

**Title: “Stay the Course”**  
**Text: Mark 1:29-39<sup>1</sup>**  
**Epiphany 5 – February 5, 2012**  
**©copyright 2012 – Rev. David P. Mumm**

---

**Immediate & Long Range**

Jesus would have made a great CEO. He knew how to deal with the urgent needs without losing sight of the long-range goals. Jesus would also have made a great farmer. The right amount of seed, planted in nice straight rows, always able to see the immediate, while working for the future. But, Jesus did not come to earth to be a CEO or a farmer. He came to be *the* Savior for all people. There were countless temptations placed before Him, to change course, to lose sight of the real reason for His being here. Yet Jesus never lost sight of His purpose.

**The Press of the Immediate**

On the occasion of our Gospel reading for this weekend, it was the press of the immediate which could have resulted in a loss of focus.

We need to understand, there are some urgent situations that demand immediate attention. If a person is in the middle of a medical crisis, we don't "wait a while" before responding. If a house is on fire, we don't say, "Let's see what will happen if we wait 10 minutes."

---

<sup>1</sup> Scripture readings, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The Holy Bible:English Standard Version © copyright 2001 by Crossways Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

I'm sure you know some people who, because of personality, background, or nature, live each day as a crisis waiting to happen. The "tyranny of the urgent" drives their life. I'm here to let you in on a secret, not every situation is a crisis situation. Not every situation demands immediate response. Sorting out which is which is often the challenge.

Listen to the opening words of our Gospel, we are going to see how Jesus handled a situation that did require immediate action. ***[Jesus] left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup>Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. <sup>31</sup>And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.***

### **The Danger of the Immediate**

They left the synagogue, and if you remember last Sunday's Gospel, it was there that Jesus had preached, and healed a man who was possessed by Satan.

Here is a fact few understand: people who are professional public speakers, pastors, lawyers, and the like, expend a lot of energy, often it is emotional and mental energy, every time they speak publicly. Jesus would have had every reason and right to go from the synagogue to some private place, and take a nap for an

hour or two. There would have been nothing wrong with that! But, this day that would not happen.

He goes to the home of two of his disciples, Peter and Andrew, and immediately He is confronted with a crisis. Peter's mother-in-law is down with a fever. The immediate needs must receive attention; immediately, Jesus meets the urgent need.

Later today, I suspect many of us will find ourselves watching the Super Bowl. Here is what I can tell you about the game, even before it happens. Both Coach Belichick of New England, and Coach Coughlan of New York, have spent countless hours developing a game plan for this afternoon. I can also guarantee you, if one or the other team scores a couple of touchdowns early in the game, the game plan will go out the window. The urgency of the moment will overshadow the best laid plans of the coaching staffs.

The same thing happens in the world of business, it can happen to denominations, churches, and to us as individuals.

I met a man a number of years ago, his story amazed me. I found out his story after I asked him what he did for a living. He worked for a company that designs prosthetic devices for athletes.

Dumbly, I asked, how he became interested in that profession. He lifted his pants legs to show me, he had

lost both legs from the knee down some years earlier. He went on to tell me about the first year or two. He gained a lot of weight, sat in a wheelchair, and was convinced there was nothing he could do. It was the tyranny of the moment. He was so worried about his disability that he lost sight of the bigger picture. Once he realized there was more to life than what was lost, everything changed.

Jesus had been through quite a day already. He could easily have thought only about Himself, but that would not happen. <sup>32</sup>***That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.*** <sup>33</sup>***And the whole city was gathered together at the door.*** <sup>34</sup>***And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.***

Scarcely had the dinner dishes been taken off the table, and the crowds formed outside. The situation became urgent. We aren't told how many people were there, I would guess a dozen or more. Enough people were there that the entire evening was taken up as Jesus met their needs. Again, how easy it would have been to lose perspective. But, He did not!

***Rising very early [the next] morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.*** Jesus did not ignore the important to accommodate the press of the urgent.

This is hard for me to say, because it is a battle I face every day. It is so easy to get caught up in the things that need to be done, and in the process to forget that which is most important.

Jesus took off, without His disciples, and went out to a quiet place, by Himself. It was in that quiet solitude that He found His prayer time, His communion with the Father, the respite which He needed. No cell-phone, no pager, no computer, not even a fishing pole, just Jesus and the Father in prayerful conversation.

For that short time, Jesus moved from the urgent, from the crisis of the day, to focus on the important, the relationship of Father and Son. In that brief hour or two, the plan and purpose of His presence, your salvation and mine, was the only focus.

I would ask, “When was the last time you did that?” but then, you might ask that of me, and I would not like the answer I would give to you.

This good solace, however, would not last. <sup>36</sup>***Simon and those who were with him searched for him,*** <sup>37</sup>***and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.”*** Perspective restored, Jesus and the disciples went forward.

## The Good News for Us

As I look at this brief text, I am tempted to focus too much on the moment. This text is filled with good news not only for our present moment, but for our future as well. Jesus kept perspective. Jesus stayed the course. Because of this, we can be 100% sure, we have a Savior. Yes, He healed those in need of healing; Yes, He preached to those who would hear; Yes, He forgave those who repented; Yes, He did all this, and so much more, for us.

How can we be sure? *[Jesus] said to [His disciples], “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”*<sup>39</sup> *And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.* Jesus came for the express purpose of rescuing us from sin, death, and damnation. He would not be dissuaded from that goal.

By the way, did you catch the gentle correction of the disciples Jesus makes in our text? Jesus’ disciples came thinking only of the people around them. Their view of “everyone” was pretty small.

It’s a game we get caught up in when we let the urgent overshadow the important. Someone becomes frustrated or upset and they tell one or two other people, and you know what happens next? One of that group of two-or-three says to someone else, “**everyone is upset.**” Is that true? Is everyone in the whole world upset?

The disciples said to Jesus, “Everyone ... is looking for you.” They were, from their “urgent” perspective. Jesus answer is a wonderful, gentle correction: **“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”** He would not be stopped by “everyone,” when there were millions of “someone’s” who needed what He had to offer.

It reminds me of a famous Yogi Barra’ism. One day, when Yogi was managing the New York Yankees, a man asked Yogi about a certain restaurant. Yogi’s answer: *“Nobody goes there anymore, because the place is always full.”*

Staying the course – keeping focus on the real priorities. It’s not an easy thing to do. These are the things that could have made Jesus a great CEO, a great farmer, or great at any other job He could have held.

But He did not come to earth to hold such a position. He was – He is – He will always be – our Savior.

Assured of this, we can go forward, guided by His Spirit, through His Word, confident that He will lead us, and we, too, will stay the course – His course for us. Amen.