

the gospel Jesus' good news for all

noun | Greek εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion)

This coming Sunday we'll be looking at a short passage where Jesus retreats from his ministry to go pray. While having just announced that the "Kingdom of God is near" and beginning to build on his ministry, Jesus chooses to get away to a solitary place to be with God.

NOTE TO LEADERS

Are there any testimonies from people in your Lifegroup who prayed for or received healing on Sunday? Please email josh@epicentrechurch.org so that we can share those testimonies!

FAMILY TIME

Take some time to share prayer requests and praise reports with each other and encourage folks to keep praying for each other's prayer requests throughout the week and to believe that these will become future praise reports.

In light of the recent presidential election, it might also be a good idea to check in to see what people are feeling/thinking about the election results. This could be a good time to just share concerns and express frustrations. However, do not let this time become a political debate. Instead, as Pastor John said in service, let's make the church a safe space for people since everyone is feeling attacked.

DISCUSSION: Mark 1:35-39

Introduction Question: What does your time with God look like these days? What are the things that keep us from spending time with God? *Note, this is not a time for people to feel guilty or judged – more just an honest reflection of the current state of our spirituality.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Why would Jesus need to go away to pray alone?
2. What was the disciples' response when they found him? What do you think they were worried about?
3. With so many people wanting Jesus' attention, why do you think Jesus chose to go to other places instead?
4. What values might Jesus be trying to teach his disciples?

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Spending time in prayer and reflection is an important part of our time with God. Take the next 15-20 minutes individually and use this prayer guide as a way of understanding God's presence in the events of today and to discern God's direction for us.

1. Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you

give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

SMALL GROUP TIME

End the time by breaking into small groups / gender groups to debrief the experience. What did God reveal to you? What are some practicals that might help you make space to spend time with God more?

Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place

³⁵Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

³⁸Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” ³⁹So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.