

A Day in the Life of Jesus

by Ray C. Stedman

It is a popular literary style today to trace through the events of one day in the life of a person. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has given us a remarkable book in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Perhaps you have read some of Jim Bishop's books, like *The Day Kennedy Died* or *The Day Lincoln Died*. There is something similar in the gospel of Mark, as Mark traces for us *A Day in the Life of Jesus*.

It begins in the bright sunshine of a Galilean morning when Jesus walks out alongside the lake, moves into a mid-morning visit to a synagogue in Capernaum (for this was a Sabbath day), takes in an afternoon visit some hours later at the home of Peter and Andrew, and traces the events of a busy evening in that city, as thousands gathered to be ministered to by Jesus. The account concludes with a solitary prayer vigil in the hills during the lonely hours of the early morning. Thus a full twenty-four hours is given to us in this account -- put together from the brief memories Mark had of Jesus and the stories Peter had told him.

One theme is apparent as you read through the stories of the incidents in this day, and that is *the authority of Jesus*. You remember that in the first study of this series we saw that it is at least possible that Mark himself was the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked him the secret of eternal life, and to whom Jesus said, "Go, sell what you have; and come, follow me," {cf, Matt 19:21}. I personally believe Mark was that young man, and that he did exactly that: gave away all he had, and came and followed Jesus. If this is the case, it would account for Mark's seeming fascination with the power base from which Jesus operated. He is struck by the authority of Jesus, and yet by his servant-character. This would be new to Mark. He would not understand at first how authority could come from being a servant. But the theme that flows through all these accounts is a radical principle which is apparent in the Scriptures: to one who voluntarily serves, God gives the power also to rule.

There are six marks of the authority of Jesus recorded in this one day. The first is given to us in Verses 16-20:

And passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him. {Mark 1:16-20 RSV}

It would be a great mistake to think that this is the first time Jesus ever saw these men. They were disciples of John the Baptist, and Jesus had met them earlier down in Judea, and they had even followed him for a time as his disciples. So this is not their first encounter. But it is the story of their official call to a continual discipleship. The remarkable thing about this, the thing that impressed Mark, was Jesus' claim to competence in their lives. He said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men." He assumes the entire responsibility for this.

These men were fishers of fish. They were simple Galilean fishermen, rough, somewhat ignorant, untutored, unlearned, elementary men, governed by Jewish passions and prejudices, narrow in their outlook. Before they could become fishers of men, they would have to become universal in their view. They would have to learn how to walk in a way that relied upon the power of the Spirit of God. And Jesus assumes the responsibility to do this.

That is encouraging to me! Because whenever he calls you and me to any task, the Lord himself assumes the responsibility to fit us for it -- if we follow him, if we yield to him.

In his book, *What Should This Man Do?*, Watchman Nee makes the very captivating suggestion that not only does Jesus undertake to equip these men fully for the task to which he calls them, but also that he plans to do it in a way which retains the personality of each. This is suggested in what Mark records that these men were doing at the moment Jesus called them. Peter and Andrew were casting their nets into the sea, throwing circular nets out on each side of the boat in order to catch the fish. This suggests that they were to become evangelists. That would be their process of reaching out, casting out to those around. As the account goes on we will see how Andrew becomes the disciple who leads people to Jesus, even as he has brought his brother Peter to Christ. Peter becomes the great evangelist when, on the day of Pentecost, he preaches the gospel to three thousand people.

But James and John were doing something else -- they were mending their nets. The Greek word for "mending" is the same word which appears in Ephesians 4, where Paul says of pastor/teachers that they are to "equip" (or mend) the saints to do the work of the ministry {cf, Eph 4:12}. Just as James and John were equipping their nets, getting them ready, when Jesus called them, so this would be the work they would be doing as fishers of men. They would do it as teachers, equipping the saints. Again, this is what you see in the lives of these men throughout Scriptures.

