

. THE TASK AND THE POWER

Rev. Lawrence Baldrige

April 27, 2008

Mk 1:35 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.

Mk 1:36 Simon and his companions went to look for him,

Mk 1:37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

Mk 1:38 Jesus replied, “**Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.**”

Mk 1:39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Lk 4:42 At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.

Lk 4:43 But he said, “**I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.**”

THE TASK WAS EXCITING

THE TASK WAS DEMANDING

THE TASK WAS URGENT (The Messiah is Present).

THE POWER IS PRESENT

THE POWER IS PERSONAL

THE POWER IS PRACTICAL

Last Sunday I had a task to do; but I could not do it. I had apparently strained the muscles of my back, and the muscle spasms caused by it, pretty much limited my ability to go to Combs Baptist Church and speak, which was my assignment by the Director of Missions. Some would say that I had too little faith to have it healed and to go and speak at my assigned church. Perhaps. But when “the back is out of whack”, as my Mother would put it, only time and some medical attention can help it. In a word, I had a Task, but I didn’t have the Power to do it.

In our text today, Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus both had a Task, and that He had the Power to do that Task. Since most of what Jesus was doing was to show the disciples how they should do when He was gone, I want us to look at this lesson from Mark and Luke as it applied to Him, as it applied to Them, and as it applies to Us.

I. THE TASK: THIS FIRST SHOWS THE EXCITEMENT OF JESUS AS HE FACED HIS TASK.

Just 30 years of age, it was now time for Jesus to assume His role as a Rabbi, and to enter into His ministry. He was baptized by John in the Jordan River; then He had faced the horrendous temptation in the wilderness; He has just had phenomenal success at His new headquarters in Capernaum (vs. 21-32); and now He is found—disturbed-- by the disciples in a remote place, praying.

When they express their consternation at being left alone with the crowds demanding Jesus, our Lord says, “Let us go to the other towns and preach—that is why I was sent.” I believe there is a strong note of excitement in Jesus tone. He was young and ready for the world, and was going to face the world as a conqueror, though not in the sense of worldly conqueror. He was God’s Son, Divine, born of a virgin, prophesied, and Present. At the Jordan he had been fully anointed for His task. Like a soldier going to battle in full gear, He knew His power and He knew His purpose. In Luke we find the words, “I must!!” He had no choice if the world was to be saved. He had no choice if God’s Kingdom would come. He had no choice if evil would forever be defeated. He had no choice if He were to be obedient. He was God’s only Begotten Son, and He knew that there was no other choice. He had finalized that on the mountain in the wilderness when He had said a final NO! to Satan. The excitement showed on His face, in His eyes, and in the glory that surrounded Him. God has promised His Son the full and complete victory, and it was His prize to claim. It was created by Him and for Him, and the man He created had marred it and spoiled it and given their share of it to the devil. Jesus the Divine Sovereign would reclaim His territory, regain man’s sovereignty under Himself, and reclaim the Eternal Sovereignty that was His from the Beginning.

If His task was filled with excitement, as we can see, it was also filled with URGENCY. That “I must” expresses the urgency He felt. By this time John, his human Mentor, has been imprisoned, and would be beheaded by Agrippa’s order. Jesus knew what the task was. In John’s Gospel He says, “I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work.” He was not just contrasting day and night, He was saying, “I am going to be killed. Night is coming.” His urgency took Him from Nazareth to Bethabara to be Baptized, to Judea, to Capernaum, to Jerusalem, to death, and to Resurrection! We often use the expression “save time.” Time cannot be saved; time can only be used, or as the Bible says, redeemed. Time keeps passing, never stopping. Jesus understood that. His days were filled with work, and oftentimes His nights. The Kingdom of God was urgent. It had come. Men could enter it. Men and women could become Sons and Daughters of God, could be baptized with the Holy Spirit, could be born from above, could be a part of the New and Dynamic Kingdom of God, could be a part of the ‘new creation’ that was taking place for all who would repent and believe. But the whole idea of the Kingdom had a resounding NOW to it. Jesus believed that all He was doing, all the healings He was bringing about, all the demons He was exorcising was ample and sufficient demonstration that the Kingdom was Here! And the task of humanity was to receive it now!

