

“Run, Run, Run...” Pr Jim Sprengle, February 7, 2021

- I. **Mark 1:36-38** – ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him, ³⁷ and they found Him and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” ³⁸ 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.”
- II. **In February and March of last year**, our world changed.
 - a. You might have been one of those people who had a lot on your plate –
 - i. Dinners, work, volunteer positions, meetings and friends
 - ii. Maybe you had a family that had you running to school, sports and then other activities.
 - iii. For some, retirement doesn’t seem to slow them down at all – I’ve heard people say that they are busier as a retired person than before!
 - iv. At times the pace and schedule of the world was enough to make our hearts explode
 - b. And then, just like that... stop.
 - i. We went from a full calendar to a house full of people unable to do much of anything
 - ii. Even simple things like going to the store or walking outside came with an air of caution – getting near others was risky
 - iii. All our sports were sidelined – from football to basketball – from hockey to golf – even the Olympics
 - iv. Going to church and worship didn’t stop completely, but it certainly changed – as most of you are watching this from home
 - c. In a strange way, the things that were most important on our list of priorities changed in a very short time.
 - i. Remember the massive downturn and bankruptcies in 2007?
 1. People who were striving to own things, including homes, cars, and spend money on the “good life” were piling up the debt
 2. When everything came crashing down, many people found that their priorities were mixed up, and they downsized their living arrangements and reduced their debt wherever possible
 - ii. In the same way, the pandemic caused us to look at the list of priorities in our lives... and consider what is most important
 - d. What is most important?
- III. **Jesus has a full schedule in our Gospel reading.**
 - a. The Gospel of Mark is shorter than the others, along with a sense of urgency.
 - b. You may have noticed that the word, “immediately” is used all over the place
 - i. Immediately Jesus did this... Immediately they did that... snap, snap, snap and no time to waste!

- c. Jesus came from the waters of His baptism and was immediately driven into the wilderness for 40 days... in the next sentence Jesus has already traveled 70+ miles to Galilee and called the first disciples
 - i. Who by the way, “immediately” dropped their nets and followed Him
- d. Jesus immediately goes into the synagogue and teaches and heals with authority...
- e. He ends up in Peter’s mother-in-law’s house, heals her of a fever... crowds gather around, and He is inundated with people who need healing – it says the “whole city was gathered at the door” (vs 33)
- f. How long do you think that day was for Jesus as He cared for people, taught them, and healed them?
 - i. I get anxious and fired up just thinking about the pressure... the intensity of people’s needs –
 - ii. One person goes and another person jumps in over and over again
- g. Run, run, run....

IV. **Jesus ran with certain priorities in mind...**

- a. What’s important to us?
 - i. A good education?
 - ii. Raising up children?
 - iii. A good job or career?
 - iv. A comfortable life?
 - v. Spending time with family?
- b. All these things are important, and God gives us many vocations as good and right.
- c. However, do these things revolve around our relationship with Jesus, or do they force Him out?
- d. For example, how much prayer and seeking God’s will goes into your daily education... raising your kids... doing the right thing on the job...?
- e. In our constant running around, where have we set Jesus into a compartment over here... while all our other stuff is over here?
- f. In fact, we might even run, run, run.... Away from Jesus and will for us altogether!
 - i. We see His will and priorities and we just decide to do our own thing – and run the other way
 - ii. It’s not hard to run toward the world and all it offers
- g. When God is the first thing on our list – our priority – everything flows from His will and desire in our lives.
 - i. And He paid to be the first one on our long list of priorities...

V. **Jesus ran for three solid years – only to end up on a cross.**

- a. He could have found other priorities
- b. He could have gotten distracted with pressing matters
- c. He could have put other things in front of His Father’s will

- i. But He didn't
 - 1. Jesus never let anything get in the way of buying us back from an eternity separated from Him... from God Himself
 - 2. He was single-minded and focused... He set His face toward Jerusalem (Lk 9:51) and the death that awaited Him on Calvary
 - 3. And through His work of obedience to the Father, Jesus rescued all of us...
 - d. He paid to be at the top of the list in our lives
- VI. **The pandemic has caused us all to consider our priorities.**
 - a. What the Scriptures do for us today is help us consider what's worth running after
 - b. Jesus made the first move – He found us and brought us to faith... and now we run with purpose.
 - c. Not only do we run toward Jesus, we run with Him by keeping in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25)
 - i. If we had a life a year ago that had nothing but activities that crowded out Christ and life in Him... we now have an opportunity live in a different way
 - ii. It's almost as if a giant "reset" button was pushed in many of our lives, where things that seemed so important are not anymore
 - d. It is a perfect opportunity to open our hearts and minds to the leading of the Holy Spirit and allowing our priorities to flow from there.
 - i. What was Jesus' priority? It was about sharing the Gospel!
 - ii. If we are lined up with Him, if our concerns are the same as His, we are compelled to share Him with others
 - iii. In a world that can change overnight, Jesus is the only thing that matters
 - e. Here's the best part about running with Jesus... He helps us get there.
 - f. We may not have the energy or strength to keep going, but with Jesus we are empowered to run the race and receive the prize (as Paul says in our 1 Corinthians reading today)
 - g. Through our Baptisms.... Through the Lord's Supper... Through God's Word of promise and forgiveness, we are empowered to run...run...run.
 - h. As we come out of this pandemic, use it as an opportunity to run.
 - i. Run toward Jesus
 - ii. Run with Jesus
 - iii. And especially, run for Jesus... amen.