Did you realize Simon Peter was a married man? His wife is never mentioned, but he was concerned about his mother-in-law, so we understand he is partnered. We don’t know that other disciples are single, but we do know at least Simon Peter is wed.

His concern for his mother-in-law, sick with fever, is relatable and gives evidence of Jesus’ preference for the least and lost. Jesus goes to her immediately and raises her. Her response to her healing is to serve others, just the response Jesus hopes to see from us, to serve others upon recognition of the gifts we have received ourselves—and a pattern Jesus lives himself.

Mark is candid about Jesus work of healing in that place. We first hear that the disciples bring to him “***all***” who were ill or demon possessed, yet the author of the Gospel tells that Jesus heals “***many.***” We would do well to remember even Jesus didn’t heal every person in need; we ought accept our own limitations.

As if to punctuate this point, Jesus is missing the next morning, for he went off on his own to be alone in prayer. Maybe he is acknowledging his limits, or maybe he is in solitary time with God because this is what he needs to complete the work at hand.

When the disciples find him after what the text suggests is a rigorous search, they report that “everyone is searching for” him. Whether it is an exaggeration or not, this does not compel Jesus to return to those who so want to see him again. Instead, they are to move on to surrounding areas so that he can share his message there as well. Clearly, Jesus would make a terrible church growth consultant, and never make it with a congregation bent on a growth plan; just when Jesus has established a buzz, he looks to go elsewhere. He doesn’t play on his success or play up his popularity.

We live in an era obsessed with popularity. Worth on social media is counted in likes, friends, followers, and engagements. Celebrity has even become an expected category for pastors who cater to the stars.

Jesus could have become a local hero. He could have continued to address the needs of the people, leveraging it for self-aggrandizement.

I have been thinking this week about Jesus departure from Simon Peter’s home and those who sought to see more of him in Capernaum. He left those with him in the dark to get away. This is just one of multiple times Jesus goes off on his own to some deserted place and pray alone.

It’s strange as right now being separated, isolation is causing so many of us to struggle. The deprivation of human contact across the fields of our lives is but one of the causes of depression and mental health difficulties that have heightened over the past year. I wonder if the intentionality of Jesus exit for prayer might yet be a model for us despite the pandemic. Might this be a time to make an even more concerted effort to be alone in prayer with God? Might we benefit from focusing even more intently on our private time with speaking with God so that at other times, we can be receptive to seeing, living connections with others.

In the second episode of Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey, in a fascinating exploration of evolution and genetics called [**“Some of the Things Molecules Do,”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xtue2qLJ5Y) series narrator Neil DeGrasse Tyson shares a truly remarkable discovery. Reviewing the genetic formulae of the few living creatures who have had their full genome deciphered, he points out how the genetic code for processing sugar into energy among all of these living things—insects, animals, and fungi—is exactly the same. This fact, then, does more than give strong proof that all life has a common, primeval ancestor. It is a tangible, scientifically verifiable proof that all life is interconnected. “Accepting our kinship with all life on Earth is not only solid science,” he concludes. “In my view, it’s also a soaring spiritual experience.”

Yesterday, we hosted our third drive-up communion here under the portico. It’s been a really enjoyable experience doing this with Judy and Jim White. I must tell you that yesterday, seeing each of you drive up, seeing each of your faces, having each of you come, I was moved. My heart jumped a little. My heart jumped a little because it is good to be gathered together, especially in the midst of isolation.