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Mark 1: 29-39

Mark 1:35 says, "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."

Can any of you relate to this verse? Do you find yourself sneaking off to a solitary place in the wee hours of the morning? Well I have to be honest; I am not an early riser. It's not that I am cranky in the morning, in fact my kids used to say, "She starts off in such a good mood then it's all downhill from there!" My quiet time with God comes in a strange way about mid morning or mid afternoon. I will sit down to read some kind of commentary on scripture or something like that and before I know it a snorting noise has disturbed my "quiet time", oh that was me, nodding off.

Sometimes it seems that we busy people cannot sit for 5 minutes of quiet with God without nodding off. We try and we try but our busy lives have us so worn down that it is difficult to stay fully present even to God.

Jesus was having just such a time. The previous day had been filled with demands. People had recognised the authority with which Jesus taught and the healings that had taken place; his time was no longer his own. The demands on him were great. Capernaum was abuzz with the excitement and everyone wanting to be touched by him, healed of their every ailment. Think about how it must have been for Jesus. Help me Jesus, my back, my legs, my head, this cough. Over and over again requests were made. Now I'm thinking it probably saps a lot of energy out of Jesus to do all this healing.

But what did Jesus expect? Wasn't he here, after all, to heal the sick? Wasn't this his job, to meet the needs of humankind? But what about himself, his own self-care, his own health, his own human condition. Remember, Jesus was human from a physical standpoint. His body required food and water, rest and relaxation. Jesus' body needed these basic needs met just the same as anyone else. He would have had "down days" and "achy" muscles too. Where would he get the strength and the will to keep up with this continuous barrage of needy people?

Oh this is sounding all too familiar isn't it? And if Jesus needed help, what about you and me? Do you feel the demands that are placed upon your time, your energies, and your resources that are simply a part of living from day to day? Everyday there are needs to be met, decisions to be made, business to be attended to. Everyday there are people to relate to, conflicts to be resolved, actions that require more than we in our own strength alone can achieve.

If Jesus couldn't do it, how in the world are we expected to keep up? At least we don't have line ups of people outside our homes waiting their turn to dump all their problems on us. It may feel that way but it is highly unlikely. If we continue to follow the example

of Jesus through our scripture today we will soon see that Jesus gives it all over to God. He gets up while it is still dark and he finds a quiet space and he talks to God.

Let's be totally honest, shall we? Most of us do not have planned meeting times with God. Our prayers are occasional, spontaneous, spur of the moment prayers. If we meet with God, it's usually an emergency or a crisis, or in church on Sunday. We make an attempt before sleep at night but before we are done our list of thanks or needs we have drifted off into that wonderful sleep state. So it is when our backs are up against the wall, bills are due, a child is sick, it's the end of the semester and there are exams to take or mark, too many proposals to get in, we need help. I know what I'll do, we say, we'll call God. If the truth be told, we have tried everything else, now we will try God.

Jesus didn't leave his meeting with God to chance. It appears that Jesus' favorite time for his rendezvous with God was early morning. "Very early in the morning while it was still dark, while the dew was still on the ground, Jesus got up!" It takes discipline to get up in the morning for anything, and yet Jesus felt it was important enough. If Jesus felt it was important, we need to do more than seriously consider it. It takes discipline to set up a time with God and stick to it. A morning appointment with God gives us an opportunity to begin our day with the strength that God can give us to help us through that busy day. All we need to do is to ask God to get us through, to lift us up into the day ahead.

Remember at the beginning of this scripture? Jesus raised up Simons mother-in-law and she began to serve them. She was lifted up by God and given the strength and endurance to go about her day, to fulfill her role within her society and within her family to serve the guests. And by the way, this is an incredibly important moment in this scripture. At first read you might be angered at Jesus allowing this woman to return to work immediately after being healed. We think of someone recuperating from an illness, we don't expect them to jump right up and wait on us if they have just been ill. But this is a reminder that with God's help we can be lifted up and returned to our natural way of being, fulfilling the role we have in the world.

To get up in the morning to meet God is an expression of our sincere desire for God to be present with us throughout the day. It says to God that you are the most important thing in my life, and I need your help. Morning time is a wonderful time to meet God.

In the morning, a new day is ushered in, untouched. The nights' sleep separates us from the hassles and cares of the previous day. In the morning, our minds are clear. In the morning, we have an opportunity to start all over again and to allow God to set the tone for the day. Imagine meeting the source of joy and peace first thing in the morning! What choice then do we have but to experience God's joy all day long.

If God is not invited to be first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, God will be in last place by the end of the day.

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place when he prayed."

May you find your quiet place this week and know that God is lifting you up with the strength to face your day. Amen