

“Pursuit” Sermon, February 4, 2018,  
Isaiah 40:21-31, Mark 1:29-39

Very 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. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

**[picture]**

What was Jesus pursuing early in the morning?

Why was it necessary for this pursuit to take place without his disciples? Why did he insist on finding a solitary place, one where it would be hard to find him? He was breaking the fast. He had slept, but now he needed to be nourished. He had healed, cast out demons and preached, but now he needed to replenish his spirit. He understood that this daily pursuit was more important than the anxiety his friends would have from not knowing where he was.

**[picture]**

This was not the first time he had done so. Luke tells us in Chapter 2, that they went to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, they had discovered that after the great celebration at the temple, he had not come home to Nazareth with them. He could not be found among his immediate family. He could not be found among his cousins and aunts and uncles and great uncles and great aunts. He had violated the customs and traditions of the ancient clans of Israel, by removing himself from the collective and venturing out alone. For three days, his parents could not find him. Finally, he was found in the court of the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

**[picture]**

They asked the same question that his disciples later asked. “How could you do this to us? Didn’t you realize that we were going out of our minds with worry, not knowing where you were for three days?”

Did you not understand that we would be actively pursuing you? He responded: “Did you not know that it was necessary for me to be pursuing my Father?”

### [picture]

By example, Jesus taught us that pursuing God is a priority. Being alone with God, taking time with God, being nourished in ways that food and friends and family and traditions cannot nourish us, is a priority. That priority requires solitude. That priority requires us to pursue God. That priority requires us to take time for God. If we rarely eat, our physical health will suffer. We'll be weak and sick. It will affect our ability to carry on the activities of life. If we rarely pray, our spiritual life will lack vitality. We'll approach the challenges and successes of life on our own, as though we can really do so without daily pursuing God. Without this pursuit, we fall into fear, anxious worry and despair.

## [picture]

Without pursuing God, we are deceived into taking credit for things in our lives, chalking them up to our skill, knowledge, wisdom and hard work. We begin to forget that all our skill, knowledge, wisdom and hard work are the gifts of God. Without pursuing Christ, we see ourselves as alone against the world, left to fend off the storms of life on our own wits and brawn. It is in the course of our pursuit that we learn to see the true state of things — that we are creatures within a creation, creatures dependent on our Maker and as such, never alone. The prophet Hosea, Chapter 6 and verse three challenges us:

Then shall we know, if we pursue on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain to the earth.

Amen.