



Mark 1:29–39





**Before the day began,** before people and commitments vied for his attention, Jesus (now widely popular among the people) went out to find a quiet place to commune with God. In contrast to the picture of exasperated disciples searching wildly for Jesus, the Gospel writer for Sunday's reading shows an intimate picture of Jesus disposing himself to the presence of God — and simply resting in solitude.

But the disciples interrupt Jesus, apparently seduced by his popularity and the buzz of the gathering crowds. Shortly after, Jesus returns to his mission of healing and wholeness, curing the sick and preaching throughout new areas of Galilee. It seems Jesus responds to his fame by keeping his priorities straight and his heart filled.

Notice how Jesus, in Mark's Gospel, models a balance between prayerful reflection and action. Why do you suppose he often spent time in solitude? How might setting aside time for solitude invite you into wiser and more resilient ways of being in the world? What are a couple of ways you might begin to experience solitude in your own demanding life?

### **Spiritual Practice**

What is contemplation? Father Richard Rohr's Center for Action and

Contemplation explains and offers **examples of this practice-based spirituality**: “Through contemplation and life, God works on us slowly and in secret. Contemplative practice gradually rewires our brains to perceive and respond to reality with love.”

In an **excerpt from the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook***, author Adele Ahlberg Calhoun writes, “Alone, without distractions, we put ourselves in a place where God can reveal things to us that we might not notice in the normal preoccupations of life.”

Finally, writer, meditation teacher, and restorative justice facilitator Rashid Hughes introduces **the “R.E.S.T” (Release. Empty. Surrender. Trust.) practice** as an antidote to these times. “It’s unrealistic to assume that our psyches are somehow magically separate from the ever-present social and political chaos that we are forced to exist in. The impact of systemic injustice lives in the tissues of our bodies and within the corners of our psyches.” This mindfulness practice can align with any of the contemplative prayer practices above.

### **Visual Art**

From Vanderbilt Divinity School, **[a presentation pairing classical and contemporary artworks](#)** with selections from Sunday’s scripture readings.

### **Poetry**

In **“February Evening in New York,”** acclaimed poet Denise Levertov writes about the gifts of paying attention and loving life as it is.