

Jesus Prayed, Part II

Call to Worship: Psalm 121

1st Scripture: Luke 5:12-16

2nd Scripture: Mark 1:35-39

Hymn #488- *Lead On O King Eternal*

Hymn #286- *We Gather Together*

Hymn #533- *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

Introduction

Last time, we began our short series on the prayer life of Christ, by examining and considering one of the texts found in Mark's gospel, which unveiled for us, a specific instance where we were told that Jesus had retreated to a private place to pray. And within that context, we were able to make some critical observations, which helped us understand the motivation that drove our Lord to pray, ultimately leading us to draw out relevant applications from it.

This morning then, we will move on to another text found in Mark's Gospel, using the same observational format that we used last time, when examining our first text.

- 1) We will try to get a grasp of the general context, within which our Lord prays.
- 2) We will seek to closely consider any key observations that can be made, which would help us understand the compelling motivation/s for His praying, within each particular context.
- 3) We will consider any possible resultant consequences of our Lord's prayers.
- 4) We will attempt to draw out relevant applications for us, in light of the first three points.

I. The General Context Within Which Our Lord Prays

Especially, following the imprisonment of John the Baptist, the Lord spent a great portion of His ministry, preaching throughout the cities of Galilee (read 1:14-15). In fact, several of His disciples came from these regions, four of whom, were fishermen, who fished out of the Sea of Galilee. And, as was customary for our Lord, He often followed up His teaching with signs and wonders (healing miracles, casting out demons...etc), which served to authenticate and affirm all that He taught. [Note: The great woes that were later pronounced by our Lord against Chorazin, Bethsaida & Capernaum, were particularly warranted, because He did many signs & wonders in these territories, which were very near and in Galilee, and yet, they did not believe; Matt. 11:21]

Our main text then, takes us to one of the northern cities of Galilee, called Capernaum, which was right near the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee. There was a synagogue there, where Jesus had just taught, and then He amazed His audience by casting an unclean spirit out of a man. And because of this, we are told that His fame immediately spread throughout all the region of Galilee (Read verse 27-28). Following this, many who were sick and demon-possessed were brought to Him, and a very large multitude of people began to follow Him (Read verses 32-34; the *whole* city was gathered together at the door!).

And so, it is within this context that we come to verses 35-39, which contain our main text, where we are told that our Lord goes out to pray.

II. The Compelling Motivation for Our Lord Praying Here

Having a general understanding of the context in view, let's just read through verses 35-39 again, before seeking to bring out any helpful observations that might enable us to cue in on our Lord's motivation for praying here:

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons” (vs. 35-39).

Now, consider the following observations that can help us lay hold of our Lord's motivation for praying here:

1) We note that our Lord rose “a long while before daylight,” so that He could depart to a solitary place (a place where He could be alone), so that He could pray. Now, considering the overwhelmingly busy activity that He had been involved in, the day and evening before (vs. 32), it would be an under-assumption to assume that our Lord did not get much sleep; and that, intentionally. In other words, He so valued this time alone with the Father, that it compelled Him to sacrifice much sleep, so that He could obtain it, and that, on His necessary and ideal terms. He wanted to be certain that (a) He had significant time with His Father, and that (b) He had

significant time *alone* with the Father, without the interruption of the multitudes. Losing sleep unto obtaining these ends was not simply a preference for the Lord; it was a necessity. He could not possibly engage the Father, in any meaningful or fervent way, with the distractions and interruptions that would inevitably come from the presence of others. Such was the important nature of His business with the Father, and such, was the only means of providing a gateway, where He could actually pour out His heart before the Father, before continuing on with His ministry.

2) At some point, Simon Peter and some of the other disciples, having awakened themselves, realize that He is gone. And all the more affirming our Lord's necessary design to get away to pray alone, the multitudes were already searching for Him (and remember, the whole city of Capernaum stood at the door, the day before, as sick and demon possessed people were brought to Him to be healed — if *whole* is not literal here, it certainly doesn't mean a few!). We know that they were already searching for Him, because when Peter and the others find the Lord, they say, "Everyone is looking for You."

