

when things get crazy

[opening slide]

Read **Mark 1:32-39**

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew **who he was.**

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. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed:

"Everyone is looking **for you!"**

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Let's pray...

For many of us, today, September 1, feels like the start of a new year more than January 1st, doesn't it? I know it does for me...

And so as we stand on the crest of a new year, I'm drawn to this story in Mark's gospel – for all of us...

I think it's a text many of us **need** today, and I trust in short order you will feel the same...

Because, as we all know, everyday life – come September – can get pretty demanding. If not, relentless! There is always so much that **needs** to be *done* or *attended to*.

And I know I'm not alone. This is the life for many of us.....

Mark Buchanan, a pastor and author some of us are familiar with

- once wrote a description of a **typical day** for a working wife and mothers with young kids... And I want to read it for us – and yes, it might seem like it goes on a bit too long – but that's part of the point...

"Typical day: awaken after a rough night. Siren wails and cat yowls, hot entangled sheets, a dull ache in the bones, a sharp pain in the back, tumult in the belly, angst in the heart—all were a riptide keeping you, exhausted, from reaching the solid ground of sleep. It's earlier than you want to get up. It's later than you should have. The kids need to be roused, fed, dressed, sent off to school. Everyone is tired. Everyone is irritable. There's not enough hot water for showers. Someone forgot to turn on the dishwasher last night. Lipstick-stained cups, smudged glasses, food-encrusted bowls—all need to be swished out beneath the tap, set on the table where they leave rings and puddles of wetness. Arguments erupt. Angry words are shouted. Things are hastily patched over and everyone scatters—the daily diaspora.

Driving to work, you notice your husband didn't put gas in the car yesterday like you asked him to. You have to do it. At the gas station, you remember that you forgot to turn on the dishwasher again. You make a mental note to phone home after school and get one of the kids to do it. There's a road crew slowing traffic on the route you drive, and you miss a light because you have to halt for a fire truck. You are running late, and your nerves, like string caught on the hub of a spinning wheel, wing to a choking tightness. Your muscles, like wet cloth wrung by strong hands, twist into heavy knots. And it's not yet nine o'clock.

At work, you have three phone calls to return (two of them urgent), five e-mails requiring a response, a stack of paper you've been intending to get to all week, and a woman outside your office waiting to see you. You don't recognize her but think you should, and you're unsure if she made an appointment and you forgot it, or if she arrived unannounced. Both possibilities annoy you. You get most of that sorted away, plus handle several phone calls and e-mails and interruptions, and it's almost lunch, and you still haven't touched that stack of paper.

At lunch, mustard comes out the wrong seam of the little plastic packet and spatters over the front of your shirt. You rush into a clothing store and buy a new one. You put it on your VISA card because you're low on cash and doubt a debit card will clear. You

return to the office. The afternoon is like the morning, except you have even less strength and enthusiasm for it.

You **arrive home weary**. The only mail is a pizza flyer and a VISA bill. Opening the bill, you are deflated: You had forgotten about the \$350 brake job you charged last month. You order a pizza from the flyer because you are too tired to cook. You put it on VISA. Only when you go to set the table for dinner do you realize that you forgot to make your phone call: the dishwasher has still not been run. More swishing of plates, glasses, forks.

You eat quickly because your son has soccer practice and your older daughter has youth group and you have to drive them both. You have a meeting at seven. You hope, against reason, that it will end by eight-thirty so that you can pick up your daughter at church without making her wait and the youth pastor wait with her. At the meeting, you are so obsessed with watching the clock that you can't focus on the business at hand. You get more and more irritated at Sally's shambling, mawkish stories and George's bulldog fierceness and Harry's slippery persuasion and Betty's "I think we shoulds" and Larry's pretentious otherworldliness and his monomaniacal question, "Have we prayed enough about this?" Inside, you feel the fruits of the Spirit, one by one, shrivel and drop off the branch, pushed out by their opposites: loathing, sourness, worry, impatience, rudeness, rottenness, faithlessness, gruffness, wildness.

The meeting goes to nearly nine. You rush out, gravel flying scattershot beneath your spinning wheels (did you just hear the ping of rocks hitting Larry's car?) and arrive at 9:08 to pick up your daughter. Neither she nor the youth pastor are pleased. You drive home in silence because your daughter refuses to speak to you, and you are too angry and prideful and weary to apologize. You had earlier planned to read a bit before bed, but you're too spent for that. You get into bed, and though your body has a corpse-like stiffness and heaviness to it, some angst in you, along with the cup of coffee you had at the meeting, keeps plucking you from sleep. Twice you have to get up, once to check for a file you need to take to work tomorrow, once to let the cat out. **When morning comes**, you can't remember ever getting to sleep, though the alarm wakes you with an abruptness like a coronary. You begin all over again.

