

Jim Gill

February 4, 2018

"Somewhere Else"

Isaiah 40:21--31 Mark 1:29-39 I Corinthians 9:29-39

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 40:21-31

In our passage from Isaiah, Israel is in exile and she perceives that she is abandoned by God. Yet Isaiah prophesies that God is the One who ministers to fainting creation. He charges them to wait confidently and God will give them strength. .

INTRODUCTION TO MARK 1:29-39

For Christmas my wife Anne gave me an iPad. I already had an iPod and an iPhone. I'm not fully acclimated to it yet. Yesterday when I opened it I got a message, "This iPad is not backed up. Backups happen when this iPad is connected to power, locked and on WiFi.

What happens when these devices that run our lives are used but not connected to a power source? The batteries run down and need to be recharged. In this morning's gospel lesson we get a peek at how Jesus addresses that issue after his first 100 hours of public ministry. Hear the word of the Lord from Mark 1:29-39.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, you are the Great Physician. You are the one who can touch us, heal us, and raise us up so we can serve supper to others. You are the one Lord who can give us the strength to do more than we can imagine. Inspire us this morning to commit to be used by you to accomplish great things. As we examine your calling on our lives this morning, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Hear the word of God from Mark 1:29-39.

As I shared in my article in Faith Lift this week, tonight many of us will spend an evening with friends and family watching to see if someone can beat the Patriots and their 40 year old quarterback. Football is 22 people in need of rest being watched by millions who are in need of exercise. There is a time to get to work and there is a time to rest and recharge. Tonight they exercise. Tomorrow morning they recharge. Jesus exemplified this in his first 24 hours of public ministry.

I had the privilege of visiting the Holy Land in 1993. Of all the places that I visited there was one place that got to me the most. The tree where Jesus broke the bread and fish to feed 5,000 or even where he was born or buried are up for speculation, but the synagogue in Capernaum was there before Jesus was born and it was the same place when he first shared the reading of scripture and performed his first miracle in a place of worship. As I stood on those stones of a structure without a ceiling, it hit me that was a place where Jesus actually once stood. I was standing ...on holy ground.

What was amazing to me was that after we left that synagogue our tour guide took us to the next stop, right across the street. It was the house where Simon, who one day Jesus

would nickname Peter, lived with his wife and maybe his mother-in-law. Simon lived across the street from the synagogue! Jesus' first sermon in his home synagogue yielded deliverance from a demon. Jesus first healing from a fever came in a home. It happened immediately afterward when Simon took Jesus home after worship for lunch.

I am here because someone took someone home for lunch after worship. When my dad was going through training to be a radio operator at Shepherd Air Force Base in Wichita Falls he went to Eastside Presbyterian Church. My mom's family had a practice of taking servicemen home for lunch after worship. That's how they met.

When Simon took Jesus to his house across the street he was met by his wife at the door who told him that her mother was ill with a fever. I don't think she said that expecting that she could be healed. I think it was more like, don't go back there or you'll get it too. Or maybe she was saying, "I don't have mom to help and there's no way I can fix lunch for you and your friends. You'll have to go somewhere else."

Jesus public ministry was 1 hour old. His coming out party resulted in the congregation trying to throw him off a cliff. Instead, he walked away through the threatening mob and Simon took him to his house...

Just picture it in your mind. Simon brings this man called Jesus with him who has just called Simon to quit his fishing business--their only source of income for her and her mother. Now this is before Jesus has healed anyone. But when Jesus hears about Simon's mother-in-law he goes straight to her, prays for her and just like the unclean spirit left the man in the synagogue across the street, the fever leaves her. Immediately she gets up and starts fixing dinner for these unexpected guests.

Though there are later stories of rabbis taking the hand of another man and healing him, there are no such stories of rabbis doing so for a woman, and especially not for a woman who was not a member of the healer's family. In addition, there is the fact that Jesus performed this act on the Sabbath. Thus, while touching a non-related woman was in itself an offense, and touching one that was sick and therefore unclean was doubly so, performing this act on the Sabbath only compounds the social offense. But this is not all. The service of Peter's mother-in-law to Jesus and the others itself could have constituted work on the Sabbath, depending on what was done (e.g., preparing food). In any case, later Jewish traditions suggest that women should not serve meals to male strangers. The important point about Jesus, however, is that he does not see the touch of a woman, even a sick woman, as any more defiling than the touch of the man with the skin disease.¹

Jesus Cares. Jesus came, not only to bring healing to folks who had mental and spiritual illnesses like the man in the synagogue, but he also came to heal folks that had physical ailments like the fever that was holding down Simon's mother-in-law, even if he had to cross man made obstacles to do it.

