

Title: What Would Jesus Do?  
Date: March 10, 2024  
Subject: Jesus' priorities  
Scripture: Mark 1:35-39; Matthew 4:23-5

Hope you've been reading the scripture passages printed at the bottom of the sermon notes. They're a great way to witness the life of Jesus and prepare for our times together.

If you've been reading, you've probably noticed that the four gospels don't cover the same material and don't cover it exactly the same way. I found some beneficial observations from Zondervan Academic. The complete resource can be accessed by going to the link at the bottom of the sermon notes.

“It's important to point out right off the bat that each of the Gospel writers had a particular intention and focus. Each of them set out to accentuate a specific and unique portrait of Jesus. Through their individual gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—focused on particular elements of Christ's ministry and message that they felt illuminate their narrative.

“Despite the writers' varied focus, the gospels exhibit a surprising cohesiveness. They all bear witness to Jesus and his ministry, but approach the story with an individual perspective. These four panoramas don't detract from our understanding of Jesus. On the contrary, they give us a richer, deeper, and clearer glimpse at the mystery of Christ...

“The gospel writers were not only interested in exploring specific points about Jesus' ministry, but they were also focused on speaking to particular groups. Through their presentation to these audiences, various truths about Jesus and his mission were highlighted” (Bible Contradictions Explained: 4 Reasons the Gospels “Disagree”, [zondervanacademic.com/blog/bible-contradictions-explained](https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/bible-contradictions-explained))

Priorities are seen in how people spend their time. Priorities in the life of Christ.

Read Mark 1:35-39

## I. Spend time with the Father

Prayer was essential to Jesus. He taught about it and told parables about prayer. He gave “The Lord's Prayer” as a guide after the disciples had noticed his habit and asked him to teach them how to pray.

Jesus frequently communicated with his Father. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night he was betrayed and when he was on the cross.

Two particulars of this prayer incident were the timing - early morning – and the location - privacy. Does this mean we have to get up at 4:00 AM every day to pray and that if we don't we are failures? No.

The key is Jesus carved out time for the priority of prayer. Think of what his life was like. Jesus was incredibly busy, pulled in a thousand directions. People wanted him. On this morning, people were looking for him. The search party included Simon Peter and his companions. Everybody was trying to find Jesus. Everybody wanted his attention. Luke tells us that when they found him “they tried to keep him from leaving

them.” Things were wonderful. They wanted more - more of his teachings, more of his miracles. They hadn't turned on him like the people of Nazareth had.

Jesus knew he needed and wanted to spend time to be alone with the Father. That's why he got up very early. He sought privacy to limit the distractions when he was talking with the Father. It was difficult for him to find time where people weren't bugging him. Not that he'd put it that way, but that's the way we feel.

I think most of us would say we're rank amateurs when it comes to praying. We feel we don't do it long enough. We don't do it often enough. We're concerned if we do it with the right motive. We call to mind great prayer warriors who spent hours and hours every day on their knees. We think of the example of Jesus. In comparison, we feel like we're falling way short of what having a good prayer life should be. It's pretty easy to pick apart our prayer lives. In doing so we develop a defeatist attitude as if to conclude “why try?”

Maybe the best thing to understand is the Lord doesn't expect perfection in our prayer lives or any part of our lives. We don't have to wait until we've attained a super spiritual status, a maturity comparable to the great saints of the past before we pray.

The truth is anybody and everybody who is a follower of Jesus Christ can pray, whether you're a new believer or one who has walked with the Lord for decades, whether 4 years old or multiple times that. Did you ever listen to children pray? They can be candid, to the point, simple and extremely honest, a pure delight.

We need to make time in our schedules to have time with God. It may be early in the morning before we do anything else. It's a good habit to begin our days that way, even if it's to briefly turn our thoughts toward God before we get out of bed. The extended time with God may come after we get everybody else up, fed and off on their schedules, to school to work. Then we find time, make the time for prayer. The important thing isn't the time but taking the time.

