

The Prayer Life of Jesus Christ:

Early Morning Prayer as a Regular Christian Discipline

Scripture: *Mark 1:29-39.*

Exegetical Big Idea: The prayer life of Jesus Christ reveals to us the *priority, place,* and the *purpose* of early Morning Prayer.

Introduction

Our passage of reflection this morning is **Mark 1:29-39**. From this passage we are going to look at a very specific aspect of the prayer life of Jesus Christ because it gives us three insights into early Morning Prayer as a regular discipline of the Christian life. First, this passage gives us an insight into the *priority* of early Morning Prayer. Second, the passage gives us an insight into the *place* for early Morning Prayer. Third, it gives us an insight into the *purpose* of early Morning Prayer.

Read **Mark 1:29-39**.

I. The Priority of Early Morning of Prayer (Verse 35)

- 1) **Verse 35 (NIV):** *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. (KJV):* *A great while before daybreak. (GNB):* *Long before daylight.* What time would you say that was? Pre-dawn hours, no doubt; 4 a.m., 5 a.m.
- 2) **Isaiah 50:4-6** helps us to understand why Jesus made it such a priority to wake up so early in the morning to go off to pray. The Book of Isaiah, by the way, has been called the *fifth Gospel* by Bible scholars because it contains more prophecy about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ than any other OT book. **Isaiah 50** is one of these Messianic chapters in the book of Isaiah and **Is. 50:4-6** is clearly a passage foretelling Jesus Christ's discipline of waking up early in the morning to pray. In the **TLB** part of **verse 4** says: *Morning by morning He wakes me up and opens my understanding to His will. MSG: He wakes me up in the morning. He wakes me up, opens my ears and I didn't go back to sleep. I didn't pull the covers back over my head.*
- 3) This prophetic Isaiah passage reveals to us that Jesus made it a priority to wake up very early in the morning to pray in this passage because He recognized that it was the Father waking Him up and He obeyed, in keeping with His complete obedience to the Father. He made no excuses about what a tiring day He had had the day before.
- 4) Let me share with you my own experience of waking up early in the morning to pray. Give history (*note sweetness of sleep at that time, with rain, etc*). The Lord going to such lengths to wake me up to pray made me realize that He was serious about having me wake up to pray.

- 5) So, I realized that my response to the Lord waking me up so early to pray was an obedience issue. This has me to make waking up early in the morning to pray a personal discipline that I have practiced for more than twenty years now.
- 6) Over the years I have realized that the early morning is the best time to meet with the Lord in prayer because it is when all is quiet and I am well-rested and alert from a good night's sleep, before the busy hustle and bustle of the day begins, that I can interact unhindered with the Lord and more easily hear Him speak to me. The length of the time I spend in early morning prayer differs from time to time, but it is almost always a very fulfilling time.
- 7) Choosing to obey the Lord when He comes to wake us up to pray early in the morning will enable us, like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to *prioritize* the early morning prayer and to make it a regular discipline of our Christian lives.

II. The Place of Early Morning Prayer (Verse 35)

- 1) **Verse 35** tells us that Jesus left the house and went off to a *solitary place* to pray. **Luke 5:16** confirms that Jesus often withdrew to quiet places to pray.
- 2) This is a pattern we see in the lives of God's people throughout the Bible. For example, in **Exodus 33:7-11** we read that Moses used to pitch a tent outside the camp some distance away, calling it *the tent of meeting* and that here in this tent the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. Throughout the Bible we see that whenever a man or woman of God pitches a tent, that is, establishes a quiet and solitary time and place outside their daily busy schedules where and when they go to meet with God, the Lord indeed comes to meet with them and to speak to them face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.
- 3) Let me share another personal testimony of this with you. *Story of Yaa baby incident*. God could have made me aware of this at any other time but the fact is that He chose to come to me during that early morning time of prayer. I still shudder to think of what could have happened if I had gone back to sleep and not woken up to pray that morning when the Lord came to wake me up! *Talk about a wake up call!*
- 4) I can give many more examples of God speaking to me face to face as a man speaks to his friend during my early morning time of prayer but we just don't have the time for this this morning.
- 5) The fact is that as Christians we have the privilege of praying anywhere at any time knowing that the Lord will hear us and answer us so I'm not saying here this morning that God will not answer our prayers if we do not wake up early in the morning to pray. That would be very legalistic and very untrue. I'm definitely not saying that.

