

Sunday 7th April 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

In this Sunday's reading, Mark 1: 29-39 - Jesus shows us his priorities – he knows what he must do and demonstrates this by healing and proclaiming the good news. However, Jesus also takes time out to get away from the crowds and be alone in prayer – he knows what he must do to care for himself and stay true to his mission. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

Call to worship

Lift your eyes to gaze on God.
Hear God's Word and receive God's peace.
With all that you have been, all that you are,
and all that you hope to be,
offer yourself now to God in worship and praise.

A prayer of confession

People. People. Everywhere! Day in. Day out.
Seeking you, Lord. Hunting you. Following you.
Hungry for your presence. Wanting your attention.
Yet not once did you complain.

We're sorry, Lord, that the weight of life's demands causes us to stumble,
to lose our temper and at times to buckle under the pressure.
Help us to be more like you, Lord.

We're sorry for not getting our priorities right.
Help us to know, as you did,
the importance of spending time with and drawing refreshment from the Father.
We're sorry for allowing other people and things to take over and squeeze out our time with you.
Help us to draw daily on your refreshing strength in order to cope with whatever our day holds.
Lord, hear our prayer.
Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven...

Song Everlasting God – Brenton Brown

[\(354\) Brenton Brown - Everlasting God \[with lyrics\] - YouTube](#)

Mark 1:29-39 - Jesus heals many

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.



³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Jesus prays in a solitary place

³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'

³⁸ Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' ³⁹ So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. (NIVUK)

Jesus begins his mission – Making an impression (Mark 1: 29-39)

We move on from last week's account of the first day of Jesus' public ministry describing his authoritative teaching and dealing with evil spirits, to a family scene.

Simon and Andrew had 'left their nets' and James and John 'left their father in the boat' and all four followed Jesus (verses 16-20). We hear now that the brothers Simon and Andrew are still living in the home they shared with their families in Capernaum, and that Jesus and all four disciples went there after the service to see Simon's mother-in-law, who was ill in bed. Simon will be renamed Peter (the Rock) but we are not told his wife's name, although it was known that she became 'a believing wife' who accompanied him in his ministry (1 Corinthians 9:5).

In his ministry Jesus moves between public spaces and private ones, and we learn in this passage how he uses each to sustain himself and others. He comes to the house of his first disciples, perhaps seeking to retreat from the crowds - a house is often a safe space for Jesus. However, even in a private home, Jesus' healing power is still needed. Peter's mother-in-law's healing makes it possible to re-establish the order of the whole household – the story is a small-scale reflection of Jesus' impact on society at large.

After dark, when the sabbath is over, people are able to travel and carry their sick to see Jesus. The door of the house becomes a meeting-place and Mark vividly suggests the chaos of a desperate crowd. People needed healing – alongside the pain and trauma of illness, it created economic problems where workers were unable to earn their living. Jesus wields complete authority over a range of illnesses and, as in the synagogue, shows his power over evil spirits by forbidding them to speak. This is exciting - for the first time, Mark shows us the extent of Jesus' power, verifying the big claims that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus actions match his words and healing, caring, serving, and bringing wholeness and salvation are the key responses for ourselves as followers of Jesus today. Looking at the last part of this passage it is clear that we need spiritual sustenance and a clear vision for where God is leading us.

In the stillness before dawn, Jesus retreats to a deserted place. For the Israelites, the desert was the place to meet God, and Jesus too uses this safe space to pray. He knows that he needs to look to God for the Spirit in his life, if the work is to continue. When the disciples find him, and tell him of the clamour for him, 'Everyone is searching for you' (verse 37), he sets out for the neighbouring town. After his time of prayer, Jesus has other ideas. He is purpose driven - he knows enough has been done to challenge those in Capernaum to recognise the moment: enough to make the people think about the love of God and their way of life. Jesus has heard God and has now got his priorities right. The message must move on and the kingdom proclaimed in a new place.

When politicians or chief executives begin a new role or time in office – including in very recent time the President of the USA, Joe Biden – they often set out a list of priorities for their first 100 days, giving a sense of the direction of their thinking. Then, we critically evaluate their achievements against their stated hopes and goals. Here, Jesus is establishing his priorities for his mission. He preaches and heals, he resources his disciples, and he underpins all this with a life of prayer. There is no stated list of aims and objectives. Far more powerfully, people can see from his actions what he wants to achieve.

Our vision is “In the name of Jesus Christ we work and pray to help people in our community to develop their relationship with God and each other.” As we move through these COVID times we must do as Jesus did in this passage – support each other in our homes & families and by prayer seek out the next steps for us as individuals & as a faith community and let our actions make the vision a reality within the communities in which we live and serve.

Intercessory prayer

Lord of love,
we lift up the world in our prayers
and ask your blessing on all who are suffering today.
Lift up those who are bowed down by debt and poverty;
lift up those struggling under the weight
of broken relationships.
Lift up those bearing the burden of pain and illness...
Lift up those whose hearts are heavy with grief...
Lift us up, Lord, and use us in your service,
today and every day.
We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

Please add your prayers for others you wish to pray for today . . .

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer, Amen.

Song Here is love vast as the oceans – Robin Mark

[\(354\) Here is love, vast as the ocean - Robin Mark - YouTube](#)



HOLY COMMUNION Thanksgiving Prayer Mark 1: 29-39

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,
for you strengthen the powerless
and renew those who wait for you in trust.

You came among us, as one of us,
in your child Jesus the Christ,
sharing our weakness in order to save us.
Healing the sick and casting out demonic powers,
he proclaimed your mercy and peace.
Turning his back on the acclaim of the crowds,
he faithfully followed your call
all the way to death on a cross.
You raised him up
and promised that all who trust in him
will rise up with wings like eagles
and run the race without ever growing weary.



The Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.
I Corinthians 5:7

The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Alleluia.*

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

Prayer after Communion

God of a love stronger than death, you have given us new birth into a living hope through the gift of your Son.

God with us, you have fed us with yourself and strengthened us for journeying ahead.

God of truth and power, you take our weakness and our sin and refashion us by grace.

A sending out prayer

Lord Jesus,
go with us into the world this week.
Help us to remain focused upon you
and to make your priorities our priorities in
all the places you are sending us.

Amen.



