

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Spend time with Jesus

- I. To learn and love all that He has done for you.
- II. To learn and love the work He has for you to do.

In Christ Jesus who has called us to faith and to service in his kingdom, dear fellow redeemed,

Have you ever noticed that everybody seems to be in a hurry... all the time? Like the Energizer Bunny our busy schedules keep us going, and going, and going. There's work... and there's school... and there's football... and the fridge is empty... so there's shopping... and the dogs need to go out... and the bills need to be paid... and the boat should really be taken out this weekend... BUT... I need to schedule a doctor's appointment... and I have a test tomorrow... and the list goes on and on.

Now being busy isn't all bad. It's good to be active. But we can be too busy. When we are, we overlook some really good things. When we are too busy we neglect some very necessary things. For example, the precious moments we could be spending with God.

I don't mean this time now when we, as a body of believers, gather together for worship. I mean the times we spend with God outside these doors. Do we take the opportunity to have a personal devotion early in the morning while the coffee pot is working its magic and the rest of the world is still asleep? Or do we take advantage of those precious yet rare times when the entire family is together around the table to read a bible story?

Dear friends, take time to be with Jesus. When you do, you will grow in your understanding and love of all that He has done for you. When you spend time with Jesus you will also grow in your understanding and love of the work He has for you to do. In our text for today, Jesus reminds us that busy schedule or not, God comes first.

“They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples.”

Now if you want to talk about a busy schedule. Take the opportunity today to read through the first eight Chapters of Mark. As you read those chapters you'll notice there were very few moments when Jesus and his disciples had any time to themselves. Every chapter records Jesus healing, and preaching, and teaching, and confronting anyone teaching errors.

Even when Jesus would travel across the Sea of Galilee by boat we are told that large crowds traveling by foot would run ahead to welcome him where they docked. Imagine standing at the gate of an airport. There you are elbow to elbow with complete strangers all eagerly waiting for their family members or guests to arrive. I'm not sure if anyone waiting on the shore of the Sea of Galilee was holding a sign with Jesus' name on it but they were all there waiting for the same person, the Messiah. And why not? Jesus was the greatest thing to ever happen to them. When Jesus was around the blind received sight, the deaf heard, the lame walked and when Jesus spoke their hearts were on fire.

Jesus could have spent every hour of every day healing the sick. But having 20/20 vision or being able to walk won't save the immortal soul. Jesus could have spent every day feeding the hungry crowds. But when man dies and stands before God for judgment – God will not be looking for a stomach full of bread but a heart of faith.

So Jesus takes time to spend with his disciples. He gives them some much needed instruction and nourishes their faith with his Word. Jesus knows what his followers need most. And that is time spent with him. But what Jesus says next most likely wasn't what they hoped to hear,

“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”

Jesus knew every step of his journey was bringing him one step closer to Jerusalem. Jesus reminded his disciples again and again of the events that would happen in Jerusalem: his future suffering, death and resurrection. What Jesus was telling them was important and this message was something they were to remember and understand. But they didn't!

Our text says, **“(The disciples) did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.”**

The disciples still didn't understand. They wanted to see Jesus as the “Messiah” who would dominate with power and authority. They didn't understand how suffering and death could serve any great purpose. Healing a blind man... now that was great! Feeding thousands with a boy's sack lunch... now that was great! But there was no greatness in betrayal. There was no greatness in suffering and death. In those, there was only humiliation and defeat. They couldn't understand how the most humiliating and embarrassing symbol of their day, a cross – a “criminal's punishment,” could be greatness.

There are times when we also prefer to measure true greatness not in the cross but by our own accomplishments. We want to measure greatness as the world measures greatness; in the number of medals hanging around your neck and trophies collecting dust on the shelf. Greatness is fitting in at school or at work no matter what the cost. Greatness is having the latest technology, the biggest houses and the highest payroll. For Christians the world tells us it's being MEGA! You can't really be a successful church unless you are the size of a Super Wal-Mart. You aren't really successful unless you are having a membership explosion. You aren't a great preacher unless you have the highest conversion rating. This, says the world, is greatness! And we fall for it hook, line, and sinker.

And why do we prefer to view greatness in this way? It is because we don't want to hear about the ugliness of sin. We hate to admit that sin – our sins! – made Jesus' suffering and death necessary. We don't want to hear that greatness is not measured by how many things we cross off our list each day but that it comes by what Christ accomplished for us on the cross. We cringe when told despising God and His Word whenever we make them anything other than #1 in our lives is a sin.

But we need to hear this again and again. We are sinners and our greatest deeds are nothing more than filthy rags. We need to be reminded that we are lost and condemned because only then will we come to the cross confessing our sins. Only after the law has crushed us can we cling to the cross and take comfort in the words of Christ, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Jesus' death on the cross served us by making us great in God's sight! The blood he shed at his crucifixion poured forgiveness over all our sins. His resurrection serves as the assurance that our sins are actually paid for.

Spending time with Jesus will help us better understand and appreciate the work he has done for us. And as we grow in our understanding and love for all Jesus has done the more we will understand the work He has for us to do.

“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Jesus says this because the disciples were arguing over which among them was the greatest. If Jesus was going to be killed it was only natural for them to think “who's next.” Who would be their next leader? But the twelve were looking for greatness in all the wrong places. They were looking for greatness in positions of power and authority; Christ, on the other hand, explained that greatness is found in positions of humility and service.

True greatness, Jesus says, is when a believer in Christ lives out his/her faith in humble acts of service. Jesus does not tell us to live this way without providing an example: Paul writes that our **“attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant... he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!”** (Phil 2:6-8).

Our Savior served us with eternal riches without any thought of gain for himself. Serving others in our Christian lives is to be done out of thanks for him serving us with forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. We are to serve in this way in whatever position we are in, whatever place in life we find ourselves.

Husbands, you serve as you place the needs of your wife before your own and as you love your wife as Christ loved the church. Wives, you serve when you place the needs of your husbands before your own and submit to your husbands as the church submitted to Christ. Children, you serve when you honor God by honoring your parents, teachers, and others in authority. Called workers, you serve when you are faithful with the work God has given you and as you share God's Word in its truth and purity. Christians, you serve when you place the needs of others before your own and as you take time to share Jesus with others.

Take time to be with Jesus. Only then can we truly understand and live the serving, sacrificial love he wants us to share with others. Amen.