

Title: **Everyone is Looking for You!**

Mark 1:35-39

35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Mark starts out by giving the secret to Jesus' success. Honestly we could stop after verse 35, commit ourselves to following Jesus' example, and be so much the better for it. After an intense day of ministry, Jesus knows that what he needs more than sleep is solitude – to be alone with God in prayer. After a day and an evening of releasing people from physical illness and spiritual oppression... After a day of people looking on him with a mixture of awe and gratitude and desperation... after a day full of praise and thanks and accolades, what Jesus needed most was to reconnect himself to the source of his power and of his identity. He needed to be in the intimate presence of God. He needed to remember who he was and re-anchor himself in his identity as the unconditionally beloved Son of the Father. So he got up and got out.

Meanwhile, we can imagine the disciples being utterly amazed and utterly exhausted. Those heads of theirs must have hit the pillows full of thoughts about how respond to Jesus suddenly being in very high demand. We love an eager beaver – a person who has lots of energy and desire to make get stuff done and make a good impression. Surely Peter and the other disciples were very eager to usher in the Kingdom of God. It must have really surprised them, when people came from all around to get healed by Jesus. Maybe they had no idea how much demand for such a ministry there would be. When we see a need, we have a strong impulse to want to fill it. And when we see a need, it's pretty easy for us to assume God's WANTS us to fill it.

But Jesus's life and ministry – that is, his pattern for living – is not organized around the wants, needs, or expectations of others. It was organized around a deep, intimate relationship with the Father. As Jesus says in John 5:9, "I only do what I see the Father doing." The whole of Jesus' life was a day by day, moment by moment response to God's unfolding plan of love. Unlike the disciples and everyone else around him, Jesus was steeped in the practice of regularly being alone with God. As a result, he had total clarity about who he was and what his life's purpose was to be.

Core

Abundant life is about being with God, not doing things for God.

By staying grounded in his identity, he clearly knows what he should do... and what he should NOT do.

When Jesus lives and ministers out his identity as the beloved Son, he is bound to disappoint the crowds and confuse the disciples.

Mark begins his gospel in a way that seems to say, "Spoiler alert! Jesus is going to both please God and disappoint people A LOT in this story."

The disciples wake up and, finding Jesus absent, start hunting. Simon (not nicknamed Peter yet) is mentioned by name. He is already seen as the leader. Even with Mark's economy of language we can tell that Simon and the others are a bit miffed when they finally find him. "Everyone is looking for you," they say. The implication is pretty clear. Yesterday was great, Jesus! But guess what: All those folks are gonna tell their friends. And those friends are gonna tell their friends. And never mind the Yelp reviews! This is no time go wandering off, Jesus. We've got to get ready for all the people who are going to show up today. We've got a lot of work to do.

Jesus then reminds – gently but firmly – that he is the Master and they are the students. **"Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."** They think that healings and exorcisms is the most amazing thing ever. What else could be better? Yet Jesus tells them that he has come into the world to proclaim the message. What message? The message that the God's rule and reign, God's gentleness and justice, God's healing and God's hope are here, not just for a few people but for all people. Yes, it's great that folks in Capernaum have heard and experienced this. But now the folks in the small towns and villages need to know it too. This is as much for them as it is for the people here in the city.

That doesn't sound very efficient. This is not terribly practical. After all Jesus, look all the needs right here! At precisely the moment when they think it's time to stay put and let the people come to them, Jesus says it's time to go out to where they are. Why? Because he's been with the Father. Because that is what the Father is doing and wants done.

We aren't called to do the most successful thing, or the most efficient thing, or the most popular thing, or even the thing that everybody says is the most needed thing. We are called to do the thing God has created us to do. This is no less true for us than it was for Jesus.

This is the fundamental paradigm shift for people who decide to follow Jesus. It's a shift from

**I am what I do
to
I do what I am**

When I remember who – and whose – I am, then knowing the right thing to do gets pretty easy. When I'm not caught up in the swirl of other people expectations of me – real or imagined – then I can simply attend to the work in front of me without ever losing sight of the big picture.

So how do we do this? How do we cultivate the capacity for remembering who we are, and to whom we belong?

Call

Set aside time each day to be alone with God.

We do it exactly the same way Jesus did it. Spending time, every day, to simply be still in God's Presence is critically important. Because Jesus spent this time in disengagement, the rest of the time Jesus was engaged in the world he was doing the most important, impactful, and God-glorifying thing he could. We can all live like that!

This may sound easy, but if it were then we'd all be doing it. Staying busy and distracted in order to feel important is the very thing we all fall back into in the absence of knowing who we are whose we are.

“All human evil comes from this: our inability to sit still in a chair for half an hour.”

- **Blaise Pascal**

Is this more important than regularly being in God's Word? No, but it is no less important. Is this more important than the doing the work of intercessory prayer? Again, that work is indeed important. But intercessory prayer work is well done – and perhaps best done – with others in supportive community. But there is no substitute for this time alone with God.

Let us pray.