

Being A Mary in A Martha World

Luke 10:38-42

Open to Luke 10. Most people I talk to would say that they're busy, like they've got a lot going on. I don't know anyone who says, "No I don't do anything." Most people I know have days and weeks that are chock full of activities and sports and exercise and vacations and work and family obligations and a million other things. And I am so thankful to God that we have the kind of technology and resources to do all the things we do. We get to do and see so many things that other generations couldn't experience in 10 lifetimes. And we make full use of this. We definitely want to live fast, do it all, 100 mile an hour lifestyle. And I want to spend some time this morning talking about what it looks like to do that well. And you might be surprised to hear that the Bible actually addresses the concept of busyness and gives us some principles for coordinating the multitude of activities and obligations we have in our lives so that we live them for God's glory.

So what I want to do is walk through this text with you and look at Jesus wisdom and love can help us navigate a few of the dangers that can come from living a life with very little margin. So my goal for us this morning is to leave this place with a fresh awareness of the dangers of busyness and then see how through Jesus and everything he is for us we can guard against those dangers so that we don't miss him along the way. And we'll just take it verse by verse here.

Read vs. 38.

Jesus was an itinerant preacher in the greater Jerusalem area. And he traveled around with a group of 12 ordinary men that he had selected to be his disciples. And here in this text, Jesus and his disciples are on the road, when they enter into a village called Bethany which was about 2 miles east of Jerusalem. And as they are traveling they are met by a woman named Martha who welcomed them into her home.

Now, let's chat about this real quick because understanding what's happening here sets the backdrop for what we're about to learn. Hospitality in the 1st century Jewish world was considered to be one of the highest moral virtues. To fail to show hospitality to strangers and travelers, wasn't just distasteful, it brought great dishonor on you and your family. The OT had laws about hospitality. Caring for strangers and travelers was seen as a moral obligation, not a way to go "above and beyond". The thought was that if I care for you when you're in my town, you'll care for me when I'm in your town and we'll have this reciprocal relationship of protection and provision. And so when Martha invites this group of people into her home, it's a very culturally appropriate and even expected gesture, and when she invites them in, she takes full responsibility for meeting their needs.

So, Vs. 39

And so they come inside and as they do, we're introduced to another woman named Mary. Now Mary, the text says, was Martha's sister and they lived together. They had a brother named Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead.

And so these are these two women (don't know if Lazarus is present) and here Jesus is in their home with his disciples. So we've got these two women who have committed themselves to hosting, providing for, meeting the needs of 13 men—one of which is the Son of God. And so now the stage is set for the exchange that is about to take place that really serves as the central point of instruction for this story.

vs 39 says that Mary “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching.” Jesus wasn’t just trying to bum a meal. He’s focused. He’s teaching. The phrase “His teachings” here literally translated means, “his word”. This phrase along with the phrase “word of God” is used over 40 times in Luke to refer to the Gospel Message. And so Jesus is here teaching the Gospel, and Mary is sitting at his feet absorbing it. How incredible would that be?

So here’s Mary sitting and listening and **Vs. 40** says, “But Martha was distracted with much serving.” Now let’s not be too harsh on Martha here. I want you to remember what a big deal hospitality was. Failing to care for your guests was socially taboo. It was shameful. There was this huge weight of expectation and responsibility to be a good host. And here’s Martha, she’s got 13 guests in the house. Someone had to prepare a meal and get drinks for 13 people. Remember there’s no Digiorno or bottled water. And she’s got to make this happen—if she doesn’t she’ll feel the shame of being a bad host and her reputation will be tarnished. And remember, Mary isn’t helping. She’s sitting at Jesus’ feet. And if you hosted people before, maybe you’ve cooked for 13 people by yourself before, I dunno, but you can probably appreciate the anxiety and stress she’s under.

And what happens here is that Martha sees Mary sitting there, and is just so frustrated that Mary isn’t helping she has to say something. **Vs 40** “And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” (She mildly rebukes him—when you correct Jesus you’re always wrong).

And, given the circumstances, I think we can all sympathize with the way Martha feels, but what the Lord says next completely explodes the categories that you and I think in and that Martha thinks in. He says something that serves as a powerful but loving critique of our heart and lifestyle.

Vss. 41-42, “But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken from her.”

For years Jesus’ response truly bothered me. For years this was one of my least favorite stories in the Bible. Because it just seemed wrong to me; like she’s just trying to get some help and Jesus doesn’t care. But as God gradually worked in me and developed my love for him, I realized why it was that I struggled so much with his response. I realized that I had a low view of Jesus’ answer here because I had a low view of Jesus himself. I’m ashamed to say that I honestly looked at Mary sitting at Christ’s feet, listening to him teach the Gospel, and thought, “You need to stop being lazy, you’re not doing anything, you need to focus on what’s really important here.” This story exposes our dangerous tendency to confuse what is genuinely valuable with what is ultimately valuable. I think that’s why this story is in the Bible. Mary is sitting at Christ’s feet being with him learning from him, Martha is saying to Jesus, “Tell her to get up and come help me. There are things that are more important here; some more pressing issues going on in life that we need to attend to.” And Jesus says, “No there’s not.” And so this serves as a loving caution for us and I want us to take a little closer look here and make a few observations that will be helpful as we think about being busy.

