

Mk 1:35–42 (ESV) 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. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” ⁽⁴¹⁾ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “**I will; be clean.**” ⁽⁴²⁾ And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

1. **An interesting section in Mark. You get a glimpse into the priorities of Christ**
2. **Outline: Three priorities**
 - A. The priority of *prayer*
 - B. The priority of *preaching*
 - C. The priority of *pity*

I. THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER

Mk 1:35 (ESV) 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.

1. He gets up early so He can be alone with the Father - undistracted

- A. If you know what happened the night before – you’ll understand the importance He put on prayer
 - 1). Because Jesus had been healing and casting out demons – He became extremely popular
 - a). Everywhere He went He was mobbed
 - 2). The night before He was at Simon’s house and the crowds had been massive
He was up late at night ministering – healing – delivering from demons = exhausting work
 - a). Yet here we see Him early in the morning out by Himself praying

Point: Why does Scripture point this out? Jesus being our example – we see what our priorities should be

- A. You will have no passion for God and no power to live for Him if you don’t pray
- B. We don’t want to be legalistic about this – and say it **MUST** be in the morning
 - 1). I think its best for a couple of reasons
 - a). That early morning hour is the rudder of the day – pointing you to God – I want that
 - b). AND early prayer insures there will be prayer
 - 1a). I have to pray in the morning or I won’t pray – day crowds out the time
 - 2). If you can wait until later *and be faithful* - fine
 - a). Just do what it takes to have a good prayer life! Whatever it takes!
 - 1a). It may mean disciplining yourself the night before to go to be earlier
 - b). Everybody who has ever made a difference for God’s kingdom has been a person of prayer

Transition: So Jesus is praying when Simon and the others come looking for Him

II. THE PRIORITY OF PREACHING

Mk 1:36–38 (ESV) 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.**”

1. Searched = diligently searched until they found Him – Why?

Because “Everyone is looking for you.”

- A. Probably another crowd had shown up at Simons house like the night before

Thought: And I think there is a bit of rebuke here

“Jesus what are you doing out here! Everybody’s looking for you, You’re a hit! Go back and ride this wave of popularity. You’ve made it, you’re successful.”

- A. Simon just wants to act – rather than wait on God’s will
- B. But I think Jesus was getting directions for the next step
 - 1). Simon is new at this – immaturity has a hard time waiting for God
 - a). It will smash down doors instead of waiting for God to open them
 - 2). ***I want to be as active as anybody – I just want it to be God directed activity***
 - a). It drives people nuts but I’m willing to wait

Transition: But Jesus does something I doubt the disciples understood at all

2. Rather than going back to Capernaum He heads out of town

Mk 1:38 (ESV) 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.”

- A. Rather than go back and bask in the popularity like most would do - He doesn’t
 - 1). He just wants to do the Father’s will and advance the Father’s purposes

He said in John: Jn 6:38 (ESV) I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

3. We see another priority here – I must go and preach

- A. Meeting physical needs is important – but temporal – they will still die and face God

Thought: We see the proper balance in Christ - He cared about the physical and the spiritual

- A. I think the devil would want us to go to one extreme or the other
 - 1). The church just becomes a ***preaching center*** – is content with that
 - 2). Or the church reaches out to meet physical needs only – is content with that ***“Social gospel”***
 - a). Meeting physical needs but not rescuing any from hell
- B. But Jesus taught spiritual truth while He met physical needs
 - 1). He told about how to be right with the Father while healing, delivering, feeding
 - 2). So we meet physical needs – showing the compassion of Christ

All the time preaching to bring about conversion – the condition of the soul is ***primary need***

Thought: This is where I feel the Lord is speaking to me

- A. We have a lot of spiritual truth going out – pulpit – Bible school – internet messages around the world
 - 1). We are out in our community regularly – with evangelism and prayer booth
- B. But I feel the Lord is pressing on my heart to expand our reach into the community
 - 1). Extending the compassion of Christ to those around us

Transition: We say we want to be like Christ – but what was Christ like? Look at next section

III. THE PRIORITY OF HAVING PITY (COMPASSION)

Mk 1:39–42 (ESV) And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” ⁽⁴¹⁾ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, ***“I will; be clean.”*** ⁽⁴²⁾ And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

1. Prayer – Preaching – Pity (compassion)

- A. Prayer lights the preaching on fire and fills the heart with compassion

Transition: To fully grasp what is happening here we must understand some background

- A. What makes this such a powerful lesson is who the leper was – who Jesus reached out to touch

