

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – February 8, 2015
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Mark 1:29-39 (NIV)

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 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 the sick 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.** 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 I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39) So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Brothers & Sisters in Christ;

We are a people and a society in which being busy makes us feel like we are worthwhile. If we are not doing something, there is something within us that makes us feel like we are lazy, or that we are wasting our time. Most of us are simply too busy to stop and do nothing for even a few moments each week. Most of us feel like we need to be active every minute of the day. We confuse busyness with being productive, successful, efficient, effective, and meaningful.

A couple of generations ago, the life of the family was going to be revolutionized by the automatic washing machine. I remember that my Grandmother would spend an entire day doing the laundry. Then technology came up with the automatic washing machine, and you could throw the clothing into a machine, and then leave it and go do something else. What a time saver! So what happened? Did we get more time to relax? No, we filled our time with other duties. The computer was the same way. It enables us to do more work in a lot less time. But do we get off work early? No. We simply do more work. There is something within us that compels us to fill up every moment of our time.

Even if we are not talking about work, our families are stretched to the limit with activities as we go from dance classes to music lessons, to basketball games; from school to work and then to this activity and that. Or try on this scenario: the kids have finally left the house -- just in time for us to take a more active role in assisting our aging parents. And doesn't it just seem like at times our lives are just an on-going trip from one appointment to the next – the doctor, the chiropractor, the dentist, the hair dresser etc.

Sometimes it seems as if the busyness seeks us out when one unexpected obligation after another seems to crop up out of nowhere. However, at other times we are the ones who are seeking out those things that keep our planners filled and sometimes even double booked. It is as if we are afraid of what might happen if we would just be still for a moment. Now of course we realize that nothing bad will happen if we don't just do something and if we just sit there – but what we may not always remember is that something good can happen if we sit and observe Jesus.

Theme: Don't Just Do Something, Sit There

1. Observe Jesus in Action 2. Observe Jesus in Prayer

Jesus and his disciples had been worshipping at the synagogue. While they were there, Jesus had shown his divine authority by driving a demon from a man who was possessed. **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 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 the sick 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.

Talk about being busy! Jesus certainly was busy, wasn't he. He was busy doing his Father's will and giving glory to him with his actions. He was busy helping those in need. He was busy demonstrating that he was not only the Son of man but the Son of God.

It's good for us to sit and observe Jesus in action. In fact one could say that observing Jesus' is the one thing which we need. You and I and our generation are not the first people to be so busy that we don't have time to sit.

Sit a bit longer and observe Jesus in action in another section of Scripture. This time Jesus had been busy preaching and teaching. He had been helping people see their need for a Savior when **he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39) She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40) But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41) "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42) but few things are needed--or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."** (Luke 10:38-42 NIV)

What do we see here when we observe Jesus? We see Jesus taking time to deal with individuals. We see him putting his focus on things that are eternal. It's not that Jesus was ungrateful for Martha's busyness. It's not that it's wrong to be busy. The point is that sometimes it's good to sit at Jesus feet for a devotion break – to listen to Jesus as he speaks to us. It's good for us to take a break from our action to observe Jesus in action as we focus our attention on his revealed word.

It's in the Word that we see Jesus as our Savior – the one who defeated Satan for us, the one who proclaimed the truth of God for us and to us, the one who conquered sin for us with his perfect life, the one who took away our sins by taking them with him to the cross, the one who defeated death for us by rising from the dead, the one who assures us that whenever we gather together in his name he is with us, the one who promises us that there is a place waiting for us in heaven and that he will return to take us to be with him forever. It's in the word that we see just how much Jesus loves us and cares for us. It is through this word that we are called to faith and that our faith is strengthened as the Apostle Paul reminds us: (Romans 10:17) **Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us: **There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.** And that would include a time for being busy and a time for sitting still. When we sit and observe Jesus in action for us we will learn that it is his work for us that brings salvation to us. And we'll be motivated to be busy with those things which are pleasing to him – including listening to his word.

Now if you'll sit with me a bit longer you will also have the chance to observe Jesus in prayer. **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.** Now it's not that there wasn't anything else for Jesus to do. In fact, our text tells us everyone was looking for Jesus. Non-the-less Jesus took time to find a quiet place where he would be able to communicate with his heavenly Father in prayer. He did this often to recharge his spiritual and emotional

batteries – to share his needs with his heavenly Father, to seek his help to do his will, to seek his encouragement; strength and assistance and to give him praise. We can learn an important lesson for our lives as we observe Jesus in prayer. Jesus often found a quiet place and a quiet time for prayer. It is important for us to do the same.