This is beautiful thought, because it indicates that when our Lord calls us he not only equips us, taking full responsibility to teach us everything we need to learn in order to fulfill that calling, but he does it in such a way as to retain those nuances of personality that mark us as us.

While I was at Wheaton College this past week a young student came up to me at the close of a chapel service and, with a very earnest look on his face, said, "Look, all week long you've been talking to us about Christ's working through us, saying that he will do the work. I have a question: How can Jesus work through us without destroying our personality?" I cast about for an answer, and all of a sudden an illustration came flashing into my mind: "When you prepare breakfast, if you plug an electric toaster and an electric mixer into the same outlet, would they both do the same thing?" He said, "I see what you mean." Of course they would not. They both use the same power, but they do not do the same thing. So it is with Jesus. He is the power in the Christian life, the One who is able to live in us and manifest himself through us -- whatever the demand of life may be -- but the result always retains something of our individuality. The glory of the call of Christianity is that we are all empowered by the same mighty One, but that we lose nothing of the distinct flavor of our particular personality.

So Mark is impressed with this amazing competence of Jesus, for men simply do not act this way. Sign up for a course in personality development, or management skills, and invariably you are subjected to a standardizing process which tries to force everybody into the same mold. Unfortunately we do this in Christian circles as well, so that we all come out of the sausage grinder as identical little sausages -- chop it off anywhere and it is still baloney! But Jesus does not do that, and Mark marvels at the competence of this amazing man.

The second mark of authority he records in the following passage:

And they went into Capernaum [Notice the word "they" -- Peter, Andrew, James, and John went with our Lord into Capernaum]; and immediately on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. {Mark 1:21-22 RSV}

Here Mark is amazed at the comprehension of Jesus, the vast scope of his knowledge, his insight into humanity and into life. He was particularly impressed with the authority with which he spoke. All who were present were astonished at his authority. He did not teach like the scribes they were accustomed to hearing: "Now, Hillel says this, and Gamaliel adds this, while other authorities contend..." Jesus made no reference to any authority other than himself. Yet his words were so insightful, so true to the experience and inner convictions of the men and women there that they nodded their heads, "Of course!" and knew what he said was true. J. B. Phillips entitled a book, *The Ring Of Truth*. That is an apt description of how Jesus taught. His words had that ring of truth, acknowledged by all who heard him speak. It was self-authenticating truth, corresponding to an inner conviction in each person who heard him, so that they knew that he knew the secrets of life.

This is important, because it means that we ought to measure every teaching by what Jesus has said about the subject. The previous time I was at Wheaton College was several years ago when the campuses of this nation were torn with riot and dissension, and even Christian colleges were not spared. I was invited to teach a class on current events, and we discussed various problems like capital punishment and, of course, the Vietnamese war. I was greatly dismayed as I listened to these students because they constantly referred everything to secular authority. Finally, I stopped the class, and said to them,

"Look, this is a Christian college. Yet no one in this class has made any reference at all to what God has to say about these matters. But his, ultimately, is the only viewpoint that counts. And it is in what he says that the truth lies."

Truth is what you find in the teachings of Jesus. We are to correct our psychology and our philosophy by the truth he sets forth.

I want to share with you a quotation I ran across some ago, from an outstanding American psychiatrist named J. T. Fisher:

If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene, if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage, if you were to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and an incomplete summary of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearning. Here rests the blueprint for successful human life, with optimum mental health and contentment.

That is why, there in the synagogue at Capernaum, they were astonished at the teaching of Jesus. And as I read through the Scriptures, and see the things that Jesus said, I am frequently absolutely dumbfounded at the amazing wisdom and insight into life that he represents, and at how he reveals how far afield secular thinking often is, how wrong it is, when everybody around is praising it and saying it is right. That is why we need the insights of this amazing man, as we study our lives, and human life in general.