After the news that Jesus had healed Simon's Mother-in-law spread, crowds began to gather at Simon's house. Maybe some of them were from the mob that tried to throw him off the cliff. Jesus spent the rest of the night healing people that came to him. He pulled an all-nighter. But after doing so, Jesus needed to get away. His healing hands were drained.

This morning I want us to look at this need between working and praying, between serving and resting, between recharging and charging forward.

Hard work is good for the soul. There is no feeling like having a goal, to applying yourself and accomplishing that goal. We all recognize that any goal in life worth achieving demands a great deal of our energy.

If you are a doctor you must spend vast hours alone and in residency studying the human body. The life of your patient demands it. If you are a teacher you must spend time researching and preparing for your lecture or developing your lesson plan. The minds of your students demand it. If you are a carpenter you must patiently measure the building before you drive the first nail. The integrity of the structure depends on it.

To be successful, to provide for our families and our needs, we need to work. We work at our jobs; we work at home; we do homework; we work on our relationships. And why do we do all this work? We work because life demands it.

Jesus had been working overtime. It's the very beginning of his ministry. Finally they get to the point where they can get some sleep. But instead of sleeping-in, Jesus gets up before dawn and leaves the house to find a quiet place to pray.

I don't know about you, but if Jesus needed to get away to pray, how much more do we? Keith Wagner writes, "We live in a hi-tech, fast pace, workaholic world where no one rests. We are constantly on the road, running errands, going places. We stuff ourselves with "fast food," overbook our lives with a myriad of things to do, and at the end of the day we are totally exhausted. We live (and die) by the clock. We are controlled by the need to produce. Time is money. Time is how we keep in control of our lives. We resist quiet time by keeping the radios, televisions and computers on. The very thought of being alone, praying, scares us to death. We want professionals to do that for us. We haven't learned that relaxation and mediation breaks ... will empower us to do even greater things. Thus, we continue to be busy. Consequently we are on a path to self-destruction, unable to help others, let alone help ourselves. (1)

I know that I need to build in personal prayer time, time to relax, time to "get away." This story has reminded me to make time for myself a priority. But, I have also learned something more important. The story tells us that Jesus took time away to pray and be refreshed. What we fail to see is that Jesus set aside this time to draw from the power of God. I believe we need to learn to draw from the power of God too. That means being free from all other distractions so that God can empower us and refresh us. Then and

only then can we help others as the power of God flows through us." (2)

When it comes to finding time to be alone to pray, Jesus' disciples were not much help. When they woke and saw that Jesus wasn't with them they sent out a search party looking for him. When they found him they said, "What are you doing, everyone is searching for you?" Basically they are saying, "Hey, it's time to get back to work."

Jesus could have said any number of things at this point, but what he says is surprising. Instead of trying to get across the obvious, that he is trying to have a moment alone, he says, "You're right, Simon." You're right; let's go to the next town so we get started there. Let us leave this solitude and get back to work... but do it ... somewhere else.

Somewhere else? Somewhere else? What about back in Capernaum? There are sick people lining up around the block.

Jesus did not feel that he had to respond to every need. Jesus could have gone back to Simon's house, hung up a shingle and started a healing ministry and spent the rest of the next 3 years healing the people that beat a path to his door. But he came to be more than a healer.

The healings were Jesus I.D. They were not his M.O. The healings were Jesus' identification as to who he was not his M.O., his modus operandi or his sole mode of operating. The healings were to identify who Jesus was, that he was the Son of God, that he was uniquely in touch with his Father in heaven, that he was who he said he was.

Jesus did heal everyone that came to Simon's house that first night in Capernaum. But the next day he went somewhere else to preach. During the three years of his public ministry Jesus didn't even meet the needs of one percent of the people in Palestine. Why? It wasn't his goal. His goal was to continue to preach the good news, and that called him to keep going somewhere else.