We will be distracted from Jesus with good things not bad things:

Notice here that Martha isn’t distracted from Jesus by doing drugs or stealing money. It’s not like she’s a bad person here. Some times she gets bad rap like she’s bad and Mary is good. John 11 says differently. Martha is distracted from Jesus by showing hospitality she’s distracted with much serving—with good things. Martha’s problem is not that she chose what’s bad that she didn’t choose what’s best. She was busy with good things, and it caused her to miss out on the one thing that is necessary.

And this is one of Satan's most potent strategies in neutralizing our effectiveness for Christ's kingdom. Satan loves busy Christians who are always promising themselves that they'll spend time with Christ once thing die down a little bit. You see, to get you to miss Christ and suck the power out of your Christian life, Satan doesn't have to tempt you with doing bad things. He just has to tempt you with doing a lot of good things so that you don't have time for the one thing. Satan doesn't have to keep you sinning. He just has to keep you going.

Satan's strategy to keep you from beholding God's glory and seeing him and savoring him is not to steal you away into some heinous sin but to keep you buried under a laundry list of good things that must be done: helping their kids with homework, then a work meeting, then the game, and exercise, and lake weekend, and the cookout, and the business trip and then baseball practice, and basketball practice, and football practice and band concert, the date night, going shopping, the movie night, checking facebook checking pinterest, sleeping, eating and a hundred other good things that keep us from sitting at Christ's feet. We don't miss Christ because we're out doing something bad. We miss Christ because we're out doing something else.

I hope you see how dangerous and deceptive this is! **Mk. 8:36** And it seems so innocent. It even in some cases seems admirable, "wow...he does so much!" But, if we're not careful it is deadly. Busyness is deadly. Isn't that extreme: no. Do you remember the parable of the sower. Some on the path, rocks, thorns, good soil. **Mt. 13:22**. Kevin DeYoung said busyness kills more Christians than bullets. Friends see what's at stake here. Life, your spiritual life is at stake here and I'm zealous to guard your faith and the health of the church and we have to recognize that when we are distracted even with good things in such a way that it causes us to postpone and dilute ultimate things, we are in serious danger.

And in a sense, I think we'd all say, "sure I know you don't want to do too much and Christ should be first." But it's amazing how causally we treat this threat. And it's amazing to me how easily we excuse ourselves and convince ourselves that God approves of our non-dedicated non-worshipping lifestyle because we're busy. Do we not think about it this way? Like I know I'm not spending time with him, making disciples, serving, but God understands because I'm busy. Like there's going to be a special exemption line in heaven for the people who were busy. But it's not there. He's not ok with it. God didn't send Jesus to suffer and die and rise so that you could make 6 figures or play football or go on vacations.

When Jesus said **Mt. 6:33** he did not mean, "Seek me after you do everything else you want to do. Fit me in if it's not too much trouble." We need to recover the supremacy of Christ in our lives, in our homes, in our schedules, and in our hearts. And to do that, we must guard against the busyness that would take its place.

Now I want to be clear here. Being busy is not sinful. But it is possible to be sinfully busy. The reason we know it's not sinful is because of Jesus. He maintained a mind-blowing ministry schedule. But look **(Luke 5:16)**. We're sinfully busy when we're so focused on pursuing good things that we're distracted from the one thing that is necessary. Not everyone is sinfully busy and you may be wondering if you so let me just ask a few questions to help you look into your heart.

Is it hard to find room in your life for an intimate relationship with Jesus?

And I can't tell you how many people I talk to that struggle with this. So you shouldn't feel comfortable here, but you shouldn't feel lonely either. Do you find yourself giving Jesus the leftovers of your time and energy. You find yourself trying to squeeze him in if you have some freetime? Are you always trying to streamline your faith. I see this a lot today. Spending quality time with the Lord gives way to a verse a day bible app or playing Christian music in the background while you study. Spending time in prayer is replaced

by a quick prayer before meals and bedtime. If you don't pray, your sinfully busy. Care for other people's needs. Don't have any time to invest in your local church?

I remember talking to youth parents about why I have seen them or their children in church for while...I've actually heard parents say, "Well we can't really come and worship for a while because we're just kind of crazy right now with football practice or lots of homework this semester." And it takes everything in me not to say, "Football didn't bleed for them, football didn't die for them, and football won't come back for them. Why would you bend over backwards to give them everything they want, and barely lift a finger to give them the only thing they really need?" Satan loves homes where grades are high, trophies are many, problems are few, and Bibles are closed. We must make time for it. For personal worship. We must make time for corporate worship. It is not optional. There is nothing that you will ever do that is more important than pursuing and worshipping Jesus.

Maybe if you were being brutally honest with yourself, spending time with Jesus, being a part of the life of the church is kind of inconvenient. It's kind of an intrusion on your already full schedule. Maybe for many of us, we're just doing well if we can find a way to fit Jesus into our busy life.

