

Sermon ✝ February 7, 2021  
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We are busy people. On any given week, most of us have a full calendar. At least, that's how it was prior to COVID. However, now that we are months into this pandemic, I've noticed that many are returning to their "old ways".

When the "shut down" occurred in March, many welcomed it as a multi-week long snow day. Some folks were able to finally clean out *that* closet or *that* kitchen drawer. Of course, we desperately needed an alternate way to communicate. Little by little, businesses and schools and dioceses learned the ways of Zoom, Google Meet and FaceTime. And being the adaptable kind of folks that we are, it didn't take long before we were *Zooming* all over the place. Instead of leaving the house for this or that meeting, we can simply sit in front of our computer or tablet . . . resplendent in our comfy pants and participate. Given this, it didn't take long before our days morphed into a series of virtual meetings . . . one stacked on top of the other. As a matter of fact, we're taping this service on Thursday as heavy snow is predicted for tomorrow. If I weren't doing this (which I'm glad I am), I'm supposed to be a participant in two Zoom events . . . both scheduled for 10:00 o'clock!

We are a busy people. We are a busy society. And lest we think that we are the only ones who are or have ever been caught up in this business of over-scheduling, then we should find some comfort in today's story from Mark.

It appears that Jesus was not any better at organizing his schedule than most of us. Just look at the mounting stress and strain upon Jesus in the scene before us. This is still the early days of his earthly ministry. He has called four disciples. Went with them to Capernaum and on the Sabbath entered a meeting house to teach. He is in the midst of teaching when a man with *an unclean spirit* approached him and asked to be healed. Peter then invites him home to dinner where he ends up healing Peter's sick mother-in-law as well as ministering to the crowd that has gathered outside of the house. It was probably well after midnight before Jesus got to bed.

We are then told that he woke up very early in the morning . . . just to be alone . . . and he finds a quiet place to pray. But good old Peter tracks him down, "*Where have you been? Everybody's looking for you!*" And without batting an eyelash Jesus says, "*Okay, let's go!*" And they're off to the next town.

As I said, Jesus himself got caught up in the same kind of scheduling difficulties that plague many of our lives. **But** there is one significant difference in this story when it is compared to many of our own. "*In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.*" Jesus was busy just like the rest of us, but he did something about it.

Today we look briefly at time management as presented to us by our Lord. We all need time to be alone. Quiet times, where we are alone, are essential for the renewal of our inner resources and strength. Like food, exercise and rest, the quiet times replenish our exhausted resources. Exercise helps rid the body of un-needed flab and tones our muscles. And we can't exercise properly unless we eat the right foods and get plenty of rest. Neither can we continually give of ourselves to other

people or to involvement in worthy causes and activities, without the inner renewal that comes from being alone . . . alone with God.

It was in his quiet times of prayer that Jesus knew the closeness of God. There are numerous Biblical references concerning Jesus going off to be alone. And his recorded prayers are justly concerned with the vital issues of his ministry.

The quiet times are necessary in helping us sort out the problems and concerns of life. Jesus prayed whenever he faced a major decision. And I'm not certain that God always "spoke" to him. As long as we take the time to pray, God lets us work out many things on our own.

But we need to take the initiative . . . take the time. We need to be intentional about taking time for ourselves. You may need to re-arrange your scheme of living to give priority to quiet times. *"But that's impossible! I'm already pressed for time . . . I don't know where I'd squeeze in a few more minutes."*

There is some truth to those kinds of statements, but they are also a lot of garbage. Anyone, if they really want to change their schedule, can. It is always interesting to see how flexible busy executives can become after suffering a major heart.

Find a "quiet" time that works for you. Early in the morning. Late at night. Whatever works. If it is really important to you, you will find the time.

Quiet times can often lead to action. Whenever you take the time to think something through and reflect . . . the result will more likely be positive and not negative. Jesus sets a great example for us.

*Unless we come apart for prayer, we just plain come apart.* Devotions are essential to a productive Christian life. Most athletes do their calisthenics and stretches before the event begins, not afterwards.

Before the many demands of daily life are dumped upon us, it is important for us to "warm-up".

We need that quiet time to be alone with God so that we can limber up to do God's will. And we need to do this on a regular basis . . . not just in the moments of crisis.

Unfortunately, most of our lives are not going to be less busy this next week than they were last week. We will wake up tomorrow morning and face the same pressures and worries and schedules. We may feel like we're trapped on a run-a-way train. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Take a page out of Jesus' book. Spend some quiet time with God . . . daily.

It will not make all of your problems go away . . . but I can assure you that you will face the world with a different attitude. The quiet times are the times that help us to cope.

Find your lonely place . . . where you can pray . . .