and empowering. He needed these times to keep on mission and keep from being sidetracked with just meeting endless physical needs while neglecting the deeper spiritual purpose for which he had come.

I used that illustration not in any way to say that I don't ever need to go visit people in the hospital or that I can just ignore every request from people around me and get to them when I feel like it. That would be a selfish and uncaring way to approach life. Instead, I used it to show us how we tend to view solitude and prayer as non-essential and something we can do if we have time and if there isn't anything "urgent" needing to be done right now. But in the view of Jesus regular solitude and prayer is as essential as knowing and obeying Scripture, and only in it do we find the direction and energy and power to face and meet the needs that come our way.

*Without* it we will fall victim every time to the "tyranny of the urgent" and we'll wear ourselves out carrying the weight of the world on our shoulders trying to instantly respond to every demand...essentially trying to play "God," thinking we're personally needed to solve every problem and be there for every challenge. But *with* regular solitude and prayer, fellowshiping with God, gaining perspective, getting direction on priorities, we will find what we need to live as Jesus did: *unhurried, focused, Spirit-led and patiently walking through life on mission.*

## JESUS ON THE ROAD ON PURPOSE

*Mark 1:36-39*

Let's see how this is true as we look at our final verses for today, verses 36 to 39, which I've labeled: *Jesus on the Road on Purpose*. As Jesus was alone praying, let's see what happened:

***36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 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." 39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.***

Can't you hear the urgent trying to break in? "***Everyone is looking for you.***" The needs are overwhelming, you must come now! How can you be off praying off by yourself when there's so much to do and so many people that need you?!

But isn't it so interesting how Jesus responded? He didn't say: *Oh, you're right. I need to wrap this up and get back to the important stuff. We've got to get every person in Capernaum physically healed and make sure there's not even one demon-possessed person remaining here. Then we'll move on.* No. Instead his time of solitude and prayer seems to have reinforced him with direction and clear purpose about what needed to happen from here and what he needed to focus on above all else. And he responded to Simon by saying: **"Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."** What?! Everyone's looking for you and there's so much more to do here! We've got people in pain that need healing right now!

But I hear Jesus responding something like this: *I know, Simon. This sinful and broken world is full of sickness and disease and we're only touching the tip of the iceberg right now. I will physically heal many, many people as we travel around. And there will be a day when I take it all away for good. But my deeper purpose right now is not to simply take care of all the physical needs of people and then send them on their way. But instead to use the healings and miracles I do to accomplish something much greater. Through these signs and wonders I want them to see that **the kingdom of God has come near**, and that they can enter it through repentance and faith in me and then live there under my rule and reign, following me into the eternal kind of life – the abundant life of Spirit-empowered obedience to God's Word leading to joy – right here in the midst of all the suffering and pain of this present world.*

You see the reason Jesus was sent to earth by the Father at this particular point in history was to proclaim the good news of the near kingdom of God and then to open the way for people to enter it and live there through his work on the cross. And his authoritative teaching, his casting out of demons, and his healing of the sick and diseased were all meant, not as ends in themselves, but to provide unmistakable evidence that this kingdom is real and is available to all through simple repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

Listen to how the Luke passage describes this same situation that unfolded as Jesus prayed alone in the early morning. Luke writes:

***42 And when it was day, [Jesus] departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him***

***from leaving them, 43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." (Luke 4:42-43)***

You see, it was all about proclaiming the good news of life in the near kingdom of God, and in solitude and prayer Jesus remained able to keep his eyes on this purpose and not be sidetracked with just trying to solve all the physical needs and meet all the endless demands of the people around him. In solitude and prayer he was guided by the Father and the Spirit to remain focused on proclaiming the kingdom rather than pleasing the people. Jesus continued down the road on purpose, even though there was much more healing work that could have been done in Capernaum.