Typical day."

The specifics of the day are different for every one of us, but the hectic pace is **shockingly** familiar. For some of us, **too** familiar. I had days like this this week and I know others of you did too...

Which is why some folks are **away** today – trying to savor this last long weekend of the summer – and to **shore up** for the craziness that's coming...

And in the light of this, it seems **fitting**, if not **VITAL**, for us to spend this morning in **Mark 1:32-39**.

So, if you haven't already opened your Bible to **Mark 1:32f**, I invite you to do so. And let me begin by telling you a bit of the story that **sets the stage** for this particular moment in Jesus' life.

Now as you'll notice, **this is Mark chapter 1**. Which tells us that *this is early in Jesus' public ministry*. Not *early in Jesus' life* (because Mark doesn't tell us about Jesus' early years), but early in Jesus' ministry. Only a few weeks have passed since Jesus really came on the scene preaching the gospel: announcing that the kingdom of God is at hand, and that all are invited to get in on it.

The disciples have only been with Jesus for **a few days** possibly! **At least for a weekend**. Not that they had weekends like we do, but they had the Sabbath – and in the story that precedes ours, we read about them **being with Jesus on the Sabbath**...

At this point in the chronology, Jesus only has **4** disciples: Simon and Andrew, James and John. The others haven't joined them yet.

So, it's only been a short time. The ball has **just** started to roll. **But it's already rolling FAST**. Virtually **overnight**, Jesus has

become a small-town celebrity. People are coming from everywhere to see him. He is in **serious** demand.

Which shouldn't surprise us. I mean, when the first thing you do is go into a synagogue announcing that the long-awaited day of God's Kingdom has come and **you** are the One through whom it has come, **and** with this, to prove it, you cast out an unclean spirit out of a tormented man that everyone know – and you do it by no other authority than your own, *and it happens!!!*

Well, let's just say, *people are going to talk.*

This is going **VIRAL** – **and there is no stopping it!**

And so, by the end of Jesus' **second** visit to a synagogue, we're told, in (v.28) that "*News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.*" People were making calls, posting on social media, sending out **carrier pigeons!**

"Drop everything and get to Capernaum! Jesus is here. And he's not just another preacher or rabbi. Something is happening here... God is at work in this guy.

He's got authority like no one's business. When he says, "you're healed", you are healed. If he tells a demon to leave you, you are set free. It's crazy and amazing – and you can't miss this...

So, bust your butt down to Capernaum.

We don't know how long he's in town. So, get on down here. This could be our only chance."

"News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee."

And so in v.29, we read that from the synagogue, Jesus and his little crew of followers headed over to **Simon and Andrew's place** (the

brothers). Simon's mother-in-law lived with them. And although we're told that she was often the one helping others, she was in no condition to serve anyone. She was in bed with something serious.

Now, although the disciples had not been with Jesus for very long, they **had** been paying attention. They'd been listening to him talk about the kingdom of God being at hand, and they'd just come from the synagogue, having witnessed Jesus not only announce the kingdom, but **reveal it** – by casting out a demon, setting a man free from years of torment...

So, **Simon told Jesus about his mother in laws condition.**

We're not told what they said. I've always imagined Simon saying something like, "Sorry there's no refreshments. My mother in law usually is the one to make something – she makes the most amazing *gluten free, yeast free, sugar free, dairy free latkes*. But she's actually in the back – sick... She's got a fever... It's pretty bad. *Just thought I'd let you know.*"

And in response Jesus just **smiles**... With one of those "*I know what you're doing*" smiles, but also a "*you have no idea what you're getting yourself into*" smiles.

And with that, Simon led him to the back of the little house and introduced Jesus to his mother-in-law. And with no fanfare, Jesus

simply took her hand to help her up, and the fever left her – and next thing they knew, she was up making biscuits, or something.

It all happened so fast. A moment ago, she had been sick with a dangerous fever, and now she was up and running. Looking healthy. Whipping up something for everyone...

Well, by sunset, we're told that **the whole town was knocking** on their door.

According to the Rabbi's, the Sabbath is officially over when **three stars** can be seen. So, by the time that **third star** was somewhat perceptible, people were coming from all over, bringing the sick and demonized to Jesus. v.33 says, "**The whole town gathered at the door**" - they set up camp on Simon's front lawn – each one waiting for their chance to get close to Jesus.

And Jesus spent the evening healing the sick and driving out demons.