2. According to the Mosaic law the leper was considered to be unclean

Le 13:45–46 (ESV) “The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ***‘Unclean, unclean.’*** ⁽⁴⁶⁾ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. ***He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.***

- A. Sounds harsh – but leprosy was highly contagious – you couldn’t allow this to spread
 - 1). Therefore was necessary to protect health of the community

3. Leprosy hit its victims with powerful one-two punch – physically and emotionally

- A. The disease was **brutal physically**: Parts of the body became twisted and disfigured
 - 1). It deadened the nerves so the leper couldn’t feel anything at all
 - a). They might suffer burns that would melt the skin off – then get infected
 - b). They might lose toes and fingers as rats nibbled them off as they slept
- B. The disease was **brutal emotionally**: The leper became a social outcast
 - 1). He was isolated from the life of the community
 - 2). He could never be near anyone – he was forced to drive them away
As they approached he would have to cry out “Unclean, unclean.”
 - a). Adding more humiliation to what he already suffered because of his appearance
Now he’s forced to draw attention to himself

Thought: Who knows the last time this man had experienced the touch of another human being

- A. Luke tells in his account - this man was covered with leprosy – advanced stages – suffering many years
 - 1). If he had a wife – he would not have known her touch for years
 - 2). If he had children they would have been forced to keep their distance from him
- B. No embrace, no hugs, no kisses, no holding hands
 - 1). It’s proven human beings need the touch of another human to be healthy
 - a). Not uncommon for a lonely person to do things like get hair cut weekly
Just to have human contact – that touch they so desperately need
- C. To add to this emotional pain – the Pharisees piled on unnecessary regulations
 - 1). Taught it was illegal to even greet a leper
 - a). So no smiles – waves – or acknowledgement at all – like they didn’t even exist

Transition: That was this man’s experience for many years

- A. But this black backdrop shows how loving and compassionate Jesus was = our example

3. Somehow this man felt he could approach Jesus and would be accepted

- A. This man who couldn’t approach anybody could approach Jesus
 - 1). How different Jesus must have been in the midst of a society that kept pushing this man away
 - 2). How different from the other leaders who said “you can’t even smile at the leper”
 - 3). What an example for us: **Society is cold – the Christian is to bring the warmth of Christ into it**
- B. He approaches Jesus close enough to be touched – He bows before Him
Matthew adds: Mt 8:2 (ESV) And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “**Lord**, if you will, you can make me clean.”
 - 1). **Lord** – I think he saw something divine in Jesus. He believed He was sent from God
 - a). He had great faith. **Lord you have authority over disease – you can make me clean**
This leprosy will bow to you just like I am doing if you want to heal me

3. Jesus compassionate response

Mk 1:41 (ESV) **Moved with pity**, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “**I will; be clean.**”

- A. He wasn’t disgusted like all the others – He was “Filled with compassion” (NIV)
 - 1). Means that Jesus felt His pain – entered into that pain with Him
 - 2). The only thing I can compare this too – is when your child or a loved one is really sick – hurt
You enter into that pain too – it is not a distant thing – you suffer with them
 - a). One writer called this “**Gut wrenching compassion**”

- B. Jesus lovingly stretches out His hand towards this man nobody wanted to touch
 - 1). How that touch must have reverberated through this man's body – it had been so long
- C. I imagine him looking into the eyes of Jesus – there was no revulsion like in everyone else
 - No nervous glancing around to see where He could move to create some distance
 - 1). He only saw love. Compassion. Kindness and mercy – He saw God's eyes – God's heart
- D. He hears these wonderful words *"I will; be clean"*
 - 1). This one who was so used to hearing words mocking him – children ridiculing him
 - a). Now hears God's voice loving him. *"Of course I want to. Be clean"*

4. The powerful results

Mk 1:42 (ESV) And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

- A. Wow! I wonder what that felt like. Did divine power shoot through His body like a shock wave?
 - 1). I can picture him holding up his hands and all his fingers were there
 - He looks down and TOES – toenails!
 - He feels his nose and it feels normal – no longer twisted and contorted
 - And his skin... it's no longer white and flaky – it is pink and healthy!