3) The Lord's response to His disciples, when they inform Him that everyone is looking for Him, is most informative, in giving us insight into what probably compelled Him to pray on that early morning. [Now, obviously, it was our Lord's regular practice to pray, fervently and often. And so, I don't mean to say that He was only driven to pray (on any given occasion) by some timely, relevant concern. But, I also believe that the writers of Scripture highlight certain occasions, where particular events definitely helped direct the focus of our Lord's prayers, which is why we are told about these occasions of prayer, for our own edification. And so, how then does our Lord respond to His disciples, when they tell Him that everyone is looking for Him?

We are told, "*But*" ("But," as, in contrast to how they would have expected Him to respond, thinking that He would be diligent to return to the multitude which was looking for Him), He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." You see, our Lord very well could have allowed His ministry to be dictated by the desires of the multitudes, but He didn't. This probably shocked His disciples, to some extent. "Lord, everyone is looking for you. Come on. Let's go back and minister to this great following of yours. Surely, there are more opportunities for healings, where you can show

your power.” “Well, no. We will be going into other towns throughout Galilee now. My primary purpose for coming is not to heal and to show signs and wonders. They are secondary purposes that are meant to authenticate and serve a greater purpose, namely, the preaching of the Gospel.” “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, *because for this purpose I have come forth.*” “I did not come to satisfy the curiosities and whims of the crowds. I came to preach! I came to proclaim the truth of God to a spiritually dead world.” [Note: Remember, Capernaum was one of the three cities, upon which, our Lord later pronounced woes, because in spite of the abundance of signs and wonders they had witnessed, they didn’t believe. Their judgment would be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah for this, because Sodom and Gomorrah were not given such light.]

And so, no doubt, in the face of another large, growing following, the reality and direction of our Lord’s ministry going forward, is what drove Him to pray that early morning, hours before the sun even came up. And having communed with His Father, without the compelling urges and desires of the multitudes pressing upon Him, He was able to discern the will of the Father, which was to move on into other towns, where He could continue to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God, which was at hand (read verses 14-15).

III. The Resultant Consequences of Our Lord’s Prayer

Are there then any revealed, resultant consequences which follow our Lord’s prayer here? Yes. The simple and obvious consequence is found in verse 39. We are told, “And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” And so, simply put, our Lord moved on from Capernaum, continuing to preach and cast out demons in all of the synagogues, dispersed throughout Galilee. In keeping with the Father’s direction, rather than getting hung up by the multitude at Capernaum, He continued onward, doing what He was called to do, preaching the gospel, calling people to repentance and faith in Him. And His gospel message continued to be authenticated, as He exercised power over demons, casting them out of those who were possessed, wherever He went. [Satan’s kingdom was being overthrown!]

IV. Relevant Applications for Us

1) Let us not miss the fact, brethren, that Jesus often prayed alone in a solitary place. We have seen this already, and we will see it again, but I thought it best to take note of it now. Now granted, we probably don't have large multitudes of people constantly seeking us out. But, I firmly believe that the quality of our prayer time, will also be determined by our ability to retreat to a place without any distractions. This could be very difficult for a person such as myself, but I see the necessity of this more and more.

And while we don't have multitudes of people flocking around us, how often is there a TV set, a radio or some form of media playing in the background? How often are we surrounded by noise of all different kinds, which would distract us from engaging our Heavenly Father. Jesus went great distances at times, into the mountains and such, to ensure that He could pour out His heart before the Father, without the concern of any distractions. Let me suggest that we find such a place in our lives, be it a "prayer closet," a vacant basement or room...etc, where we can do fervent business with God, with minimal noise and distraction. [*The church sanctuary]

And I think, brethren, that while praying during driving or riding on the train, or in other settings, where some level of focus (outside of your prayer) is necessary, is not wrong, that we ought not to allow such habits to keep us from finding that time where we can give ourselves entirely and uninterruptedly to prayer. Praying while doing chores and during other events is not wrong (praying anytime can be very good and ought to be encouraged), but also search out time to seek out a place where you can give yourself over to a fervent, qualitative seeking of your God in prayer. This was a regular habit of our Lord's. And if He needed that; if He has set forth such an example for us (and often), as that type of prayer that could enable Him to engage His Father without any hindrance or interruption, certainly we ought to recognize the value in borrowing that pattern for ourselves. Generally, the prayer of faith, will find its life in such a setting as this. [And furthermore, if possible, get up early to pray, before your day begins, indeed, as a means of also preparing for the day, so that you will be ready to face whatever each day brings, without losing sight of your God, and His calling upon you, for that day]