He'd walk over to someone on a stretcher and after a few moments of conversation, the person would be up giving Jesus a hug. *There was nothing weird about it. Nothing flashy about it. No appeals for financial support.* Just Jesus revealing the reality of the gospel – that the kingdom of God is at hand – in and through Him...

(v.34) **"And Jesus healed** many who had various diseases. *He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was."*

He did this till late. *He must have* – the whole town had come.

As Jesus and the disciples watched the crowds disperse, they probably overheard people talking about friends they'd be calling, people they knew who *needed* a moment with Jesus...

And when the last person had gone, they went inside, **knowing that *this was just the beginning.***

Tonight the line-up was long, *but **this was just the beginning.***

And I suspect Jesus could feel it. He must have.

As he lay down to go to sleep, **He KNEW what was coming...**

There were so many people who **needed** him — legitimately – who needed to be touched by him, healed by him, delivered by him, restored by him. Who **needed** to hear his message—about the Father and about the kingdom. ***And they were coming.*** Coming with their desires, with their needs, their requests, their agenda's for what they wanted Him to do for them and for others.

Pretty soon **EVERYONE** would want a moment of Jesus' time.

Everyone would want something from him.

And Jesus knew it.

As he lay to sleep, Jesus **knew** what was coming...

So, what does he do?

Mark 1:35 tells us.

"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."

That's a verse I've come back to so many times...

Here's Jesus. Everyone is **starting** to ask **for** him and **of** him – seeking him out, looking for him, expecting things of him (and with good reason), **and what does he do?**

Well – **two** things. **(1) He goes to bed and (2) He gets up early to pray...**

He goes to bed and then gets up early to pray...

Now, in the past, I think I've only really payed attention to Jesus' getting up early and what it tells us.

But I think there's also something important about this reality that Jesus didn't stay up all night in prayer (at least not this night) – but that he simply **rose early**. The obvious implication being that **Jesus went to sleep**.

Which could seem not worth highlighting, but just the opposite. It's actually **startling** and **beautiful** – for 2 reasons.

First: because it gives us a glimpse of **Jesus' humanity** – **even Jesus needed sleep**. Even Jesus was not "**so spiritual**" that basic things like sleep didn't matter. No, **Jesus' needed sleep**.

But **second**, with this, **more than this** – Jesus' sleeping is not just a glimpse of his humanity – ***it's a glimpse of His faith.***

It is a glimpse of ***His trust – in the Father...***

Trust that *because His Father is at work – He could sleep...*

*That in the night – while Jesus slept – the brokenness of the world – the needs of the many – were **not** unattended to...*

*No, in the night – **while Jesus slept** – the rescuing God of the Universe **was** and **is** still at work.*

As Jesus Himself says in **John 5:17** – "My Father is always at his work..." And *because of this – **trusting** this – **Jesus was able to get some sleep.***

[As one my profs used to say - that alone is worth the price of admission!]

But that's not all. As the text explicitly tells us, (v.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."

I wish that Mark filled us in on what Jesus talked to the Father about in this early hour of prayer, but it doesn't really matter. What matters is that we grasp that **when things got crazy for Jesus**, when His life could so easily have become shaped and overrun by

everyone else's desires and requests of Him, *Jesus got up early to get alone with the Father in prayer.*

He was **unwilling** to just **wait till things slowed down.**

Which is good – cause *things never did slow down for Jesus.*

When everything was pressing in on him, when His life could have been **overtaken** by the demands of others, *Jesus got up early to get alone with His Father.*

Which isn't to say that Jesus **ignored** the needs or desires of others. **He didn't. Just the opposite, right?**

He got alone with the Father because He knew that **if He was to be of any help to others**, He **needed** to *get alone with the Father.*

He **needed** to *know the Father's heart.*

He **needed** to be *guided by the Father's will and desires.*

He **needed** to see *his own life – and all of life – from the perspective of the Father, and to live in dependence upon the Spirit, who came from the Father.*

He **needed** to get close and stay close to the Father... **Or** He *would lose his bearings and end up just a pawn of others, tossed by the waves of everyone's desires, no use to anyone.*

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. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

Do you hear the **clarity** in Jesus' response? It's striking, isn't it?

In the face of the **bewildering** onslaught of the needs, demands, and desires of everyone – **Jesus knew what the Father desired** – with a **piercing and liberating clarity** – because He'd been with the Father.

And so he was able to say, *"Let's move on—to the next village over—so I can keep preaching the message the Father has sent me to preach. That is why I've come."*

And **as they followed Jesus out of town that day**, the disciples must have **understood** that what they had just witnessed **in** Jesus was something they would need to learn **from** Jesus – *the grace and priority of seeking and knowing, trusting and following the will of the Father...*

Just as this was central to Jesus' life, this would soon need to become central to their lives... as it does to ours...