The next mark of the authority of Jesus is a very remarkable response to the teaching of Jesus that Sabbath morning, Verses 23-28:

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. " But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. {Mark 1:23-28 RSV}

Mark sums it all up for us in the response of these people in the synagogue. They were astonished, amazed, and said, "With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." This represents the command of Jesus. There is no doubt that the unclean spirit in this man was reacting to the teaching of Jesus. He could not stand it! The insight our Lord gave on that morning was so piercing, so revealing of error and the foggy thinking of men, that the demon was tortured with truth, and he broke out in this angry interruption: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!" And Jesus rebuked him, commanded him to be silent.

The film, *The Exorcist* has so caught the popular imagination that people are flocking in droves to see it. I have not seen it myself, but have read several reviews of it, made from various points of view. It is the story of a girl possessed by an evil spirit, a demon. She is supposedly set free of it by two men who intercede on her behalf. But from what I have heard and read of the film, I do not think it is quite what it seems to be. The girl may be freed temporarily from the evil spirit, but it is not a story of triumph over evil. It is the demon who

triumphs, for he destroys the two men in the process. It is an evil and frightening film.

But you do not see anything of that here in this account. When this demon is confronted with Jesus, he is forced to leave the person he was inhabiting. The word of Jesus is victorious right from the start. The spirit is reluctant to go, as is obvious from the way he convulses this person and cries out with a loud voice. But he must leave -- that is the point. He is overwhelmed by a superior power. And through all the centuries since, the only name demons have ever feared is the name of Jesus. It is Jesus who sets men free and delivers the oppressed. It is well to remember, as we are experiencing in our own day a tremendous invasion of demonic forces, that no religious mumbo-jumbo, or church ritual, is going to set people free. It is Jesus whom demons fear, the authority of Jesus to command the unclean spirits to obey.

This particular obedience was so remarkable that Mark records, "And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee." When Mark says "at once," he does not mean in a few days or a few weeks; he means in a few hours. This was such a remarkable situation that within hours the word had spread like a flame all through the area. By evening, they were bringing the sick and demon-possessed into the city to be healed by Jesus, as we will see in a few moments. The word had gone out like wildfire that here was one who could command the spirits of darkness, and they would obey.

Next we have the account of a simple event in the home of Simon and Andrew, Verses 29-31:

And immediately he left the synagogue, and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told him of her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them. {Mark 1:29-31 RSV}

This is early afternoon by now, and Mark's emphasis is on the compassion that moved Jesus. If you read this account rather superficially it sounds like a case of labor shortage. Simon and Andrew had invited Jesus and James and John home with them, only to find that the mother-in-law who perhaps usually did the serving, was sick. So they apologized to Jesus, "told him of her." The English translation seems to suggest that they even asked him to heal her. But the Greek makes clear that this was not the case; it was Jesus' idea to heal her. When he heard about the sickness, he took the initiative, approached her, laid his hand upon her, and the fever left her. And it was out of a grateful heart that this restored woman ministered to the needs of these people that afternoon.

Now, it was not a necessary miracle; she was not particularly sick. The fever doubtless would have run its course and she would have recovered in a few days. But it speaks of the compassion of the heart of Jesus that he responded to the suffering of this dear woman, light though it was, and touched her, delivered her, restored her to service that afternoon. Mark records for us that this is a compassionate Christ who ministers with such authority and power.

Then we have the evening account, Verses 32-34:

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And he healed 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. {Mark 1:32-34 RSV}

At sundown the Sabbath ended, and they began to bring from the surrounding region all these sick and demon-possessed people for Jesus to heal. Mark tells us "the whole city was gathered together about the door." If you visit Capernaum today you will find it a very small town, perhaps a half dozen houses. The ruins of a synagogue are there. Some have felt it was the very synagogue in which Jesus taught. However, the majority of scholarly opinion is that it dates from the second century, although it was probably built on the site of the synagogue described in this account. But at that time Capernaum was the most flourishing city on the lake, the largest city of all. It was where Jesus made his home.