Several years ago, newspapers told how a new Navy jet fighter shot itself down. Flying at supersonic speed, it ran into cannon shells it had fired only a few seconds before. The jet was traveling too fast! Some of us are traveling through our lives too fast. We're going to find ourselves in a mode of self destruction.

As God's own children we are in a unique and very special position. We have the privilege of knowing that God is ready to take care of us. He's there when we need help. He's there when we need comfort. He's there when we need strength. God is always there to help us through the troubles of life. But you know what, we are almost comical sometimes. All too often we try to take on life on our terms and under our control. We actually think we can somehow control our life and change our own destiny.

Imagine this picture. I have two tons of stones that I have to move across this big field. I have a good friend who is waiting on the edge of the field waiting for me to toss the stones in the back of his truck so he can carry them across the field for me. In fact he even has a front end loader that I can use to load the stones in the truck. Now my friend doesn't just have any old truck. He has this big huge diesel with tandem wheels and a 500 horsepower engine. And it can carry over four tons of load. It is all warmed up and ready to go. All I have to do is load the stones in the back of the truck.

But now I also have an old wheelbarrow. You probably have one too. The tire is flat, one of the handles is almost broken. It is hard to push it in a straight line because it keeps pulling to one side. So I stand there looking at the truck and the wheelbarrow thinking about both options. And I say I'll take the wheelbarrow because then I will be in complete control. Everyday all of us make a decision almost as ridiculous as that. We make the decision to carry life's load all by ourselves. We make the decision to depend on our own abilities, our own understanding and our own strength, rather than rely on God. All too often, we choose the broken down wheelbarrow over the high powered truck. All too often, we rely upon our own effort and power when we could be relying on God's power.

Prayer is not always a matter of telling God a list of things that we need for him to do. We think that prayer is talking to God, giving God a list of things we want him to do. "Heal me from my headache, make my car last another week, bring down the gas prices, do something about terrorism etc."

Prayer is spending time with God. It might involve asking for things. It might involve thanking God for things. It might be simply being with God. Have you ever simply spent time with someone, and you are both just quiet. Not really saying anything. Just quietly being together. Perhaps with your spouse. Or holding your child. Or at the bedside of your sick parent. We need more of that time spent with God.

Quiet time with God. In the busyness of our lives, we need to be like Mary. There are times when we need to just stop and be quiet and still, and rest in the simple presence of the Lord. It is good for our own soul, it is good for our relationship with others, and it is good for our relationship with God.

Prayer should be a constant thing. It should be an attitude and a frame of mind that never ends. St. Paul said in his letter to the Thessalonians, "pray without ceasing." (1Thes 5:17) Paul doesn't suggest that we live a life in the monastery, always being in the kind of solitary place for prayer that Jesus finds in our New Testament lesson. He is referring to a constant attitude about prayer.

There are times when you should not just do something, but sit there in quiet prayer. Then there are times when you should say to yourself, “don’t just sit there, do something.” But at the end of the prayer, when you say AMEN, that should be a word that calls you to ACTION. You should not just sit there in life, but do something. That’s what Jesus did.

In our New Testament lesson, he sneaks off for prayer in a quiet solitary place. The disciples found him and at the end of the prayer time, Jesus got up and went on with life. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples, "Let us go somewhere else-- to the nearby villages-- so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

At the end of your prayer, when you say AMEN, what ACTION do you do? Do you pray for the sick and then leave it at that? Or do you pray for the sick, and then pick up the phone and call them to let them know you are thinking about them. Do you ask if you can do anything for them? A hot meal brought to their home? Medicine they need to have picked up?

Do you pray that God would enlarge his kingdom and help our church grow and then hope that God inspires someone to do something? Or do you pray and then say as Jesus said, “I have to go somewhere so I can tell someone about the Good News of Christ.”

Our lives are so busy. We need to stop from time to time and go to that solitary place for prayer. And then, at the end of the prayer, get up and get busy with the things that are most important – the work God has given us to do in our various positions in life. Amen.