

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: May 4, 2008

Staying On Target

by Dan Trygg

"While the sun was setting, all those who had any *who were* sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. ⁴¹ Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ. ⁴² When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. ⁴³ But He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.' ⁴⁴ And He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea." Luke 4:40-43

One of the things that has really impressed me about Jesus' ministry, as I have studied the gospels in recent years, is how He retained focus during such busy, hectic times. Once He started healing the sick and casting out demons, the crowds that gathered to hear Him and receive ministry increased dramatically. At times there were so many people coming and going that there was no time even to eat a meal (Mk. 6:31). The crowds were so eager to get close to Him that they pressed in upon Him. They were even stepping on one another (Lk. 12:1). That is probably why He gave the sermon on the mountain (Matt. 5:1). The natural setting allowed Him to address a large crowd, and still be heard and seen. On other occasions, He preached from a boat, sitting a little ways out from the shore (Lk. 5:1-3). Again, this allowed Him to be seen and heard by many, without interruption. At times, when He went into a home, there were people outside who could not get in to hear Him, or get close to Him (Lk. 8:19). The story of the men who tore the roof off to get their friend down to Jesus shows the determination of people who were willing to do almost anything to gain access to Him (Mk. 2:1-4). Wherever He went, crowds followed Him (Matt. 4:25; 8:1; 14:35; 19:2; 21:9; Jn. 6:1,2). If anyone recognized Him, they would spread the word so that those who had sick family members and friends would bring them out and place them along the way He travelled (Mk. 6:54-56). Imagine. town squares, villages, market places and along the roadway, people who were sick, or oppressed by the devil were placed so that Jesus might pass by them and deal with their concerns. Many, many were healed. We have such a small glimpse into all that Jesus did during these brief three and a half years. The immensity and extent of His healing ministry is hinted at by the apostle John in the last chapter of His gospel, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that *even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written*" (Jn. 21:25). For John to say this, Jesus' life must have been extremely hectic and pressing. **Everywhere He went people were waiting for Him, looking to Him for help, calling His name, wanting His time, running to meet Him. It had to be *incredibly draining*, physically and emotionally.**

All of this work must have been *incredibly rewarding*, too. Jesus was seeing people healed of sicknesses and bondages they had been stuck in for years. He saw broken lives transformed before His eyes, as He was the instrument God used to heal sick and broken bodies. He saw people whose lives had been shattered by demonic oppression, people who were mentally and emotionally deranged, outcasts from society, dramatically changed by a simple word of confrontation and rebuke from Him. He must have been mobbed, not only by the ones healed, but also by their families and friends. Whether in tears, or jumping for joy, they could not help but pour out their expressions of gratitude, not only to the Father in heaven, but also to Jesus.

All of this activity would also have been *incredibly stimulating*. He was experiencing the flow of the power of the Holy Spirit, as He operated within Him to heal people (Lk. 5:17). He was seeing the Father at work in the people that came to Him, and was responding to what He saw (Jn. 5:19). He was experiencing the promptings of the Father, who was abiding in Him, and was doing the mighty works of God in a partnership with Him (Jn. 9:4; 10:25,32,37,38; 14:9-11; Acts 2:22). It was the power of God upon and within Him that enabled Him to do good and to heal those who had been demonized (Acts 10:38). He was receiving wisdom, insight and teachings from the Father which was amazing to the crowds and confounding His opponents (Jn. 5:30; 7:16,17; 8:28,29; 12:49,50; Matt. 7:29; Lk. 7:16; e.g., Lk. 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 15:1-7; 20:19-26). It had to be tremendously exciting, seeing God work so powerfully within Him, and seeing the results clearly demonstrated before Him.

Yet, in the midst of all this hub-bub of Holy Spirit empowered, Kingdom ministry, we find Jesus not permitting Himself to become enmeshed in the activity itself. He had a larger mission, which kept Him moving on, never settling in one place. He kept a clear head, not allowing Himself to be diverted from His main purpose. In spite of all the excitement, stimulation, the demands and pleas of the multitudes, and even the bone-wearying

exhaustion, Jesus kept returning to His main mission. **How did He do it? How did He keep from being swept away by all of these dynamics**, both internal and external?