So people brought him their sick and diseased and demoniacs to be healed. What a busy, full evening he spent

there in Capernaum! Mark records for us the amazing control Jesus exercised over these demons. He laid a vocal quarantine upon them. He would not permit them to speak, because they knew him. This is very significant, for it is the first indication of the desire Jesus frequently manifested to de-emphasize the spectacular, to keep it under control, to play down deliverance from demons, and physical healing. On a number of occasions Jesus said to those he healed, "Go and tell no man." That is "Don't tell anyone about this. Just accept your healing. But don't spread the word around." Yet invariably they disobeyed him, and soon it was recorded of him that he could no longer come and minister in the city because of the crowds that followed him. It is evident that Jesus did not want those crowds -- not on those terms.

What a contrast this is with some people today. There are healers who go about advertising their healing campaigns, and try to bring out the crowds on that basis, emphasizing the spectacular in what they do. But you see nothing of this in the Bible. Even with the apostles, the physical healings that went on in their ministries were played down, just as in Jesus'. They never advertised them. There is no record in Scripture of people giving public testimonials in order to increase the crowds, or of being "zapped by the power of God," or any of the theatrics you see so much of today. These are totally unbiblical.

Now, God does heal -- and thank God for physical healings. But they are only temporary blessings at best. What Jesus continually emphasizes is the healing of the spirit of man -- the healing of bitterness and hostility and lust and anger, of worry and anxiety and a critical spirit. This is what he is after deliverance from these ugly and evil things -- because this is of eternal value. The healing of the spirit is a permanent thing. So Jesus turns his back on popular acclaim, tries to suppress it and keep it under control, in order that he might be free for the ministry of greater importance.

Mark gives us the final account, the sixth picture, in Verses 35-39:

And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him followed him, and they found him and said to him, "Every one is searching for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.
{Mark 1:35-39 RSV}

After this full day -- and what a full day it was, what a heavy ministry our Lord had that day, with all the healing he did in the evening! -- Mark records that early in the morning, before it was daylight, Jesus went out on the mountainside and there, alone by himself, he prayed. But even there he was not safe. His disciples interrupted this communion, told him that everyone was looking for him. And Jesus reveals the heart and substance of his prayer in what he says in reply: "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out." This is what he was praying about -- that God would lead him, doors would be opened, and hearts prepared in the cities to which he would go next.

Why did Jesus seek the Father's face like this, in these hours of pressure? The only answer we can come to is that he wants to make clear that the authority he had was not coming from him. This is what our Lord is trying to get across to us so continually in the Scriptures -- that it was not his authority by which he acted; he had to receive it from the Father.

I do not know any more confusing doctrine in Christendom today -- one which has robbed the Scriptures of their authority and power in the minds and hearts of countless people -- than the idea that Jesus acted by virtue of the fact he was the Son of God, that the authority and power he demonstrated were due to his own deity. Yet he himself takes great pains to tell us this is not the case. "The Son by himself can do nothing," {cf, John 5:19}. Why do we ignore his explanation, and insist that it is he, acting as the Son of God? He tells us that "it is not I; the Father who dwells in me, he does the works," {John 14:10}. And all the power that Jesus manifested had to come to him constantly from the One who dwelt within him.

The reason Jesus stresses this is that this is what he wants us to learn. We are to operate on the same basis. Response to the normal, ordinary demands of life, and power to cope with it, must come from our reliance upon him at work within us. This is the secret -- all power to live the Christian life comes not from us, doing

our dead-level best to serve God, but from him, granted to us moment by moment as the demand is made upon us. Power is given to those who follow, who obey. The Father is at work in the Son; the Son is at work in us. As we learn this, then we are given power to meet the demands and the needs which are waiting for us in the ministry yet to come.

This is why Jesus was up on the hillside praying -- that there might be such a keenness of relationship with the Father that there would be no hindrance to the flow of the Spirit of God through him as he went out to these other cities. What a difference it makes when we begin to understand this principle!