- 6) What I am saying is that from our passage of reflection this morning and from many other places in Scripture we discover that if we are serious about spending quality time with the Lord on a daily and consistent basis then our preferred *place* of prayer should be a secluded place of quietness and solitude where we will not be disturbed, with our mobile phones turned off, and our hearts and minds tuned to hear the Lord speak to us.
- 7) This is best done early in the morning. This is precisely what we see the Lord doing in this **Mark 1** passage.

III. The Purpose of Early Morning Prayer (Verse 38)

- 1) Have you ever asked yourself why Jesus prayed at all? He is God the Son. He is, as the Nicene Creed declares, *true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father*. So why did He need to pray at all?
- 2) **Phil. 2:6-7** gives us an answer to this question when it tells us that although Christ was in His very nature God, He chose to make Himself nothing by being made in human likeness. He was truly God and truly man – this is the mystery of the incarnation. As a very real human being, therefore, **verse 38** of our passage helps us to see that the primary purpose that was accomplished by Jesus' discipline of waking up early in the morning to pray was to cultivate intimacy with the Father. This is because in **verse 38** when Jesus said to Peter and his companions: *Let us go to the nearby villages so I can preach there also* He was revealing that in that place of prayer that morning, He knew what the Father expected of Him that day.
- 3) This takes us back to the prophetic passage of **Is. 50:4-6**. That I earlier referred to. This is how the **MSG** Bible translates these verses: *GOD has given me a well-taught tongue so I know how to encourage tired people. He wakes me up in the morning, opens my ears to listen as one ready to take orders. He opened my ears, and I didn't go back to sleep, didn't pull the covers back over my head*. This shows us that as a very real human being, Jesus obviously did not have a divinely drawn blueprint for every detail of His earthly ministry; instead, He discerned the Father's will in those quiet early morning places of prayer.
- 4) You see, to get to *know* anyone intimately requires spending time talking and listening to them. This is equally true of our relationship with God our heavenly Father. In the OT the Hebrew word for *know* is *Yada*. This refers to experiential knowing, rather than mere intellectual knowing about. Eg: **Gen. 4:1 (KJV)**. **Jer. 9:24**: *Let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me*. NT: **Ginosko**. **John 17:3**: *This is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*. **Matt. 7:23** - *Away from me, you evildoers! I never knew you*. These texts indicate that knowing God, biblically speaking, refers to coming into a personal spiritual relationship with Him through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Committing ourselves to spend quality time with God, talking and listening to Him on a regular basis, ideally in the early morning hours, then nurtures that relationship of experiential knowing.

- 5) As I explained earlier my experience of the Lord waking me up so dramatically to initiate my discipline of early morning prayer did not continue for very long but it left me with an enduring fascination about the fact that the Lord actually wanted me to wake up and pray, He wanted me to spend time with Him! It reminds me of the words in **Song of Solomon 2:10** that say: *Wake up, my love, and come away with me* and it made very real to me the biblical truth about the church being the bride of Christ.
- 6) Evidently the Lord does want us to develop intimacy with Him and to thereby become more aware of His divine love and presence daily demonstrated in our lives by His provision, and His protection.
- 7) The discipline of early Morning Prayer in our Christian lives accomplishes this *purpose* of developing intimacy with the Father so that we come to truly know Him. This is obviously what we see the Lord Jesus Christ Himself doing in this morning's passage of reflection.

Conclusion

So, this is how this passage helps us to see first, the *priority* of early morning prayer, second, the *place* for early morning prayer, and third the *purpose* of early morning prayer.

In the Heights illustration. May this aspect of Jesus' prayer life that we have looked at this morning inspire you to ask the Lord to help you to make the early morning prayer a regular discipline of your Christian life. And if you start and backslide, in a spirit of repentance, just pick it up again, and continue!

Let us pray!

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