

# Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Reverend Dr. Daris Bultena

February 8, 2009

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 40:21-31

<sup>21</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? <sup>22</sup>It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; <sup>23</sup>who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

<sup>24</sup>Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

<sup>25</sup>To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. <sup>26</sup>Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. <sup>27</sup>Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? <sup>28</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. <sup>29</sup>He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. <sup>30</sup>Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; <sup>31</sup>but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Mark 1:29-39

<sup>29</sup>As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup>Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. <sup>31</sup>He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup>That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. <sup>33</sup>And the whole city was gathered around the door. <sup>34</sup>And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

<sup>35</sup>In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup>And Simon and his companions hunted for him. <sup>37</sup>When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."<sup>38</sup>He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." <sup>39</sup>And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

## **"It Is Focus Not Frenzy"**

**I'm not sure when busyness began, but it feels as if it began with us. It does not seem like it has been going on for many decades, because it feels as if there was a time back not all that long ago when people had more free time.**

**The reality of it is I believe that we have always been busy—but in recent times that busyness has taken on a fervor unlike any other time in history. In fact, it is beyond busyness and it is on the verge of becoming more like a constant frenzy.**

**Our lives are a frenzy of activity. I think what is different now is that when there is any time that is not scheduled or when one dares to take a few moments; there is then, this guilt that sets in and takes over. We feel guilty for taking any time off. We are all over achievers.**

**What has happened in our society is that frenziness has left most of our culture sleep deprived and/or addicted to caffeine and things even worse.**

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**Interestingly enough, as we encounter Jesus here in the first chapter of Mark's gospel he is engaged in a frenzy of activity. There is no gradually easing into his ministry and his service to people. Here in Chapter One he is going full throttle. Full throttle just like us in our living.**

**But also here in Chapter One he makes his way to the deserted place to pray. Did you notice that there in verse 35, “In the morning, while it was still dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.” This was his pattern. Prayer. Activity. More prayer. More activity. Still more prayer. Still more activity.**

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**This dynamic is for us—it is a gift that Jesus gives us in our frenzied existence. In applying it to our living let me share with you three truths.**

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**First, you will not get less busy. You will not get less busy.**

**Oh, is that a hard pill to swallow. The reality of it is that we all think that when things slow down then I will get to that, or when things slow down then I will handle this or that, etc.. But if you think back on it, or if you look forward and face up to the truth of the matter---things do not slow down. It is just the opposite. Things seem to pick up more momentum. Life goes faster and faster each year.**

**You are not going to get less busy---**

**That is not all bad news—there is something to acceptance that allows one to face realities. If one knows that life will be busy—then one can develop strategies that will make it possible to cope. This is precisely what Jesus does. Hence the pattern: Prayer. Activity. More prayer. More activity.**

**So the first truth—you will not get less busy.**

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**The second truth—You can only cope if you have balance—that balance is provided in the deserted place---it comes from your spiritual center—it comes from that time with God.**

**Jesus finds refreshment and renewal in prayer. He shows us that to be centered we need that active prayer and spiritual life. It is not that we can pray when we have time—but that we must pray when do not have time. We especially need to pray when we don't have time.**

**That is the role of Sabbath---that we stop in the middle of all we are doing in order to strike that balance of knowing who we are and whose we are. God needs to be allowed in and invited in---we cannot do that if we never rest from our work so that God can do God's work in us.**

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**Yes, we will continue to be busy.**

**And we will only find balance by having an active spiritual life and a living prayer life.**

**Before I go on let me say something about an active prayer life. Praying is not difficult it is both being quiet—in fact, that is the most important part of prayer--being quiet. Then in the quietness it is a conversation with God. There is no such thing as a good prayer or a bad prayer—we are all prayers.**

**In prayer we simply share with the Spirit of God within what is happening inside of us. It is a sharing with the depths of our being. That can happen frequently and at many points in our day. And practically speaking, frenzied people may indeed have to schedule it. If that is you—then schedule it and stick to it. Make a commitment for a month and you will end up committed. That time spent becomes this refreshment that makes it possible to keep up the pace.**

**That time of refreshment is absolutely essential to the mix of doing and being.**

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**The final truth is that it is possible to emerge from prayer without leaving the posture of prayer. Let me say that again, and take it in---it is possible to emerge from prayer without leaving the posture of prayer.**

**So while we rise up to do what needs to be done---we allow that position that prayer has placed us in to influence how we are as we attend to the frenzy of our day.**

**Assume the posture of prayer as you attend to the busyness of life. How is that done? As Jesus did it---he brought with him all that he had garnered in those moments in the deserted place. What he had gathered there—the reality that God was with him and that his purpose was to proclaim the kingdom of God---that was carried forward in the tasks he undertook.**

**Allow the posture of prayer to be the posture you assume as you take up the task. Pray. Pray, and emerge from prayer to do what needs to be done, but do not emerge from the posture of prayer.**

**Finally---it is that posture of prayer as we attend to the busyness of living that allows us to see what really needs to be accomplished and to accomplish it. That posture of prayer---of know that God is sovereign and that God will lead and guide our lives—that posture allows for a vision that otherwise we do not have. It transforms us from frenzied to focused.**

**That is the movement when we remain in the posture of prayer—it is focus not frenzy that reigns in our living.**

**Amen.**