

March 11, 2017 – Elmont Baptist Church

Message Series: The Gospel of Mark

Week 8: "...And There He Prayed..."

Text: Mark 1:35-39

We have launched into unpacking and understanding the Book of Mark. By the time we are done, we will have read every verse and unpacked every passage. Here's a little background – the author is Mark, or John Mark. Mark served as Peter's interpreter, and is giving us Peter's account of the life and ministry of Jesus. This book was written about AD 53-57, making it the first of the four Gospels to be written and the fifth earliest book in the New Testament to be written.

Mark's audience is Romans believers, and as theologian Danny Akin says, "he is telling them that Jesus is the Messiah King and suffering servant who actively ministers on our behalf and gives his life as a ransom for many."

Last time we tackled a longer passage than normal, because we needed to see the big picture – that the message that Jesus preached was authenticated and illustrated by the compassionate acts of Jesus. That Jesus came preached a message of faith and repentance – leaving the broken and hopeless and trusting Him for life and peace, and He showed that visibly by setting free those physically stuck in brokenness and giving them freedom.

Today, we are looking at a critically important passage.

Jesus Shows us that Prayer...

✓ **Must be Intentional & Intimate**

- **Priorities get placement** – "rising very early"
- **Free from distractions** – "went out to a desolate place"

Confession: I often have to preach things that are true, but are struggles in my own life. This is one of those days.

The things that we value most get the top spots in our schedule, calendar, and budget. You have so many things wanting your attention, you will have to carve out some time to make Jesus the center of everything. You won't drift into that. We're talking about a relationship here though, not just getting God to do things for you. Someone smarter than me once said, "The great reward of prayer is prayer".

✓ **Gives us Path & Purpose**

- **Conviction over circumstances** – "let us go on"
- **Call over convenience** – "that is why I came out"

We can so easily be influenced by good things right in front of us that we miss God's best that is only received as we journey farther with Him. So

much of experiencing God's best is saying "no" to a ton of good things. When I say God's best, I'm not saying "always pleasant, never painful" or "always sunshine, never suffering". I'm saying trusting Him to be for you what no one or no-thing can be for you. Trusting that His glory is better than your comfort.

We need to pray until we are convicted of what God would have us to do, so that when good opportunities arise we will not be detoured for His best. This is also how we come back to being sure of what God has called us to be and do. Sometimes weeks, months, or years can go by and we look up and the lines are blurred and we're not sure who we are and what we should be about. When we pray and seek the Father's will over ours, we are re-focused on His call on our lives. We get up from our knees with clarity of how we need to walk in faithful obedience to Him in response to where He is leading us and what He is doing in us.

I wish there was a magic pill to knowing and growing in Jesus. That it was "do this study" or "go to this event or class, and you're there." I don't even wish this for you, as much as for me. The reality is, there isn't a magic pill or shortcut. It's a relationship. One with the King of Creation. One that will fill you with everything you need and want for all of eternity. One that you and I desperately need to make a priority right now. But here's some encouragement – Your prayer life and other spiritual disciplines are not earning God's love. There is so much grace and mercy even in these things. God is not impressed with my best days and most faithful moments, because those moments are empowered by His Spirit and grace. We can all feel bad because we don't pray enough, and we should feel a level of conviction over that, but rather than you being hopeless and frustrated, just start here – "Loving Father, thank you for your grace and forgiveness. I'm sorry for not loving you and seeking you like I should. Please forgive me and help me."

Thinking it Through...

- ✓ **When was the last time that Jesus got the best part of your day?**
- ✓ **Have you ever known that God was leading you in a direction that went against what was easy and obvious?**
- ✓ **What is taking place in your life right now that is only possible because of bold prayers and faithful obedience?**

Storying Mark 1:35-39

This passage is easy to preach and hard to live. There is so much grace in our spiritual disciplines. Because we are not earning God's approval, He is not taking grades. Remind your group of that.

- **Questions**

- **Observation:** (emphasize that these are rather obvious answers)
 - What has Jesus just been doing before this passage? (teaching, healing)
 - What time is it and where does Jesus go and do?
 - What is everyone else doing? (looking for Jesus)
 - What is Jesus' response to the demands on Him?
- **Interpretation:**
 - Why does Jesus go away and pray?
 - Why does Jesus need to pray, after all, He is God?
 - Why does Jesus not stay where He is and keep healing and ministering to the people there?
- **Application:** Use the "Thinking it Through" questions as needed
 - Do we have to pray early in the morning while it is still dark?
 - At what part of the day are you at your best?
 - How do you discern the will of God in your decisions?
 - Does God always lead against the easy and obvious?
 - What prayers are you praying that stretch your faith?