Exciting, Urgent, and exceedingly DEMANDING was the task for Jesus. At one point the Bible tells us that when the woman with the issue of blood touched His garment, there went out from Him, virtue, or power. We know that from the human side, Jesus needed physical energy as much as any other man. We know that from the episodes of His thirst, and His hunger in the New Testament. We also know that He was so depleted of energy following His beatings, He fell under the weight of the cross and needed the help of one Simon of Cyrene to drag it to Mt. Calvary.

II. THE POWER

PRESENT

In our Scriptures this morning, here is Jesus needing energy and power. From His human standpoint, He knew where to find His own Spiritual renewal and replenishment—from God His Father. This happened often. Sometimes He would have to spend the entire night bathing in the Light of God's Love; and, oftentimes, He arose before all others and spent time alone with His Father. Such times gave Him the replenishment of He needed.

In an exposition in the Interpreter's Bible we find these telling words: "Here is the first instance of what, through His life, was a great priority of Jesus, the renewal of life in prayer. In the 3 scenes just preceding (vss. 21-32) we watch the expenditure of power. Here, in the lonely place, we behold the secret behind it, the creation and renewal of prayer. Here was the hidden spring of the authority and power which struck men with astonishment." This "hidden spring" should not be hidden: It is present. By prayer one can enter the very Presence of the Living God. But to do so, one needs privacy. Jesus was so busy that He had to find a place to pray. That place would be the place of the least distractions, the closet and the shut doors.

One woman heard the preacher preach about entering a closet and shutting the doors and said to him, "In our apartment there are no closets and no doors." Jesus found His closet in a desert place. He prayed to the present Father at all times; but in that desert place He could spend uninterrupted time—even if the disciples on this occasion did interrupt Him.

PERSONAL

The power is not just present, but PERSONAL. God is a Personal God—He is our Heavenly Father. He had a personal task for His Son Jesus to perform. As the Interpreter's Bible implies, Jesus received His task from God the Father, and it was to proclaim the Kingdom of God throughout all Galilee. The exposition in the Interpreter's Bible says, "*Capernaum was a starting point, not an ultimate goal. He refused to be localized. It was not enough to be a popular healer in one place; He came to preach the Kingdom of God.*" There are two quotations in Barclay's commentary on Mark that come from a book, *Practice of Prayer*, by Dr. A.D. Belden: "*Prayer may be defined as the appeal of the soul to God*"; and, "*In prayer we give the perfect mind of God an opportunity to feed our mental powers.*"

PRACTICAL

The Power was Present, Personal, and Practical. In their hour of communion, God told His Son, "Here is your task for now." Jesus always listened to the Word of His Father for all His direction, as He declares in John. (Whatever the Father tells me, I do.) We can find the will of God in that quiet place of prayer. Prayer is practical. The soul of man appeals to God, and the mind of man is fed by the perfect mind of the Almighty. Barclay gives a good concluding sentence: "Prayer will never do our work for us; what it will do is to strengthen us for the task which must be done."

That episode in the life of Jesus spoke powerfully to the disciples. Even before the Spirit came upon them, they were in prayer. When persecution came, they prayed. When there was some need, they called upon the Father for His help. When martyred, they cried out, “Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.” And even Saul, before receiving the Spirit and receiving his sight, was praying. Later, when he had long had his name changed to Paul, he wrote in his very first letter, 1st Thessalonians 5:17, “pray without ceasing.” By prayer they saw prisons open; by prayer they saw multitudes saved; by prayer they entered heaven.

How is prayer in your life? Someone said, “You pray and I will work.” Work itself without prayer is oftentimes the best way to failure. We must know our tasks and know God’s priority. Surely our task, like His, is Exciting, Urgent, and Demanding. That task can only be accomplished through prayer. You cannot save time, you can only use it or lose it forever. If you believe that your task was given to you by the Heavenly Father, then do it with urgency and do it with all your might.

Some of you are perhaps not saved. And what is your work, your task? The answer is found in John 6:29 “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”