Point: *Jesus gave him his life back! That's what God does!*

Transition: Let me tell you what I think that should mean to us as a church
and what the Lord is speaking to me right now

IV. THE VISION OF THE CHURCH

1. Told you what our vision is last week

- A. To promote Jesus Christ and to get His word out through all means possible
- B. To save those who are lost through all means possible
- C. To train those who are won through all means possible
 - 1). **Summary:** Promote Christ. Win people to Christ. Train people to serve Christ

2. There is something that has been on my heart for years

- A. I understand the church promotes Christ and *wins souls through its teaching*
- B. But I have felt there is something missing here and in the church in general
 - 1). The Church is also to promote Christ and *wins souls through compassion*
"Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care"
 - a). The millennials complaint against church – where is the action?
 - 2). *The Bible calls us again and again to care about the poor and hurting – Why aren't you?*
 - a). This has been bothering me for some time

3. Some history – this burden began in 2008 – when we returned from England

- A. We went to a different church every Sunday for 6 months to see the Spiritual climate
 - 1). Were some good churches and some terrible churches
- B. One thing that struck me was how professional church had become in OC
 - 1). Very polished – but felt like something was missing – *it felt too sterile – squeaky clean*
- C. There seemed to be a disconnect between the church and the Savior
 - 1). He came and got involved in the needs of others – He cared about the poor and hurting
- D. If you've prayed with us on Saturday morning – a constant prayer of mine has been
 - 1). Lord help this church get our hands dirty in the society around us
Help us to get involved in the needs of the hurting around us

- 2). Don't let us be Sunday only Christians who make no difference the rest of the week
 - 1). Who don't care while things like homelessness grows all around us
While families are being destroyed by all kinds of addictions
- 3). Don't let us keep a safe distance from the world when you want us to reach the world
 - a). When you want us to show your compassion to the hurting

Thought: We say we want to be like Jesus – Great – what was Jesus like? What is a Christian like?

- A. Again and again we're told He was MOVED with pity – with compassion for those with needs
 - 1). He didn't isolate Himself from the poverty – the need – He moved towards it
- B. See it in Mark 6 after a day of exhausting ministry – tried to take His disciples away for rest

Mark 6:34 (NIV) When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had *compassion* on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

 - 1). Compassion in the Greek = implies an intense, deep feeling, tender mercies
 - a). He genuinely cared – His compassionate heart went out to them *and caused action*
 - 2). While the disciples might have looked at this crowd as an irritant – “Were tired. Really!”
 - a). Jesus saw them as lost sheep - wandering without a shepherd
With no one to teach them, guide them and care for them – so lost – so far from God
 - 3). They needed someone to instruct them and care for them - so He did just that!
 - 4). Then after that He fed them – the miracles of the loaves and fishes – Teaching and compassion
 - a). It's so easy to just be a teacher – tell everybody about how compassionate Jesus was
Yet never be compassionate yourself – never have time for anybody
- B. Jesus was showing us how we are to live – these stories are here to disciple us – give an example

Paul says in Col 3:12 (ESV) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, *compassionate hearts, kindness...*

 - 1). Because your God's chosen ones PUT ON compassion – act like Jesus did
- C. The believer is told he is to care about the poor around him or her

Prov 19:17 (NIV) He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

Prov 14:31 (NIV) He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

Prov 21:13 (NIV) If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

Francis Quarles: Proportion thy charity to the strength of thy estate, lest God proportion thy estate to the weakness of thy charity.

4. How this started to surface in my life

- A. I saw the lack of the church reaching out – my own lack
 - 1). Christianity seems so professional – polished – sterile – so middle class
 - 2). I looked at how Jesus acted and reacted to the needs – His heart went out to people
- B. I saw the scriptures about the poor – the hurting – and it bothers me – convicts me
 - 1). I've been praying – “Lord burden my heart with your purposes. Whatever you want.”
 - 2). As I've been praying that – these passions rumbling around in my heart for years
Have risen to the surface – become something I feel we must do something about
- C. When we gave back some of our salary and needed to raise support – a real blessing for me
 - 1). It drove me to prayer – to a deeper surrender
Which has produced a greater longing for God's will
 - a). Result: Now is the time to act on those burdens He placed there years ago
 - b). Now is the time to act like Christ in the world around us