In preparation for the message, I read someone writing about how people have good intentions about praying but often fail. They realize they should do more and decide they're going to spend two hours a day in prayer. They intend to go from zero to 100 mph in nothing flat. The writer suggested it's better to commit to 5 minutes as a starting point.

The greatest lesson we can learn for growing in our prayer lives is simply to begin praying. Nike launched an ad campaign in 1988 that dropped the other shoe. It utilized Bo Jackson, Michael Jordan and Roger Federer with the tag line “Just Do It.” It encouraged people to get up, get going, take action – and of course, wear Nike.

Learn by doing. Since we often define prayer as talking with God, that means what we need to do is to open our mouths, let some words come out and talk to God.

One quick quote about prayer: “Prayer will never do our work for us; What it will do is strengthen us for work which must be done” (Barclay on Mark, P. 41).

Prayer is an act of dependence on God. We indicate to ourselves that we need his strength and guidance to make it through life.

The people of Capernaum wanted Jesus to stick around. They'd heard Jesus preach. They'd seen him heal folks with terrible diseases. They'd had a good time. He was popular.

It's nice to be wanted. I'm sure it felt good to Jesus because it wasn't always the case. Like what happened in his hometown of Nazareth where people wanted to kill him.

However, Jesus had something else in mind. V. 38, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages, so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." Luke's account puts it this way, "I must preach."

Let's go to our second scripture passage. Read Matthew 4:23-25.

## II. Stay on mission

### A. Speak the message

Jesus came so he could preach, teach and proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. John the Baptist had informed people that the kingdom was near. Jesus continued the theme and brought it to its fullness.

The first chronological scripture of this section of Christ's life is earlier beginning at Matthew 4:13. Jesus left Nazareth and moved to Capernaum which would become his headquarters. It was Peter's hometown and most Bible scholars feel Jesus used Peter's house as his base of operations. A church was built in the 400s over the presumed site of Peter's house.

The change of location for Jesus is accompanied by a quote from the prophet Isaiah. It feels like it fits with the Christmas story, but its focus is on the beginning of Christ's ministry.

In v. 17 we find - READ Matthew 4:17.

The book of Matthew reveals how the teaching about the kingdom was central to Jesus' mission. Kingdom is mentioned 50 times. It's in the first beatitude given by Jesus: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

The Jews of Jesus time were looking for a political kingdom and a king to rule over it. He, being the king and Messiah, would set up his throne in Jerusalem. From there he'd be king of the world.

Though there is the promise that one day Jesus will be that kind of king, it didn't happen at his first coming. His kingdom was not of this world at that point. He told Pilate that. He came to establish a different kingdom. He was the King who would bring a kingdom which would rule and reign in people's hearts while waiting for the ultimate kingdom. He spoke of how God could be Lord and master.

The kingdom was near because Jesus the King was present. The kingdom was near to people because they could become part of his kingdom by placing their personal trust in him. They would be anticipating the future kingdom when he will reign over all the earth beginning at the Millennium and continuing into the New Heavens and New Earth, the eternal state. Until that time, we're to allow him to rule and reign in our lives.

Jesus' teaching was different. The religious establishment used God's words, so while it contained truth, it was hidden under layers of ritual and more ritual and more ritual, so it was devoid of spiritual nourishment.

Jesus' teaching moved people by his ability to communicate, the depth of his teaching, his authority. The people in Nazareth had been "amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips" (Luke 4:22). Later,

his enemies would express their amazement: “How did this man get such learning without having studied?” (John 7:15). His teaching was so powerful that those who were sent to arrest him returned empty handed and explained their inability to arrest Jesus: “No one ever spoke the way this man does” (John 7:46).

A little prior to where we began this morning we find these words: “People were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching - and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him” (Mark 1:22, 27).

