

## Mark 1:29-39 | Narrative

By Tony Stoltzfus

The rhythm was interesting. Three young men sleeping, all with different intervals between snores, made an ever-changing music. The sound was like women grinding grain, the periodic rasping of the top stone back going forth across the lower, layered over more distant versions of the same sound.

He was so used to waking to the sound of Mary grinding (she was a notorious early-riser) that he'd opened his eyes. It was still pitch black—too early. But rising to the level of wakefulness required to intentionally open his eyelids started up his conscious mind. And when he thought of what had happened the night before he knew he'd never go back to sleep.

Rising with as little stir as he could he bundled up his himation and slipped out into the courtyard. Nothing and no one was up but the stars, and the faintest touch of purple on the eastern horizon. An hour til sunrise, he judged.

The courtyard gave him space to properly drape his outer garment. Slipping the latch, he stepped out into the deserted street. Jesus took a step toward the seawall 50 feet away, but then realized the fishermen would soon return. He wasn't looking for a commotion in that moment. So he headed inland instead.

It wasn't til he passed the last house that he let out a pent-up breath. *Ob—that was a bit of anxiety there, wasn't it? I just didn't want to be discovered—not yet, anyway. I need to think.*

*Yesterday. The day it really all began. It wasn't my first miracle. It wasn't my first teaching. But yesterday was the day it all came together. There was a before, and an after; everything that I do from now on will be part of the after. The day after it all began.*

*Abba, how do you feel about last night?*

*I love watching you be you. How did you feel about it, son?*

*It was awesome and strange and kind of weird all rolled together. It's such a pleasure to heal people—the fact that one word from Us can take away a pain they've endured for years is quite a rush. Who wouldn't love that!*

*What felt strange?*

*I mean strange like different, unfamiliar. I know we've dreamed of this for years, but to be in the middle of it, when my all hopes are becoming reality—man, my pulse was just racing. I had to tell myself a couple times just to breathe. And there is this surreal air over it all, as if one half of me was back in heaven, hurling its goodness down to earth like throwing stones in a river. But the other half of me was still down here in the mud, just kind of watching it all happen and wondering how it could possibly be.*

*You are kind of stuck between worlds, aren't you? Your spirit remembers being with Us in heaven, but your human mind never had the experience.*

*Yeab, sometimes I feel like my heart and my mind are duking it out with each other.*

*Which is a very human experience.*

The path forked around a small grove of figs, and Jesus opted for the right-hand path. He was still climbing up the low ridge behind town. The croplands were behind him, and he was navigating between rows of gnarled olive trees with their distinctive grey-green leaves. It was a cold morning, but not uncomfortable. Walking uphill kept him warm.

*So, Abba—whose idea was it to try this crazy experiment, yours or mine? Watching humans is a lot different than being one!*

Abba laughed. *Don't look at me—you came up with this whole beautiful, loving, exquisite plan. I am in awe of how you have adapted so well, and how you have represented us so perfectly.*

*Thanks. I know it was me, but sometimes my human side wonders what I was thinking. Speaking of, what do I do now? The whole town is buzzing about what happened. Next thing you know, they'll pass it up the grapevine to Chorazin and Bethsaida, and we'll have three villages crowded around Peter's doorway.*

*That sounds a little chaotic. What do you want to do?*

*Well, what I don't want to do is start the Capernaum International Healing Center, and end up owning a building and spending half my time fund-raising.*

*Agreed.*

Jesus ran through a series of options in his mind as he walked upward, finally reaching the top of the ridge. He turned back then, looking over a wide, green pasture onto the lake. The eastern mountains brooded in shadow, but the sky above formed an orange and yellow halo over the Golan. A brilliant patch of white lit the center, brightening until the sun peaked over the eastern horizon. Soon its rays began to shoot across the landscape.

Jesus breathed a sigh of satisfaction. "It's beautiful. And so apt: 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.' Our friend Isaiah had such a gift with words.

*I think your answer is in that same passage, Abba suggested.*

Oh—'the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.' Naphtali's territory went all around the lake. And 'the way of the sea'—from the plain of Jezreel to the Golan. That's not just one place—it's a whole region. So...I'm not called to build a ministry here in Capernaum, but to take this show on the road, throughout Israel?

*Sounds like you found your solution.*

*Which you wrote down for me 700 years ago, so that today when I needed it I could find it. Thanks for being there for me.*

*Actually, I didn't write it just for you. I wrote it for Us.*

At that moment, Peter and John appeared over the brow of the hill just behind him. "Jesus! There you are—we've been looking everywhere for you! And so is the whole town. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, nothing much," Jesus replied mischievously. He winked, before turning to face the breathless men.

"Come on down—a crowd is already starting to assemble at our door!"

Jesus spread his arms wide, beckoning the men to look. "Gaze around you—there is the land of Naphtali, from the far shore to just below where we stand, on Zebulun's land. And to either side lies the Way of the Sea. Let's head for the next village instead. We've going to cover it *all!*