

Mark 1:29-39^{v vi}

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

^v About the Gospel: Mark 1:29-39

Today's reading continues the account of a day in Jesus' ministry. The healing of Peter's mother-in-law is presented without direct interpretation or theological comment.

Then at sundown, when the sabbath was over, people are brought to Jesus for healing and the casting out of spirits. Silencing the spirits (v. 34) was apparently part of the common technique of exorcism. But Mark implies that Jesus does not wish his identity made known by evil spirits who have no credibility as witnesses.

The following morning Jesus withdraws from Capernaum and from his disciples. He seeks communion with God and perhaps also wishes to avoid the superficial popularity indicated by the report that "everyone is searching for you" (v. 37). Jesus responds by going to the next towns, for that is why he came from Capernaum. Jesus acts as the envoy of God. His mission of "preaching" includes the whole of his ministry: teaching, healing, casting out spirits and finally his death and resurrection.

^{vi} Reflection and Response

We rush through our days, stressed and exhausted. The almost universal experience of people seems to be overwork, underpay, fast pace and stress.

When we turn to the gospel for some explanation of this state of affairs, we find Jesus caught up in a similar routine. He meets his friends; he confronts one demon after another; he cures many; he is deluged with requests: "Everybody is searching for you!" (Mark 1:37).

In a sense, it is encouraging to note how much Jesus' day resembled one of our busiest. He was certainly not removed from the hurly burly of messy human life. If anything, even more people searched him out.

But if we look again at Mark's account, we discover Jesus' secret. How did he manage it all? One sentence is the key: "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35).

Here is a model for us. Do we create a special time each day for meditation so that we know what we're about? Do we turn to God, as well as to our communities of sustenance and hope? If so, the pressing schedule can become sanctified; the busy day becomes holy ground; the problems become challenges and the successes, gifts of a caring Lord.