5. What are we going to do? The extension of the vision

- A. We are going to start a new ministry out of this church – “Grace Missions OC”
- 1). OC because it is missions focused on our own backyard – Orange County
 - 2). We will place – Friday night evangelism and prayer – e. table – prayer booth under this
- B. But there will also be a new emphasis on reaching out to those in need around us
- 1). I have so many plans bouncing around in my head – what we can do!
How we can be what a church needs to be – a church that is following the example of Christ
- C. I fear we’ve been like the rich man eating his fine food in his fine house in Luke 16
While Lazarus was right outside – longing for a crumb! The rich man didn’t care and he is rebuked
- 1). I’m rich – you’re rich – if you know you’re going to be eating your next meal – you’re rich
- Thought:** Interesting when I’ve brought this up
I hear a lot of excuses why we shouldn’t reach out to the homeless and poor
Which I think can be convenient to keep us from getting out of the comfort zone
- A. “A lot of those people want to live on the street” – maybe a small portion
- 1). But that single mom who is on the street because her husband ran off and left her with nothing
I’m pretty sure she doesn’t want to be there – a growing problem all around us
- B. But a lot of those people are there because they are hooked on drugs
- 1). I know – but what if we could do something to help them get off drugs
 - a). What if we could be the hands and feet of Jesus that gives them their life back again
So they can go out and find work – have some dignity
- C. A lot are just using the system – maybe – *but a lot have been crushed by the system*
- 1). The middle class has been eliminated – so many are one paycheck away from homelessness
- Thought:** I’m right at the beginning of all this – I’ve been working my tail off – making calls - contacts
- A. I’m meeting with people next week with people – how to do this – making connections
- 1). Interesting – as I’m praying about all this – I get a message from “Willie Jordan”
 - a). Wife of Fred Jordan – started the mission on skid row in Los Angeles
Invited me to come and see how they do things – looking forward to that
 - b). So we’re going to head up and see what can be done – learn from those doing it
 - 2). There are secret homeless camps around here – Mission Viejo etc. – everywhere
 - a). Man at Starbucks – sleeping in wilderness with many
- B. I’ve contacted some people about counseling – for those who can’t afford it
- 1). Seen again and again – families – children on drugs – go to Pastor’s for help
 - a). Many times it’s over his head – the poor guy is already working 50-60 hours a week
 - b). Breaks his heart but tells them “This is going to take a professional” Gives them a referral
 - 1a). Problem – much of that counseling is \$150.00 an hour – they can’t afford it
 - 2a). So they go away hopeless – their life continues to spiral downward
 - 2). I’ve contacted some people – who may be able to get counselors to tithe some time
 - a). **PRAY** – that becomes a reality – pray that God gives us the resources
So that we can become a church that is active in giving people their lives back
 - b). **PRAY** that we can get counselors to tithe some time
 - 1a). Already got Norm and Terri – great marriage counselors!
- C. I’m right at the beginning of putting this all together – praying – seeking – consumed by it
We’re working on a logo right now
GRACE MISSIONS OC. Tag line “The love of Christ compels me”

- 1). Eventually we'll put all this up on the web
- 2). *I have so many other things to share with you – but I can't right now*

Point: Carri and I having to raise money has been fantastic

A. I see so much good coming out of it – so much more ministry for this church

- 1). I feel like we are heading in a direction of what a church should be – going where Christ would go

Thought: Back to our vision

A. What should we expect when we do this? When we reach out compassionately to the hurting

- 1). Our vision is to promote Christ and to win souls

James 2:5 (ESV) “Listen, my beloved brothers, *has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom*, which he has promised to those who love him?”

6. One more thing – the ministry to the unreached around us

A. I have always wanted to reach the unreached – God sent them here just for me

- 1). Last Friday – witnessing to a Hindu – Muslims all the time – Buddhists
 - a). Many times it is the first time they've heard the gospel – UNREACHED!
 - b). God is really moving in the Muslim world – revival – I want to be a part of that!

CONCLUSION

1. Grace Missions OC – be in prayer

- A. For the resources needed – for the artwork – logos and websites etc.
- B. For me for wisdom – I have so many ideas for this – as I pray it gets bigger and bigger
 - 1). I'll share with you as we go on!
 - 2). Pray for support for Carri and I

2. We are called to the great commission

- A. We saw last week the Spirit was given to us to MOVE US – empower us to fulfill that!
 - 1). You MUST be involved somehow in winning souls
It can be by coming out with us – by regularly praying (Friday night) – supporting
 - 2). No Christian is being obedient while neglecting those marching orders
- B. This week we see that Jesus wants us to be like Him - taking His compassion out to the world
 - 1). This is a growing work – this will take prayer – BUT PLEASE BE OPEN!
 - a). Don't be afraid to say “Lord use me in any way you can”
That is the path to real life – real joy – real peace – seeing Him move
 - b). That is the only path to the abundant life He wants to give you
 - 1a). That comes on His terms NOT YOURS