### **APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION**

Well, as we close today, let's review what we've learned and consider how it applies to our lives today. We've seen this morning that we, like Jesus, have good news for our lives and good news to share with other people...good news that goes far beyond the solving of all our worldly problems and removal of all our aches and pains. ***The good news is the near kingdom of God entered through Jesus Christ.*** This good news is the reality of God's rule and reign over this entire earth and universe, and that through Jesus Christ we can now live at peace with him, filled up with his presence, guided and directed by his Spirit within us, equipped with his wisdom and power, and effectively living out the purpose for which he created us – to glorify him and enjoy him forever.

The reality of life in the kingdom is that God is with us at all times and is ready to provide us everything we need for life, including specific direction for specific situations...focused purpose that will keep us from people pleasing and the tyranny of the urgent...endurance and patience with joy in the hardest of times...even miraculous healing and miracles are possible as we ask and ask for others and then trust his decision. But, my friends, to live fully in this kingdom God does ask us to ***seek him with our whole hearts*** through his word and prayer, spending focused alone time with him like Jesus did. ***Seek above all the kingdom of God.*** That's how God's transformation, empowerment, and purpose begins to blossom and take root in our lives. That's how we more and more live in the kingdom and align ourselves with God's purposes. Let me provide you with a

simple phrase to help you remember this important truth. It's all P's! ***Private prayer promotes pronounced purpose preventing people-pleasing.***

You see, life in the kingdom is not about my personal kingdom, where I simply ask God to start getting to work on all my personal goals and dreams and worldly things I've always wanted in life. It's not about pleasing myself or about pleasing other people. No. Life in the kingdom is about God's kingdom, not mine, and through focused and continuous seeking of him through prayer and his word, he begins to realign what I want in life around him and his good purposes for me. And that's because God knows that he himself is actually what we truly want and long for with our whole being...that's the way he made us and the way he intended for us to live...walking with him in the garden and being filled up with his love, presence and power. If our eyes could be opened to true reality and what's really important and satisfying, we would see Jesus, and like those who saw him in action while he was on earth, we would long to be with him and follow him around wherever he goes.

But there's a danger that led astray many people who saw Jesus in action and one that we need to guard ourselves against as well. That danger is the temptation to want Jesus just for his miracles and what he can do for us and for his power to solve our earthly problems...that rather than loving Jesus himself and trusting him to provide in this world full of trouble, we instead seek after him expecting him to remove all our troubles and bring our earthly dreams to reality. In essence, we want heaven on earth right now and when it's not panning out we think we must be doing something wrong, or even worse that Jesus isn't trustworthy, or isn't good, or doesn't care or doesn't work miracles anymore...or that if we just try this, this and this, Jesus will finally come through. Satan loves to take us down that path. But that path, my friends, is a dead-end. It's a path that's focused on earth and earthly things. And it's like searching for the pot of gold at the end of rainbow. We never get there.

In contrast, when we desire and diligently seek Jesus himself and the heaven-centered-life he offers us now in God's kingdom, we do find what we're looking for. We find the pearl of great price who's worth infinitely more than all our earthly possessions, hopes and dreams. And in him, no matter what life brings our way, we will find the power, the love, the goodness, the mercy, the peace, the enduring joy that only comes from living constantly in his presence. We will see

miracles and wonders and the hand of God at work in earthly challenges as we walk with him and ask him and intercede for others. But the greatest miracle will be the transformation into Christlikeness that he will bring about in us through the struggles. And that will be the most compelling evidence to others that God's kingdom truly has come near and is available to them as well.

What do you most want from Jesus today? What do you continually ask him for? Do you want him and abundant life in his kingdom or do you want him to give you the perfect earthly life you've always dreamed of? Do you want him or do you want him as a tool to get rid of your earthly problems? May he lead us to want him above all else and to seek him with all our hearts. May he lead us into sweet fellowship with him through prayer and his Word that becomes more important than sleep or food and that guides us into his pronounced purpose for our lives in his glorious kingdom!