

“That’s Enough”

Most of you probably do not know that I give titles to my sermons. I do not announce the title, but if you read the sermon online you will see it. Usually the titles are tongue in cheek wordplay using song titles or popular catchphrases. For example, last week’s sermon about wonder and enchantment I titled “Maybe I’m Amazed” after the Beatles’ song. This week I had three ideas that I have not been able to decide between. There is “A Day in the Life” also a Beatles song, “One Day in the Life” after the novella by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and the third possible title is “Quotidian Mystery” after the book *Quotidian Mysteries* by Kathleen Norris, quotidian meaning “ordinary or everyday, especially when mundane”. Perhaps you will see why these titles came to me and you can tell me your preferred title.

These titles struck me because of what the Gospel of Mark presents to us today. This short passage records a twenty-four-hour period in the life of Jesus. In Mark’s usual way he does this lickety-split. Mark’s Gospel moves by at an amazing clip. His favorite word to describe how something happens is “immediately.” According to scholar Paul Ellingworth, Mark uses the Greek word *εὐθὺς* (eutheos) forty-two times compared to twelve times in the rest of the New Testament and only six times in the entire Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.¹

Even when he does not use the word “immediately” we get the sense that things are progressing quickly. Mark’s account is sometimes described as the Passion with a long introduction. For example, as of today’s reading we are at the 29th verse of chapter one. Yet Jesus has met John the Baptizer, been baptized, sojourned in the wilderness for forty days, called four disciples, taught and healed in a synagogue, and is now going to visit the home of Simon and Andrew. Compare this to Matthew where there are two full chapters before Jesus is baptized by John. In Luke there are nearly 3 chapters before the baptism.

The day began with last week’s reading where Jesus was teaching and healing in the synagogue. Having left the synagogue, he goes to the home of Simon and Andrew. Finding Simon’s mother-in-law ill Jesus cures her. She is so fully healed that she is able to serve them. Later in the day people gathered outside the home. There he cures many and casts out many demons. Presumably the household goes to bed once it is dark.

The narrative resumes the next morning when Jesus gets up early and goes to a deserted place to pray. His absence was distressing to the disciples who hunted for him. When they found him Jesus says they must go on to other towns to share the Good News telling them “*that is what I came out to do.*”

This day in the life of Jesus of Nazareth tells us some important things about Jesus and his ministry. First note where Jesus spends his time—in a

¹ Paul Ellingworth, “How soon is ‘immediately’ in Mark” accessed February 3, 2024 [https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/026009437802900403?journalCode=tbtd#:~:text=Mark's%20fondness%20for%20the%20word,euthus\)%20has%20often%20been%20noticed.](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/026009437802900403?journalCode=tbtd#:~:text=Mark's%20fondness%20for%20the%20word,euthus)%20has%20often%20been%20noticed.)

synagogue in a small town, a home in that town, and in a deserted place. What do you think that tells us about who Jesus is? [Listen for: ordinary, everyday places, family, simple, no place fancy] Who were the people in those places? [Listen for everyday people, hoi polloi, person in the street, no great leaders, politicians, generals, elites]. What does he do in those places [listen for worshipping, teaching, healing, praying, and we can assume everyday activities such as eating and sleeping.]

What would you say this tells us about Jesus and his ministry? [Listen for among regular people, in town and villages rather than great cities, he will do what he was sent to do by teaching, preaching and healing. He will fortify himself with prayer.] In addition, I think Mark is telling us that Jesus is in the words of the Doobie Brothers “Taking it to the Streets.” That is his ministry is on the ground. He is not a televangelist or a toady to the elites in government and the military. He is keeping it real among real people. People like us.

Were Jesus teaching today he would be in the countryside not the cities. He would be among the average or poor people not the wealthy and privileged. He might hang out at the Latino grocery and not the Red Truck. You might find him teaching in a little church like ours instead of a cathedral or megachurch. You might see him healing people near a free clinic and not outside of a world famous hospital. Jesus was and is among those in need.

For us to live a more Christ-like life involves two things. One is to be like Christ and live among those in need. Serve those who have less in terms of money, education, resources, and other advantages. When we serve the everyday people we are doing Jesus work. To paraphrase Teresa of Avila we are being Christ’s hands and feet in the world. The other aspect of a Christ-like life is to acknowledge that despite our many advantages we are also needy. We have needs that all of our advantages cannot meet such as home, friends, hope, love, and the need to be needed by others.

As I think about it some more, perhaps Quotidian Mysteries is the best title for this sermon. We may not be miracle workers like Jesus, or teach and preach like Jesus, or even pray like Jesus, but we can take as an example the way he lived his life. That is in worship of God, in the homes of ordinary families, caring for people in need, and praying for the strength and love to carry on. It really is not about being a “Magical Christian.”² It is more about being a practical Christian, living a daily life that Jesus would recognize and join in. A life full of care and love for those around us and for the God who created us, sustains us, and redeems us.

That’s all. That’s enough.

² Another pop culture reference to the film starring Peter Sellers and Ringo Starr.