This is what we labored to teach the students at Wheaton last week. Many of them caught on, and came to us with exciting stories of what God had already done through them that very week, as they began to trust the power of God to work. One student said that he had gone home one evening thinking on the words, "Everything coming from God; nothing coming from me." As he tried to involve himself in his studies, his mind kept going out to his dad, who was not a Christian. So he phoned him and said, "Dad, the Billy Graham film, *Time To Run* is in town; would you go with me tonight?" His father demurred, said he was tired. But the boy pressed him to go. His dad said, "All right, son, I haven't done anything with you for a long time. I'll go with you." They went, and he received the Lord that night. That boy was so excited to see God at work in him!

When I was in Mexico a few weeks ago, I spent an evening with Miss Eunice Pike, the sister of Dr. Kenneth Pike -- both of them noted and capable linguists. Miss Pike was telling me about the early days of Wycliffe Bible Translators in Mexico. Cameron Townsend, the founder, had gone to Mexico to try to get permission from the Mexican government to translate the Scriptures into the languages of the Indian tribes. The government was adamant that this should not take place, was completely opposed to it. The official to which he had to appeal said to him, "As long as I am in this office, you will never be given permission. We don't want the Bible in the Indian languages -- it will only upset them." He absolutely refused. Townsend did everything he knew, went to every official he could find, had all his Christian friends praying that God would open this door. But it seemingly remained totally closed.

Finally he decided that he would give up pressing the issue, and he and his wife would go and live in a little, obscure Indian village, learn the language, minister to the people as best they could, and wait for God to move. They lived in a tiny trailer in this village, just the two of them. It was not very long before he noticed that the fountain in the center of the plaza produced beautiful, clear spring water, but that it ran off down the hill and was wasted. He suggested that the Indians plant something in an area to which the water could easily be diverted, and thus make use of it. Soon they were growing twice as much food as before, and their economy blossomed as a result. The Indians were grateful. Townsend wrote this up in a little article and sent it to a Mexican paper he thought might be interested.

He did not know of it, but that article found its way into the hands of the President of Mexico, Lazaro Cardenas. He said, "What is this? A gringo, an American, coming here to live in an Indian village, where we can't even get our own people to live, and helping them this way? I must meet this man!" He ordered his limousine and his attendants, and they drove to that little Indian village, where they parked at the plaza. It happened that Townsend was there and saw the car. He asked who it was, and was told it was the President of Mexico.

Cameron Townsend is not one to miss an opportunity. He went up to the car and introduced himself and, to his amazement, heard the President say, "You're the man I've come here to see!" He invited him to come to Mexico City and tell more about his work, and when he heard what it was, he said, "Of course! You can come to Mexico to translate the Scriptures into the Indian languages." That began a friendship which continued throughout the lifetime of President Cardenas, who died just a few years ago. His power and authority were used of God all those years to open doors to Wycliffe translators throughout that country.

Only God can do things like that -- bring the President down to see the peon! And that is what the church is missing so in these days. We have everything so arranged, and planned, and strategized, and over-organized, that there is hardly any room for God to operate at all. But this is what Jesus knew -- how God would work in his unique and wonderful way, and open doors that nobody could anticipate, if he were the instrument ready

and prepared to respond to that kind of power within. And this is the secret that impressed Mark -- the authority of the servant. The one who serves is the one who rules.

How far removed that is from the way we all too often live today. God grant that, as we study together, we will learn the great lessons Mark seeks to lay upon our hearts -- that we are to live as Jesus lived, exactly as he lived, by the same power and force, and to know that it is he, working in us, who does the work.

Prayer:

Thank you, our Father, for the reminder of these lessons. Help us understand that these are not intended merely to be lessons in ancient history. This is the way we are to live today. The same God is alive, the same power is available, the same principle operates, ready for us to be its instrument in any and every situation in which demand is laid upon us. We ask it in Christ's name, Amen.

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