I know I experience just a little sliver of what Jesus must have been dealing with. My days can get quite crazy. Sometimes I get flurries of phone calls, or things come up that I could not have predicted. My schedule has to flex to accommodate changes and interruptions. Some days I seem to be on the run from dawn until dusk, meeting with someone here, or picking someone up to bring them on an errand. I often meet for Bible study, prayer or sharing the gospel. At other times it is for spiritual counseling and encouragement. I experience the flow of the Spirit during many of these meetings, and I have seen people touched by the Lord as we meet. I see their progress over weeks of meetings. Many of these activities are positive and beneficial. I can see that some of them are life-changing for those I am involved with. Even the errands not only meet a pragmatic need, but also provide an opportunity for building a relationship for the Kingdom, and sharing. At times, though, it seems like the busy-ness can begin to overpower my schedule and crowd out other, more important meetings. **Very quickly the good can become the worst enemy of the best.** If I don't stay focused, and realize what I am *supposed* to be doing, I can get caught up in a whirlwind of activity, some of which is not very eternally productive, at all. A brother referred to this phenomenon as a "**trap of busy-ness**". Activity for Jesus' sake can quickly turn into activity for activity's sake. Well-meaning service *for* Jesus, can subtly replace service *at the Lord's initiative*. It may be nice, helpful and even appear to be good, but if it keeps us from what God's purpose for us *really* is at any given moment, then it becomes an obstacle to His will, instead of furthering it.

How do we stay focused? What can we learn from Jesus' example? One of the things that Luke clues us into more than any other gospel writer is the prayer life of Jesus. In the midst of the crazy busy-ness of His schedule, **the Lord Jesus regularly took time out to get alone with God in a private place.** Mark's version of this incident reads, "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there" (1:35). We learn of Jesus' conscious decision to *take* this time for Himself and the Father. First, **He got up early**, before everyone else, so that He could secure this time. It was still dark when He got up. It was "O-dark thirty", as they say. In order to get time with God, He had to give up some sleep. He had to subdue the natural desire of His body for sleep, and push Himself to get up. Secondly, **He went out from the house**, either so that He would not disturb others, or to guarantee that no one would disrupt His time when they started to get up. Finally, **He went away to a secluded or deserted place**, so that He would be undisturbed. This guaranteed that He would not only be free from interruption, but also that He would be free to express Himself as He wished. **The point of all this is to see that He consciously planned to take time to meet with God the Father, and He went out of His way to secure it.** It was a sacrifice for Him to do this. **It meant that He would not be able to be like everyone else.** Everyone else was sleeping, but He was up praying. Some may have even thought He was a little extreme about this, but the results speak for themselves. He was able to discern the Father's voice; they were not. He had unusual wisdom and understanding from God; others did not. He had the power of God to heal; they did not. He had authority to cast out demons with a word; they had never even *seen* that before. **And it was this time spent with God that kept Jesus' mind clear.** We see Him seeking the Father's counsel before picking the 12 (Lk. 6:12). He sought the Father when the people tried to make Him King prematurely (Mk. 6:44-46; cf. Jn. 6:15). He prayed before asking His disciples significant questions (Lk. 9:18), and before major events in their training (Lk. 9:26). He taught them to pray to be spared tests of temptation, and for the Father to deliver them from the evil one (Matt. 6:13). He practiced this very principle at Gethsemane. Through prayer and communion with God, He went from being deeply troubled to becoming once again resolute and joyful about fulfilling the purpose for which the Father had sent Him, even though it was the deepest trial of His entire existence (Lk. 22:40-45; cf. Heb. 12:2). [It is important to clarify that not all of us can do exactly as Jesus did. In fact, He didn't even counsel others to follow His exact regimen. He did encourage His followers to pray in secret, whether that be an inner room of the house (Matt. 6:6), or a deserted place as He was able to do. Single moms can't leave their little kids at home and go for a walk. What is important is that we go out of our way to seek God at a time that works for us, whether it be morning, evening, or during an afternoon naptime.]

Finally, note that Jesus had a sense of God's purpose for His life. This served to help Him evaluate how He spent His time. He was sent on a mission, and that mission took precedence over everything else. He was to go through the land of Israel proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel of the Kingdom to the Jewish people. This calling meant that He could not stay in one place for too long, if He was going to get the job done. It was time to move on.

Do you have a sense of God's purpose for your life? Do you know why you are here, or what God has in mind for you to do for His Kingdom? Are you making decisions in your life based upon what God has revealed to you about your purpose here? We cannot be like everybody else. Each of us has a job to do. We must take care to protect, nurture and develop our God-given abilities, so that we can fulfill His plan for us. Again, the good can easily keep us from God's best, if we are not evaluating from the right perspective.