

# Mark 1.32–39

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## *An Unhurried Life*

Amington

Sunday 26 May 2019

### **Hurry**

A husband and wife interrupted their holiday to go to the dentist. ‘I need a tooth pulled, and don’t use any Lidocaine because we’re in a big hurry,’ the woman said. ‘Just extract the tooth as quickly as possible, and we’ll be on our way.’

The dentist was impressed. ‘You’re certainly a courageous woman,’ she said. ‘Which tooth is it?’

‘Show him your tooth, dear,’ said the woman to her husband.

I wish it didn’t, but sometimes my life feels like a blur. When I get my diary wrong, I move from one thing to another, sometimes without even a break to eat – days like that mean I have failed.

Many retired people say they are busier retired than they ever were when they worked – why? – because they have many commitments and spend their days moving from one thing to another.

There is a disease and it affects many people today – it's called hurry sickness.

Some of you may be old enough to remember a time when people looked forward to technology doing all our chores for us, so we could have lots more *time*. Some predictions in the 60s even used to say the biggest challenge would be what people in the future would do with all their spare time.

Well, we're in that future now, and I don't know about you, but I do *not* have an abundance of spare time! In *Alice in Wonderland* the Red Queen says, '**Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place.**'

Sometimes it can feel like that for us, today.

Do you ever find yourself, when you're driving and you have a choice of two lanes, try to work out which one is moving fastest and choose that one? Do you count up how many people are in each checkout queue, and how fast they're moving, so you can hurry on out of the shop in double-quick time? Do you keep an eye on a car or person who's where *you* would have been in the queue you *didn't* choose, to see if you made the best choice...?

Or how about multi-tasking... we try to do all sorts of things at once. I often make phone calls when I'm walking around the parish to save time – I tell myself I'm being efficient, but am I actually suffering from hurry sickness?

Or clutter... do you keep acquiring stacks of books or magazines and then feel guilty for not reading them? Perhaps your life isn't cluttered with *stuff*, perhaps it's cluttered with things you haven't said *no* to?

Trying to do so many different things, sometimes all at once, means our age suffers from superficiality – by which I mean we try to do so much, we don't give anything the attention it needs, and struggle with depth – the surface appearance is what's important.

Hurry sickness stops us being able to love – why? – because love takes *time*. So often we find ourselves too tired, too drained, too preoccupied, to love the people who are most important to us.

And hurry stops us from *receiving* the love of God, because we never stay still long enough to focus on who we are, rather than what we are *doing*.

Here Jesus' example is so important.

# Stopping

How do we train ourselves out of a life of hurrying? Someone said once, the most important thing to grow as a disciple of Jesus, is this: **‘ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.’**

In the first half of the gospels particularly, we get a sense of how *busy* Jesus was. People were coming to him in droves, crowding round him, stopping him from being able to enter towns openly, bringing so many sick people he and his disciples barely had time to eat, following him round the countryside wherever he went.

It must have been exhausting.

And yet, time and again Jesus shows he always had *time* for people. On his way from here to there, he would stop and give someone in need his full attention. Sometimes that frustrated the disciples – because they were in a hurry.

But Jesus wasn’t.

Most importantly though, Jesus knew the importance of solitude. In our reading, as he did so often, Jesus slipped away early in the morning, before sunrise, to pray by himself.

Now I'm not saying you need to get up at 4am every day – though if that's what you need to do to spend time with God, you should consider it. However, we all need to make sure we give God time, every day – in whatever way works for us. On the bus, walking a dog, in the car, at home with a cup of coffee – it doesn't matter, as long as we do it.

Solitude means separation from people, tasks, chores, jobs, work, freedom from 'what's next'. Solitude means you, and God.

Then there is deliberately slowing down. If you struggle with always being in a rush – as I do – why not do the opposite? Why not drive at 60 instead of 70 on the motorway – you'll save a lot of fuel, but you'll also teach yourself not to be in a rush.

Why not choose the longest checkout queue at the supermarket – and maybe let someone go in front of you?

Why not eat your food more slowly for a week, forcing yourself to chew every mouthful more deliberately?

There are all sorts of things you could do – identify the ways in which you rush, and then *do the opposite*. While you wait, maybe spend that time in prayer, asking God to bless the people in front of you.

Friends, this isn't about self-help, this is about making space for God.

The more we hurry, the more we rush, the less space there is for God, the more we squeeze him out.

The more we slow down, the more time we take, the more quiet spaces and solitude we seek and make for ourselves, the bigger the space for God.

The Bible tells us God's voice is still and small and calm – that is, it is easily lost in noise and hustle and bustle. Let's follow Jesus' example and cut out the noise and hustle and bustle, let's lead an unhurried life – no matter how busy we are – and learn to listen for God's voice.