



There's lots to do – Let's pray instead

Mark 1:21-39

Mark's Gospel, as was said last week has a pace which at times feels like Mark is rushing through the actions of Jesus, however a better way is to understand is that he is getting 'straight to the point'. There is nothing in this gospel which is written without it being intentionally there. Without having something important to tell us about the Trinitarian God and ourselves.

We read the first action of Jesus with excitement and awe of what he is doing amongst the people, we picture people being healed, being saved, lives being changed. We have WOW moments which make us feel so privileged to have these stories and the same spirit with us. Then we read that in the middle of the night Jesus gets up, finds a solitary place, and prays. I'm sure like me you have heard people say this is so that he can recharge his batteries, reconnect with God, can be reminded of His purpose. We as readers almost use this section as a place of recovery before Jesus heads off on another rollercoaster. In today's reading we dismiss Jesus praying almost like the disciples do when they find him. But I believe we are reading it wrong, and like the disciples did we need to find value and learning from this.

Mark and his writing which gets straight to the point, points us to Jesus praying in the wilderness. In fact, solitary place, and wilderness are the same word. That means in the first chapter we are told that Jesus goes to places of 'isolation' (NLT translation) to pray. Prayer is described by James Hamilton as a '*privilege*', Martin Luther King says, '*to be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing*'.¹ What if the

¹ Prayer, <<https://www.perlego.com/book/2695138/prayer-pdf>>

greatest miracle, the greatest adventure was prayer, that we did see it as breathing, how would that change our lives? Would we see prayer as burdensome? Would we discover more of Gods true love for us in it?

For discussion

1. What do people find to be the most challenging part of their prayer lives? What have others found useful?
2. Why do you think an isolated place is some important when Jesus prays, how could this be helpful to us?
3. One line of the new SBC vision says we want to be a contemplative church: committed to prayer over programmes, where rest and reflection are valued as much as busyness and activism. Where do you see this in our church now? Where could there be opportunities to develop this further?
4. **Pray**, as a group take a moment to sit and be with God and then pray for one another. Don't rush this.