That's comforting for me. I will not be able to meet the needs of everyone I meet. I will not be able to pray for people and have 100% of them healed. I will not be able to be the vehicle through which every person I speak to will give their lives to follow Jesus. But I can plant seeds. I can water. Like we heard from Bob Patterson the "Yard Nerd" and owner of Southwest Fertilizer at our Men's Breakfast I can even spread fertilizer. ☺

How do you deal with it when everyone and everything is searching for you, wanting a piece of you, and demanding your time? When everyone is searching for us, we should remember not to let others define what we do and when and where we do it. How do we work hard and keep it from killing us? I think the obvious answer is to take some time off and some time away from the work.

I was blessed by my time away last weekend when I was able to participate in a memorial service for a friend and stay with another friend and be able to spend some

time in prayer with him. From what I have heard from some of you apparently Katherine Doerhering was a blessing to you when she preached for me last Sunday so that I could go ... somewhere else.

Jesus said, "The rain falls on the just and the unjust." Don't let the prosperity preachers sell you a bill of goods. Following Christ will not guarantee a perfect marriage, always healthy children or a fat bank account. But following Christ will guarantee that you will be in alignment with God's purpose for your life and will guarantee that neither life nor death, nor powers nor principalities can separate you from God's love.

Finally, when everyone is searching for you remember to pray. Our Lord needed to and so do we. There may not be a lot of time to get adequate prayers in when the crowds are descending upon the house and there are friends coming at you, and sick family members like Simon's mother-in-law, but find a moment, even if you have to hide. They'll find you eventually, you know they will, but by then you will have found some spiritual energy for the next leg of your journey.

If Jesus, needed to get away to pray, to reconnect, to plug in and recharge, what makes us think that we can get along without it? You and I have a source of power and energy just waiting to be tapped.

When it comes to iPads, backups happen when this iPad is connected to power, locked and on WiFi. When it comes to you and me the power for ministry happens when we are plugged in so that we will have the power to do the work that needs to be done, at our jobs, at our homes, in our relationships, in the church and maybe even ... somewhere else.

Let's pray. Thank you Lord that you have drawn us here. It is here that we can hear from you. It is here that we can join our prayers with others. It is here that we can be inspired and be enthused and be infused with the power to go somewhere else. Help us to see and seize the opportunities that you place before us, the people you put in our path, the people you bring to our minds, the tasks you assign us, the calling you extend. Help us to take up the challenge to work hard, to play hard and to pray even harder. Don't let us be so drained by our ministry that we can't find the time or the place to continue our seeking. Remind us that "everyone is still looking for you." And that we have been called to lift you up so that you can draw all kinds of people unto yourself.

O God of sympathy and tenderness, we give you thanks that you take pity upon us and nurse us to wholeness when we are distressed and forlorn. We give you thanks that even when despair so easily overtakes us, you send your Spirit to comfort our fears. Hear us as we pray for those confined by illness. In the midst of their infirmities, help them to sense your loving and healing presence.

Hear us as we pray for those who despair. When earthly hope seems to elude them, grant them a vision of your boundless mercy. Appear to them in the sadness of their

darkest moments, and make real for them the victory of Christ's resurrection. Help them Lord, to hear the good news that brings light out of darkness.

Hear us as we pray for those blessed with sound minds and well bodies. Help them to care for those temples of your Holy Spirit. Keep them from abusing what you so intricately created and give them the discipline to look after themselves. We give you thanks for the countless mercies we take for granted; for movement, for strength, for our minds and our senses. Help us O God to take heed of our health as a gift freely given, and never cease to praise You.

1 The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary, by Ben Witherington III

2. Keith Wagner, Help Me, I'm Falling!

DiAnne Wilson

From: Jim Gill
Sent: Monday, February 5, 2018 11:10 AM
To: DiAnne Wilson
Subject: prayers

Prayer Concerns

1. Martha Goolsby is having knee problems and may be having surgery. Her mother Anna has an upper respiratory infection. Her aunts Maria and Victoria are recovering from the flu. Their caretaker Adriana also has the flu as well as her sister Raquel. Martha asks that there be no visitors because they don't want additional germs to come. Keep them in your prayers.
2. Linda Pratt's uncle Jim Bunge, her mother's brother, passed away on Monday January 29th.
3. Sam Tune, Anne Gill's brother-in-law has now begun chemo therapy after his successful pancreatic cancer surgery
4. THE REST OF THOSE Listed in the bulletin.