For Jesus, it meant **trusting the Father** enough to go to sleep **and** also to give up some sleep. And not just to give up some sleep – *but to choose to seek the Father in place of those last hours of sleep.*

For Jesus' disciples, and for you and I – it could mean the same, or maybe something else.

I do think **regular sleep** is an essential act of trust that too often gets left out of our consideration of ***life with God***.

Trusting God isn't **just** a matter of being a person of prayer or contentment in adversity. No, **trusting God** means we can go to sleep at night, and tithe from whatever God provides us, and take our holidays, and savor the grace of a regular sabbath.

All of these are ***ordinary acts of trust in a real God*** – practices that we **can** embrace and enter into as we discover the grace that **our work** is not what runs the world... or holds it together...

No, in the night – when we are asleep – the brokenness of the world is **not** unattended to... ***Rather, in the night – when we are asleep – the rescuing God of the Universe IS at work.***

Just as He is in the day...

And because of this, we – like Jesus – can rest – in trust – even in the craziest of times (as this was for Jesus).

But before we decide God is inviting us to go to bed for the fall or to take a long vacation with Jesus from the pain and complexity of life in the **real world** – we need to ***hear and follow*** the example of

Jesus who **ALSO** got up early to seek and know the Voice and leading of the Father...

And hold up – before you blow me off with the thought: "Sure, that's nice for Jesus, and maybe for you **Pastor** Scott, but that's not realistic for me... I can't just set things aside..."

I know some of you are thinking and feeling this... **I hear you.** And much because I often have the same response...

But let me ask you that I have found God asking me – again and again: *Do you really think that Jesus is that clueless and cruel to ask and expect you and I to do something that isn't actually possible for us to do? **Does that sound like Jesus?***

Think about it! Who has come to set the captives free? Who has come to give **freedom** to the oppressed, to **restore** the broken and **revive** the weary?

It's Jesus – the very One who calls us to follow Him today...

Not so that we can **ADD HIM** to our **already overwhelming list**. But so that we might come and submit our **already overwhelming list** to **Him** – the One who sets captives free – ***that He might lead us forward – in the grace and wisdom of the Father-in paths that leads to life (for us & for all).***

LISTEN! Listen to the familiar words of Jesus in **Matt 11:28-**

30. The One who calls you today is the One who says,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Today, as we stand on the cusp of another year, many of us **need** to hear these words and let them lead us forward...

With **HOPE** and **TRUST** that in calling us to Himself – to lay some thing (or things) **aside** – so that we can truly draw near to Him – Jesus is not asking or expecting us to do the impossible. He is not asking and expecting **YOU** to do something you can't do.

He **knows** the reality of your life and mine... He **understands** the unique pressures and demands that each of us face.

Which is exactly WHY He calls us to Himself – that, **like Jesus**, we might hear and know God's Voice amidst all the other voices...

That, **like Jesus**, we might know and be empowered to follow the Father's call in the midst of all that calls us...

And – that, like Jesus, we would again and again, know that in and through it all, the Father is at hand and **at work** – sovereignly shaping our lives according to His greater purposes in us...

As I said a moment ago, **for Jesus, it meant getting up early** to get alone with the Father (as we see him do often through the gospel accounts). For you and me, it might look very different.

But whatever it is, **it will mean something**. Something we will have to **choose** to leave aside, lay aside or step away from so we can draw near to hear and know God's Voice and follow...

So, what does this look like for you?

So, how do you keep alert and responsive to the Father's leading, will and grace?

What do you do when everyone is asking of you, asking for you, demanding of you, expecting things from you? What do you do when your own expectations of yourself are too much?

How do you stay alert and responsive to God's leading and will and grace?

And more importantly, as you look into the coming days and year – ***How WILL you? How will you keep alert and responsive to the Father's leading, will and grace?***

How might God be inviting you to intentionally ***make and hold space*** in your life and soul to listen for and allow His Voice to be the Voice that anchors and guides you?

And not just once in a while, but **as a way of life...**

As I look ahead to the coming months, season and year, for all the plans I have already – I have no real idea what this year will bring.

But I do know that I will need to trust that God is at work – and in this trust, to **seek, hear, know** and **follow** the Father's Voice...

And I suspect you will need the same.

Let's pray.

-----→ **Invitation to the Table...**

Benediction

For all the cluelessness of the disciples – sometimes they say things that are more true than they realize.

We hear it in their words to Jesus – when they find him. They exclaim to Jesus – "*Everyone is looking for you.*"

That's an overwhelming truth – "**Everyone is looking for you.**"

Until you grasp – as Jesus did – that everyone ***includes the Father...***