SPEND TIME WITH JESUS AND UNDERSTAND...

1. His compassion for his followers
2. His love for all in need
3. His desire to be with his Father
4. His purpose is our salvation

They say you cannot really get to know a person unless you spend some time with them. So with the evangelist Mark as our guide, let's spend a little time with Jesus and understand: his compassion for his followers, his love for all in need, his desire to be with his Father, and his purpose is our salvation.

Our sermon text takes place on a Sabbath Day in Capernaum. Jesus already spent the morning preaching a powerful sermon in the synagogue - calling people to repentance and faith. While at the synagogue, he healed a man possessed by an evil spirit - to the amazement of the congregation.

And this is where our sermon text breaks in: As soon as they (that is, Jesus and a few of his disciples) left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. It seems as if Peter invited them over for a Sabbath dinner, but there was a problem: when they got there, they found out that Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. We do not know exactly how bad her fever was, although the evangelist Luke describes it as a high fever and it was bad enough to keep her in bed.

Peter and his household do the right thing: they told Jesus about her. And what did Jesus do? Did he say: I've had a long day preaching; don't bother me? No, in compassion: He went to her, took her hand and helped her up. the fever left her and she began to wait on them.

Consider for a moment what this little account means for us. There are times when we or a loved-one are sick. It could be a cold or a flu - you name it. Sadly, because this illness is not life-threatening, we may not pray for healing, or pray for others who need healing. Why not? Because it is not all that serious and we do not want to bother Jesus.

But that is too bad, because Jesus does not mind being bothered when we are sick - as this acct proves. Jesus is compassionate and willing to help. He loves it when we act like Peter and tell him our concerns for our family members or friends who are ill. He loves it when we bring their minor problems to his attention in prayer, and entrust their health into his hands.

The Lord is compassionate. He will grant healing - if it is his good and gracious will. No, not necessarily right away (although he can do that too, if he wants). Rather, Jesus will use the illness for his good purpose - whatever that purpose is - and grant healing in his good time. Only, let's not forget where the healing comes from - the Lord himself - and remember to thank him when he provides it.

Back to our text, after healing Peter’s mother-in-law, Jesus enjoyed the evening meal with Peter’s family and James and John. But that peaceful rest with his friends was to be short lived. We are told: That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. the whole town gathered at the door. What is going on? Didn't the people know that Sabbath evenings are sacred to preachers - that it is a time to unwind and relax with family and friends? And why wait until after sunset?

Well, they waited until sunset so as not to break the Sabbath law and do work. The
Jewish day is reckoned differently than our day. We go from midnight to midnight, or sometimes sunrise to sunrise, but the Jewish day is reckoned from sunset to sunset. The setting of the sun marked a new day and the end of the Sabbath.

So, out of concern for their loved ones, the people of Capernaum brought their sick and demon-possessed to be healed by Jesus. They trusted in his compassion and mercy. and sure enough, Jesus met them with compassion and mercy.

Jesus did not scold them for bothering him so late. He did not ask them to come back at a more convenient hour. No, he met them at the door - the whole town - and healed many (the great number of people, we could say) who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. Why not? Because he did not need the testimony of demons to confuse the people. His preaching and miracles along with Old Testament prophecy was enough to let the people to know who he was.

Let's apply this section to ourselves. First of all we never should feel like we are inconveniencing the Lord with our prayers - something we may be tempted to feel. If our Lord was willing to help a whole city that first came to him after sunset, after he had had a busy day of preaching and healing, we can be assured that he is willing to listen to us any time we come to him in prayer. He loves it when we trust his mercy enough to ask him for guidance and help. He loves being bothered by our prayers.

And then there is the question as to for whom we should pray: can we pray for people who are not members of the church? Yes, absolutely! Consider our text: the whole town, believers and unbelievers alike, were brought before Jesus and he had compassion on them all! Jesus’ loves it when we bring people before him - even people who do not believe in him. And how do we bring people to Jesus? By praying for them. St Paul wrote: I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

And who is included under everyone? Everyone - even our enemies - as Jesus once said: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Jesus wants us to take everyone to him in prayer and he promises to listen to us. He will grant healing to those who need it and send the Gospel to those who have not heard it. He hears our prayers and always answers them according to his good and gracious will, to the glory of his name. Not only that, but he may even use us to share his message of love to those we pray for. What a loving Savior we have!

Jesus’ busy night of healing did not translate into sleeping in the next day, even though he had every right to do so. No, we read: Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

My friends, look at Jesus and learn! Jesus is the sinless Son of God. If there was anyone who had reason to skip prayer or worship in order to sleep in, it is Jesus. But he did not. Why? Because he needed time to be with his heavenly Father in prayer.

What did Jesus pray about during those times when he went off alone? Based on what the Bible tells us we know that he prayed for strength and help as he faced the prospect of dying on the cross for the sins of the whole world. And we know that Jesus also spent a lot of time praying for others. He offered petitions that God not hold people responsible for their sins but save them, as is exemplified by his famous words from the cross: Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. He prayed for
the success of the Gospel, the protection of his disciples, the salvation of all, and the healing of the demon-possessed and sick. And as Jesus prayed and meditated on God’s Word, he found peace and refreshment to carry on his work.

My friends, if Jesus, the sinless Son of God, found refreshment in prayer and meditation, imagine how much refreshment we can find with God in prayer! What an opportunity we have every morning or evening, to carve out a little time to present all our problems and the problems of others before the Lord in prayer. And then, through mediation on his Word, receive peace, rest and strength to go on living to his glory. Think about these blessings and seek your heavenly Father in prayer, the way Jesus did, all the while holding on to Jesus’ promise: And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name (that is, in accordance with Jesus’ good and gracious will towards us), and I will do it.

Our text concludes: Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: Everyone is looking for you! Jesus replied, Let’s go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come. So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Unfortunately many people of Capernaum followed Jesus for the wrong reason. Overwhelmed by Jesus’ power to heal, they all but forgot his teachings. They saw Jesus as a person who could fulfill all their physical needs, but did not get the point that he really came to this earth to fulfill a far greater purpose: to call all people to repent of their sins and believe in him for forgiveness. He came to this earth to be our Savior, and everything he did was to serve that purpose.

My friends, why do we follow Jesus? Do we follow him merely for physical blessings? Do we follow him so that our life on this earth might be a little easier? Or do we follow him because We believe that he is the holy one of God, and know that he has the words of eternal life?

To be sure, our Lord is compassionate and he is concerned about our welfare in this life, but this isn’t his greatest concern. His greatest concern is our soul’s salvation: that we ever recognize our sins in repentance and look to him in faith - knowing that all our sins have been paid for by his perfect sacrifice on the cross. That we cling to him and him alone above all else – that is his greatest concern, and to this end he’s always working. Praise the Lord for this fact and may the Holy Spirit ever keep us focused on this as well.

What kind of person is Jesus? To whom does he listen? Whom does he help? What is his main purpose for us? My prayer is that you saw the answers to all these questions as you spent a little time with Jesus this morning. Amen.

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