

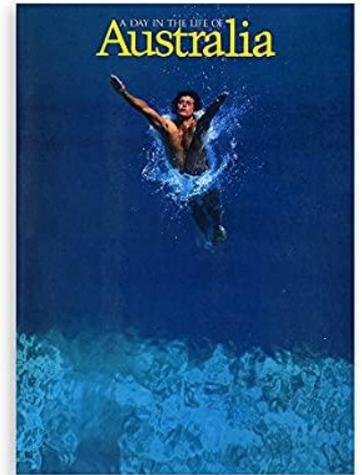
31 January 2021 – A day in the life of Jesus

READ: Mark 1:21-49, 10:45

MESSAGE – A typical day in the life of Jesus

I wonder how many of you remember a coffee table book from the 1980s called *A Day in the Life of Australia*, where 100 photographers went and took candid shots all across Australia?

I wonder what sort of photos might be included in a typical day from **our** lives? Would there be photos of home, walks, shopping, grandchildren, work?



No one had a camera to record such a day in the life of Jesus, but the Gospel writer Mark gives us a good insight into what a typical day looked like for Jesus in the first chapter of his story. As Mark leads us through a busy and **'typical'** day for Jesus, he shows us what the public ministry of Jesus looked and felt like, from the eye-witness perspective of Peter.

I suspect it would be a fairly exhausting day for most of us – a day filled with non-stop excitement and people – but also a day that includes God at every turn. Mark uses this day in the life of Jesus to introduce some key themes – Jesus as a powerful teacher and compassionate healer – but also some more challenging themes of Jesus openly confronting and overcoming evil and rising before dawn to pray and spend time alone with God.

Mark begins his typical day with Jesus at **church**. It was – we presume – a fairly typical Jewish synagogue in Peter's home town of Capernaum. The first thing noted about Jesus is that he is a **teacher**. We're not told the content of what Jesus taught, although Matthew and Luke later fill in some of the gaps. But this is no ordinary teaching! The people are **amazed** and **astounded** – for Jesus teaches with **authority**.



But not everyone is happy with Jesus. As will become a regular pattern whenever and wherever Jesus ministers, there is **opposition**. In this case a member of the congregation starts yelling out, naming Jesus as the **'Holy One of God'** and questioning whether Jesus has come to destroy 'us'. Clearly the person isn't following the unspoken rules of polite church behavior. Jesus confronts the person who shudders and is then silent, leaving us to ponder what the heck is going on ...



Mark explains the outburst in terms of an **unclean spirit**. Jesus will have several more encounters with unclean spirits later in the story. However we may interpret Mark's label of an unclean spirit, which was a common cultural way of explaining certain behaviours and illnesses in the first century, Jesus is seen to be the **'more powerful one'** that John the Baptist pointed to, the one who can free people from such afflictions. He does this as the Holy One of God, suggesting that Jesus has a special connection with God's power and God's presence.

The first conclusion we might draw is that there would have been **plenty** to talk about over coffee that morning! And for those who know their Jewish Scriptures, Mark is pointing to Jesus as a **prophet** going about his work. Jewish prophets typically spoke powerfully and were also known to arouse hostility from those who felt threatened by their message. So Jesus is speaking as a powerful prophet.

We then move from church to Peter's home, where his mother-in-law is sick in bed with a fever. Jesus appears quite at home in this setting and responds to this need immediately. Rather than her sickness making Jesus unclean, however, she catches **healing and wholeness** from Jesus and is made well. We're told that she gets up and starts **servicing**.



While we may want to question the gender stereotyping being shown here – that a woman’s place is to provide hospitality for the men – Mark suggests that this is a valid form of **discipleship**. When Jesus is later quizzed about greatness, his response is that whoever wants to be great must **serve**, as he himself came to serve. At the cross, when the male disciples have all fled, Mark notes the presence of several women – and describes them as those who have followed and **served** Jesus from the time of his ministry in Galilee.

News about this healing obviously spreads fast and by evening, a crowd of sick and afflicted people gathers to seek healing from Jesus. Next day, a leper comes to Jesus seeking healing, who recognizes Jesus’ power and authority to heal when he says ‘If you choose, you can make me clean’. Mark writes that Jesus was moved with compassion, a fun Greek word **splagnitzomai**, that means to be moved in one’s gut – and restores the leper to wholeness.



So in these various ways, Jesus is shown to be a powerful **healer** as well as a powerful **teacher**. For Jewish hearers of Mark’s story this may point to Jesus as being a prophet like Elijah and Elisha, two prophets who also healed people. In the case of Jesus, though, healing seems to have been a **regular** part of his ministry. And the cause of his growing notoriety and fame.

It seems that Jesus gets little time to himself as his fame grows. But Mark notes another important part of Jesus’ typical day. He rises early to spend time with God in **prayer**. This time is essential for Jesus to maintain his own spiritual health and to seek guidance for his ministry. The disciples may have wanted to set up a permanent healing clinic in Capernaum, but Jesus will have none of it and retreats to the countryside.



Right from the start of Mark’s Gospel, then, there are some important and unsettling theological questions swirling around ...

- Who is Jesus and what does Jesus do?
A: Jesus is the one who speaks and acts for God
- How is God work through Jesus?
A: In the typical day of ministry that Mark describes, God is working to bring healing and wholeness to vulnerable and needy people, revealing God's heart of compassion and grace
- How are the people around Jesus portrayed?
A: They are shown to have deep needs and are drawn to Jesus seeking help and hope. For his part, Jesus responds with compassion & power
- How are disciples to live?
A: Positively, like Peter's mother-in-law, ready and willing to serve ... and negatively, not like Peter and the other male disciples, who try to persuade Jesus to follow their plan for what he should do

As Davis Lose writes:

'Our God is a God of the broken, and our church is a fellowship of the needy. That's pretty much all it takes to be a follower of Jesus then or now: recognition of your deep need and trust that Jesus has come to meet it. ... God does not stay away from us because of our disappointments or fears but rather draws nearest to us precisely in these moments. ... Perhaps God might also choose to work through us to draw other people to new life.'

The **good news** in this story is that Jesus is prepared to meet us in our vulnerability and brokenness, in the places we perhaps hide or are ashamed of, our places of deep need, the places that stop us from enjoying the abundant life that Jesus speaks of elsewhere. There is no embarrassment with Jesus – nothing seems to shock or surprise him. He simply meets people where they are and offers a word or touch of encouragement and healing, always nudging the person back to involvement in their community. The person is usually left free of what was troubling them.

But what about us? What is our role? It's tempting to hear this sketch about a typical day in the life of Jesus and think that we are called to be **just like Jesus**, proclaiming the good news, healing people and setting them free from their afflictions. Later on in the story the disciples will take on some of these tasks – and will struggle. But here in this opening chapter, the focus all falls on **Jesus** and his unique and powerful ministry and how people were attracted to seek Jesus out.



As his disciples, Jesus calls us to follow him by serving others. As we look around, it's not hard to see the brokenness and need of people in our own families, in the church family and in those living in our neighbourhood. Perhaps God can speak or act through us to bring hope and wholeness. But the true teacher and healer that people need is Jesus and we are called to point people towards Jesus and his compassionate welcome and his powerful message.