2) Our Lord was about that most important business of preaching the gospel and authenticating His message through signs and wonders, and yet, as busy as this ministry was, He

always made time to walk away from it, to engage His Heavenly Father in prayer. And brethren, if such was the case with our Lord, even with the constant burden of such a great work, all the more, let us ensure that we are never too busy (even with good things) to take time out to pray. Jesus cut through swarming crowds of needy multitudes to make time for the Father. He got up extra, extra early, following a day of great labor, to ensure that He could have that time with the Father alone. Let us, therefore, not allow our jobs, our necessary responsibilities at home, our ministry in the church, evangelistic activities, or anything else, to keep us from setting apart such time for prayer, at least, every day. We must make that time to pray, brethren. For, it will not make itself for us. It takes focused, conscious discipline. It takes making it an uncompromising necessity. It takes unflinching conviction, even as it did for our Lord, to ensure, that we set apart such time with the Lord each day. And the enemy will do all that He can, to let you find comfort and excuse in every busy (even non-sinful) activity imaginable, to keep you from praying. He knows the necessity of prayer all too well, and He knows that it doesn't take much for us to breeze right past any self-disciplined determination to set apart time, each day, to pray.

3) Let us ensure that as we seek to fulfill God's ministerial calling upon us, in whatever way/s we are called to serve in the church, and in Evangelism as an arm of the church and the Great Commission, that we constantly bathe that ministry in prayer. It is so, so easy to just jump into ministry; to jump into "doing," without first "being still" before the throne of God, seeking His blessing and guidance for ministry. It would be far too easy for me to just stay at Capernaum, where I am liked and wanted, than it would be, to continue on to other areas of Galilee. I need wisdom. I need direction. I need guidance. I need power, strength, boldness, and every resource necessary to find any measure of success in my calling (success as defined on God's terms). And all of these needs indicate, that I need time alone with my God and Father, a quality and quantity of time that I am still dissatisfied with, and which needs ongoing work. Our Lord sought His Father for such direction, guidance, strength, power and boldness, all the time, driving Him of course, to fulfill the perfect ministry. Now granted, God gives us grace (oh what large vats of grace, He pours out upon our imperfections!), but let us not take such grace for granted. Let us not grow presumptuous toward His grace, and let us rather make every

improvement in obedience, seeking to increase our faith, by doing all that He expects of us, beginning with constant, ongoing, committed prayer.

All in all, brethren, what does your prayer life look like? Can it be improved? Is it hardly breathing, at all? Don't slump down in regret. Rather, begin with prayer, praying about your prayer life, and by the grace of God (the immeasurable fountain of God's grace to you, in Christ, His once crucified, but now risen and ascended Son, who continually intercedes for you at the right hand of the Father), make determined changes today! God can and will restore you!

4) Finally brethren, note that the primary emphasis of our Lord's ministry was not doing miracles (oh, He lovingly and compassionately did them, especially authenticating His message and His Messianic office), but His primary calling was to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, calling people to repentance and faith. So many people today are emphasizing all kinds of other things in ministry; Jesus can heal you, Jesus can restore your marriage, Jesus can remove your debt and give you riches, Jesus can provide social justice and a better way of life, Jesus can get you that job or that Home or that great bill of health...all kinds of things that Jesus can do for us, and yet, what is lost in all of this, is the very purpose for which Jesus came...to save sinners! People need Jesus to save them from their sins, to grant them repentance and reconciliation with God. Let that be the Chief Cornerstone of our lives and message! "Mankind has a dreadful problem of being alienated from His God, because of his sin. Jesus, God the Son, came to rectify that problem, by His own death and resurrection! Come, call upon Him! Repent and believe!"

If you are unsaved here, this morning, that is God's primary calling to you!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25