

Lenten Devotional February 21, 2024

Scripture

Mark 1:29-45

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 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.

35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38 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." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

40 A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Devotion

The Rev. Emily I. Miller '07

Lent is a time when we all give extra thought to our prayer life. Maybe we even spend a little more time than usual speaking to God. But what about the rest of the year? Do we have quiet time with God on a regular basis? Jesus shows us in Mark 1:29-39 that we should.

When reading this passage, I think back to the Xfinity commercial from early 2021 with Amy Poehler hiding in her bathtub as she tries to get a little "me" time. Using her tablet to binge her favorite show, she tells her family to leave her alone so she can de-stress. And because she is Amy Poehler, she makes it funny. But even now, the stresses of life continue to make us all a little nuts. Such is life in the 21st century.

Being under stress isn't new. It may surprise some readers to know that even Jesus felt the crush of demands on his time and had to get away from things for quiet time with God. In this passage, Jesus is in the throes of ministry. He just healed Peter's mother-in-law, and that evening, "[T]hey brought to him *all* who were sick or possessed with demons. And the *whole city* was gathered around the door" (1:32, emphasis added). Wow. It sounds like a first century emergency room, and Jesus is the only physician.

What does he do after dealing with these hurting people? Mark says, "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he went out to a deserted place and he prayed" (1:35). Jesus shows us that to live a balanced life, we need to balance our ministry with quiet time in prayer. When we feel like things are getting to be too much, we need to take the advice of mental health experts and of Jesus, and center ourselves with

God. Then, God's Holy Spirit can rejuvenate us and send us back into ministry better equipped to love God and our neighbors.

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the busyness of our lives as we seek to serve you. Help us to balance our busyness with quiet time with you, so that we remain grounded in the One who created us, who loves us, and who gives us strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.