#### B. Validate the ministry

Last week in Sunday school I distributed a list of the miracles Jesus performed. We noted how John's Gospel calls them miraculous signs indicating they were proof of Jesus' claims. They weren't just a magician's trick or done for entertainment or solely to relieve people's pain and discomfort. They were evidence presented to verify Jesus is the Son of God and validate his ministry.

One of the miracles which took place just prior to Jesus getting up early in the morning to pray was the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29 - 31; Luke 4:38, 39). She was suffering from a high fever. At that time, the prescribed cure for a burning fever involved an iron knife tied to a thornbush by a braid of hair. On three successive days the account of Moses at the burning bush would be spoken followed by a magic formula. And voila, the cure was affected. At least, it was supposed to.

Jesus had none of the hocus pocus. He entered the room where Peter's mother-in-law lay in bed. He bent over, took her hand, rebuked the fever and the fever left her. She got up and assumed the duties of a hostess, making sure the guests were comfortable, having places to sit, water to refresh them and food to eat.

The miracles pointed toward Jesus as the Messiah. They demonstrated what God could do. Later, when Jesus healed a man who'd been born blind, the religious leaders didn't believe in the miracle. They didn't believe the man had been born blind and got into a heated debate with him. They held the position Jesus was a sinner and definitely wasn't from God. They thought they had backed the man into a corner when they commanded him: “Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner. What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

The man had received physical sight and more significantly spiritual insight: “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?...We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (John 9:24-33).

The man was correct. Jesus did what only God can do. He exerted power over every form of disease, sickness and illness, including leprosy (Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1: 40-45; Luke 5:12-16).

Modern medicine and treatment have lessened the impact of the horrid affliction. In Jesus' time leprosy was one of the most feared diseases. Lepers were pushed to the distant sidelines, shut out from family and community. One day Jesus encountered a leper who had the courage to break from the required distance and approach Jesus. He begged Jesus to make him clean. Jesus did the unthinkable, risking contracting the disease

and becoming spiritually unclean. He reached out his hand to touch the man. Mark's account says Jesus had compassion on the man. Jesus wasn't some disengaged miracle worker. He cared about people.

I repeat - the miraculous signs were validations Jesus was who he claimed to be. He had authority over the devil, and sin, and sickness.

We're to proclaim the good news of Jesus in the full confidence he has shown himself to be who he claimed to be. He is the Son of God who gave his life to pay for sins so people could have eternal life.

Jesus traveled extensively. It wasn't just a wanderlust, a desire to see new territory and scenery. It was...

### III. Extend the invitation to a broader audience

In the first passage of scripture Jesus said, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come" (Mark 1:38). He went to the villages in Galilee. He preached and drove out demons.

Matthew's account traces his journey to Syria or at least people from Syria came to see him. It seems more likely he went there because later he travels to that area to encounter a needy person. Syria is north of Galilee and stretches from Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea. He also went to the Decapolis - 10 cities that formed an alliance situated east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. Eventually Jesus made it down to Jerusalem and the province of Judea.

Jesus visited the synagogues in Galilee and Jerusalem. We can presume he went there for the same reason the apostle Paul would later go to synagogues. That's where people who were familiar with the Old Testament scriptures could be found. But Jesus' proclamation of the good news wasn't limited to those settings. He spoke with individuals. He taught in homes. He utilized whatever setting he was in to proclaim the good news.

Synagogues aren't mentioned in Syria and the Decapolis. Those areas and even Galilee were predominantly inhabited by non-Jews. The Decapolis was heavily influenced by Greek culture and thought.

The point is Jesus proclaimed the Good News to Jews and non-Jews. He didn't come for just one people group. He came to be the Savior of the world.

The news about Jesus spread. That was his intent. It's the theme of his last command which was given just prior to his ascension to the Father - "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Jesus' desire is for his followers to continue doing what he did. We're to go with the good news. Communicate it to people near and far.

What would Jesus do? Spend time with the Father. Stay on mission. Extend the invitation to a broader audience.