Text: Mark 1:29-39

**Introduction**

Good, Fast and Cheap. That’s the famous triad. The reality is typically that you can only pick two out of three of them. It can be good and fast, but it will cost you. It can be good and cheap, but you are going to have to wait. It can be fast and cheap, but it ain’t gonna last. It has been my observation that each vocation probably has its own triad. When I worked in finance it was always Revenue, Gross Profit and Net Profit. You could get two of the three. And of course the Sales team would be screaming for max revenue. The finance team was always for the Gross Margin – knowing that once you cut your price, you never got it back. And operations tracked the net. Of course the bonus of the VP of each of those silos was dependent upon hitting those metrics. You get what you pay for. We were all coin operated.

**Text**

Buried within our gospel text are if not triads, things that even in the life of Jesus required choices.

The first scene I think emphasizes the choice between a quiet life and a public ministry. Last week Jesus confronts and casts out the demon in the middle of the synagogue. And the final verse of that was, at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. (Mk. 1:28 ESV)” The public ministry of Jesus has begun and whenever he demonstrates who he is by the works of power – his fame spreads. In the gospel of Mark this starts to be a noticeable problem. Today, Jesus won’t let the demons speak. And the demons Jesus can command. But soon he’ll be saying the same thing to those healed and those who have seen the works of power. And none of them ever follow his word. They all immediately go and tell. And his fame spreads. And the more his fame spreads, the sooner the confrontation with Jerusalem.

There are enough stories like the Wedding at Cana or today – Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law. Jesus enters a private house. And there is a private problem. The wine has run out. A fever. You could imagine a private ministry, at least for a longer time. Or solely a private ministry, leading to something like a private religion, that never leaves the doors of the house. It would heal and teach and refresh, but only in private life.

Such a religion is exactly what the Romans or pagans would have been fine with. And I’d argue that it is what the world has always desired. It doesn’t care what altar you set up in your house. The world doesn’t really care who you prayer to, or if you pray to anyone, on your own time behind closed doors. It is perfectly fine with freedom of worship. Because worship can easily be kept private. But the second you step out of those doors into public. You give the officially sanctioned prayers and obeisances. You can be like Peter’s mother-in-law and get up and serve Jesus in your house. But don’t bring it out of the house.

The second scene highlights a second choice. Mark is explicit that “the whole city gathers at the door.” But when do they do that? “That evening at sundown.” They saw what happened early in the day. His fame was already spreading. Why did it wait until sundown? Because it was the Sabbath. And good Jews didn’t walk distances or do work on the Sabbath. They’ve seen the power and heard the authority of Jesus. He’s right there, and they certainly have need. Do they seek him immediately, or do they keep the law?

This sets up a couple of conflicts. Within the story eventually Jesus will be confronted with those seeking him on the Sabbath. Is his ministry a private one that will respect the public religion, or is Jesus The LORD of the Sabbath? But Jesus conflict also brings it home to us. We know when and where God is present. Do we seek him while he is near, or do we potentially let God slip away while we maintain the outward doctrines of the day?

**Christology**

Jesus settles these questions in a pattern that I think is still meaningful.

Is there space for that quiet private religion? Yes. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” We see this repeated pattern in the life of Jesus. He will retreat by himself or with some small number of disciples to pray. The most famous might be the garden of gethsemane. Jesus will repeatedly retreat inside some house after a very public part of his mission. Usually to explain a parable or give the disciples further teaching.

And there are multiple places where he will give exactly this type of advice in prayer. Retreat to your private place. I’m always tempted to say that this private religion is oil in the eschatological lamps. It is the private prayers. The hymns sung on the heart during the day. The household altar and table prayers and bible studies. It is these things the build up the Spirit. It is that private relationship with the Jesus who knocks at the door of the heart that enlightens, sanctifies and keeps us in the true faith.

But is that private religion enough? No. “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” It is necessary, but it is not sufficient. The purpose that Jesus has set before himself is a public one. He must proclaim the Kingdom. And that Kingdom is not a private one, but a Kingdom that reigns. A Kingdom that encompasses all the world.

And while we might not be Jesus whose life was the itinerant public mission “throughout all of Galilee” and eventually the road to Jerusalem and the cross. We might not be the apostles who walked the known world. We might not be called to a constant public witness. We will probably all have at least one moment where the public witness is demanded. As Jesus would say, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 10:32 ESV).”

The private spirituality of Jesus is in support of the public religion. His desire for a place of prayer necessitates his public cleansing of the temple. His withdrawal to prayer, is so that he might continue “preaching and casting our demons.” His celebration of the Supper in the house, is so that this supper might be done everywhere in remembrance. The private things of the Father, the Son and the Spirit - things that we have no access to – are there so that the Son and the Spirit might secure a people for the Father in time and space.

**Moral**

God has made himself public. We know where he has promised to be. He has promised to be present in Word and Sacrament. He has promised to be present where two or three are gathered in his name. He has promised to hear our prayers. He has promised to be present in the words of pardon whether from a minister or between those who follow him. We know where and when God has promised to be present.

The question to us is what keeps us away from God? Maybe if we wait until Sundown he will still be there at the door. But there are also stories where those who come late find the door barred and are told to go away.

When the Holy Spirit calls by the gospel and gathers his people, are we obeying some other law, or do we bring our illness and oppression to Christ for healing?

And if called, are we willing to publicly acknowledge what Christ has done for us?

**Eschatology**

One of the images of the fulness of the Kingdom is paradoxically the household of God.

Today we can have this conflict between the private and public, because today there are conflicting authorities. Jesus can be the King of Kings because there are other kings. And not all those Kings acknowledge Christ. And hence the world’s demands to keep that other Kingdom private.

But when there are no other crowns, that private public distinction collapses. Everything is done within the household.

If today those call to public confession today take precedence, I think we have to listen closely to Jesus somewhat odd words, “that is why I came out?” Came out of what? Peter’s house? I think the better gloss is came out of the Father’s house. Why has Jesus come out? So that a great number might come in.

Tomorrow, Christ in full glory will be publicly with his people. The necessity for the public confession would be ridiculous. But we shall still have that private relationship with God.

Today, we preach and come out. Tomorrow, we have our own vine and fig tree in household of God. Amen.