

## Everyone's Searching For You

Mark 1:29-39

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Frank Lloyd Wright remembered an incident that seemed insignificant at the time, but had a profound influence on his life. When he was 9, he and his no-nonsense uncle were walking across a snow-covered field. When they reached the far end of the field, his uncle stopped him and turned around.

He pointed out his own tracks in the snow, straight and true as an arrow's flight, and then he pointed out young Frank's tracks, meandering all over the field. "Notice how your tracks wander aimlessly from the fence to the cattle to the woods and back again. And see how my tracks aim directly to my goal. There's an important lesson in that."

Years later Wright liked to tell how that lesson had contributed to his philosophy in life. "I determined right then," he'd say with a twinkle in his eye, "not to miss the things in life that my uncle had missed." Wright saw in those tracks what his uncle did not: it's easy to let the demands of life keep us from the joys of living.

We all recognize that any goal in life worth achieving demands a great deal of our energy. Doctors spend hours studying the human body. Their patient demands it. Teachers research and prepare their lessons. The student demands it. Carpenters patiently measure projects before they drive the first nail. The strength of the structure depends on it. Mothers sacrifice for their family. The wellbeing of their children requires it.

We could not live if we did not set goals and work to fulfill them. No sane person would argue otherwise. But here's what Wright learned at the age of 9 that others at 59 don't always understand: the journey of life is just as important as the goal.

The whole city had gathered around the door, pressing in to see Jesus. The demands on him were already piling up. He cured many, cast out demons, and taught constantly. And his disciples didn't help matters. When he left in the morning early to pray, they went searching for him. And when they found him they said, "What are you doing, everyone is searching for you?"

How do we enjoy the journey when everyone is searching for you, wanting a piece of you, demanding your time?

Truth is, hard work is required in life. We all have to work. In our jobs; in our homes; in school; in marriages. All of us have to work. Living well demands it. To have a goal and to apply yourself to accomplish that goal – there's no feeling like it.

That's what I see when I look at Jesus in this passage. Look at what kind of day he has: here's Jesus – just starting his ministry. Mark says that after one of his first sermons, as they leave the synagogue Jesus is immediately confronted with the sickness of Peter's mother-in-law.

When the sun sets all the people in this small town bring Jesus their sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathers at the door and are healed. Afterwards, at some point that evening, they finally get some sleep.

Next day, instead of sleeping-in, Jesus rises before dawn and leaves the house to pray. Simon and company go looking for him. And when they find him, they remark, "Everyone's searching for you!"

I imagine that Jesus could have said any number of things at this point. But instead stating the obvious, ("Hey boys, I'm trying to have a moment alone with the Father"), he says, "You're right, Simon." Let's go to the next town and get started.

Let's go to another town so I can preach. Let's leave this quiet, calm place of solitude and get to work. That is why I've come." Jesus understood what he had been sent to do and he set about doing it. So, even when everyone is searching for you, waiting to distract you, remember that hard work is required.

Secondly, when everyone's searching for you, don't let others define your goals. How do we work hard and keep it from killing us? The obvious answer is to take some time off away from the work.

There are, however, other ways of combating fatigue. Look at this short exchange between Simon Peter and Jesus. Simon has just come from his mother-in-law's home and he says to Jesus, "Everyone's searching for you!" It sounds like he's pretty excited about something and is chastising Jesus for slipping away.

Have you ever wondered who is the "everyone" are that are searching for Jesus? The other disciples? The sick Jesus healed? His mother-in-law? Probably all of them and more, but there's something else here.

You see, when the sun came up, the town descended upon this poor woman's house -again. Word had spread and the world was at the door of this poor woman's house. And the disciples have no idea what to do. Thomas certainly wasn't going to heal them. James didn't know how to cast out demons. Andrew couldn't open the eyes of the blind. So Simon runs.

And look at Jesus' response: "Let's go somewhere else." I can just hear Simon stammering in disbelief: "Somewhere else? Somewhere else? Where else should we be? What about ... There are sick people ... What do I tell my mother-in... Somewhere else?" Yes, Peter, somewhere else.

And here's the surprise we often overlook: Jesus didn't feel that he had to respond to every need of every person in every situation. When he was in the wilderness, people back in town were suffering. Jesus didn't meet the needs of all the people in Palestine during his three year because he knew that wasn't the goal.

But Simon thought it was. At least at this moment. Simon thought that healing everyone was the goal. But Jesus would not allow himself to lose focus. Flight 401 from New York City was flying to Miami with a load of holiday passengers. As they approached Miami Airport for its landing, a light that indicates that the landing gear was down failed to come on.

The plane flew in a large, looping circle at 2,000 feet over the Everglades while the crew checked out the light failure. Was the landing gear down but the light burned out, or was the light out because the gear wasn't down?

Trying to figure this out, the flight engineer fiddled with the bulb. He tried to remove it, but it wouldn't budge. Another member of the crew tried to help out...and then another. Soon everyone was focused on the little bulb that refused to be dislodged from its socket.

And while this was going on, it's assumed that someone bumped into the autopilot switch and turned it off. The plane lost altitude and crashed into Everglades, killing many. An experienced crew of seasoned pilots fiddled with a \$12 light bulb and forgot the most basic of all rules of the air -- "Don't forget to fly the airplane!"

Jesus stayed focused and understood that his goal was to preach. “There may be healings along the way, Simon, but let's not get lost in the hysteria. Let's stay focused boys. I've come to preach the kingdom of God and we must go to another place to do that.”

We need to stay focused, too. Our goal is to win this lost world for Christ. So we need to remember that hard work is required. And we must not let others to define our goals.

Lastly, when everyone is searching for you we need to remember to pray. Jesus needed to pray, so do we.

There may not be a lot of time to get long hours of prayer in when the crowds are descending upon us and our friends are coming at us and the demons are picking at us and sick family members need our help...

But find a moment, even if you have to hide, and pray. Those folks will find you eventually, (you know they will), but by then you'll have found strength for the journey.

And that strength will help you work hard and stay focused on your goals. There's a lot of hard work that needs to get done - at our jobs, at home, in our marriages, in our community, and right here at Providence - hard work for the kingdom of God.

The strength we receive in prayer helps us stay focused on the goal so that we, like Paul, can “forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead, pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus.”