But friends if we feel this way think about what it says about us and about Jesus. Think about a bride coming down the aisle and keeps talking to people? She says it's inconvenient having to walk down this aisle. But you'd ask well why are you here? Aren't you here to get married? Wouldn't it make us question if she really even wanted to get married? But this is so many of us...the only reason we're here is to live for and walk with and pursue Jesus...and the only reason that would be really inconvenient is if we're really here living for something else and just trying to fit him in when we can.

But friends we don't fit Jesus into our lives. He's not a piece in our puzzle. We don't fit him in to our lives. We surrender everything to him because he fit us into his. And invites us to share in his life through the Gospel. And this is glorious. And it can't be downsized or streamlined or postponed. We need to know this God because the reality is he gave his Son to know us. And the only way we're going to have the power to be a Mary in a Martha world is by finding in Christ what we're looking for in all our going and doing.

If you see this and you're compelled to sit at Christ's feet as the "right choice", you don't do it. You won't have the power to. We'll only sit at his feet when we realize he is the abundant life we're searching for in all of our busyness.

We're tempted to look at this story through the lens of religious morality; in the categories of right and wrong "Mary did the right and Martha did the wrong thing." Look, he says that she has chosen the greater portion. Not that she did the right thing. And he's doing this intentionally because what he's doing is using imagery of fulfillment and satisfaction. This is the language the Psalmist uses in Ps. 16:5, "Lord you are my portion and my cup of blessing." Ps. 73, "my flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Jesus regularly describes himself using images that appeal directly to our senses. He calls himself the living water. He says he's bread. He says he's the light of the world. And Mary was perfectly aware of the expectations that her and Martha were to show hospitality. They'd done it before with other travelers. She knew that failing to meet the needs of guests was socially taboo and perhaps even damage their reputation—and this awareness these expectations were controlling Martha

So in this moment I have to believe that for Mary the curtains were pulled back, and she saw the glory and hope and strength and satisfaction of Christ and said "that's my portion right portion. I have to have him. I have to be with him." "But Mary don't you care that your reputation might be damaged—what will people

think”. “No” I think in that moment while Martha was busy getting food and drink, God gave Mary to see that that the Bread of Life and the Living Water was sitting right in front of her. ~~And the irony is while Martha is worried about giving Jesus his portion Mary is busy finding her portion in Jesus.~~ Don’t you want to savor Christ and be so captivated by his glory that society’s expectations and people’s demands of you hold no sway in your heart? This is what’s happened for Mary here. And so when Mary sits down in front of Jesus, she’s not just “doing the right thing”. She’s getting her fill. She’s finding in Christ, the full life that many of us are trying to find in full schedules.

Oh God for hearts that treasures you so much that we would never dream of sacrificing intimacy with you on the altar of productivity.

And so I want to close by considering a few practical implications for this:

Repent

Now again I want to say that not everyone is sinfully busy. But many of us are, so I’d simply invite you to consider your heart. Have you given Christ your leftovers? Are you a distracted Christian? Maybe you need to repent of doing good things to the exclusion of the one thing necessary? Have you been worried and anxious about many things and missed the one thing that’s necessary? Ask God to help you. And then take action.

If we’re going to sit at Jesus’ feet a few things are going to have to happen.

And let me be clear, by sitting at Jesus’ feet, I don’t mean living a slow paced life or being religious. I mean taking dedicated regular time to meditate on Christ and read his word and talk to God and worship God. I’m not talking about serving God or doing things for God...

One thing we can clearly see from this story is that doing things for Jesus can never replace spending time with Jesus. Huge temptation for me as a pastor! God’s not as concerned with us trying to do stuff for him as much as he is wants us to know him. (Hos. 6:6).

And like any relationship it takes time and we know this. Sitting at Christ’s feet takes time. And for whatever reason we think that when it comes to our relationship with God, we can just kind of do that on the fly. But it’s not true. I mean, can you imagine if I just said to Rebecca, hey I don’t really have time for you. I have a lot going on. Sorry. I’ll fit you in when I can. We’ve got to make time...

And if we’re going to make time and we already have a full schedule...that means something has to go. If you want to taste the pleasure of Christ, if you want to cultivate a home that treasures the glory of Christ then you and I are going to have to learn to say no to a lot of good things in order to guard ultimate things. There are going to be great job opportunities, social opportunities, volunteer opportunities, education opportunities that you make it impossible to give Christ any meaningful time and energy and thoughtfulness. Nope, sorry.

If we’re going to sit at Christ’s feet, we’re going to have to plan for it.

Don’t we plan just about everything that we really want to make sure we get done? Don’t we plan our life around the things that matter most? I have never been exercising on Sunday at 10:30. You know why, because I plan to be here. Students know studying won’t just happen. You may do a variety of things, but then you say, “Ok I have to study.” And it’s no different when it comes to studying the word and spending time with Christ. The adage has never been more true: those who fail to plan, plan to fail. If you just wake up tomorrow and say, “I’m sure I’ll get around to spending time with Jesus at some point today” you won’t. **In a fallen world, you will not just drift toward Christian discipline!** It takes planning and

effort to get to a place where we can spend unhurried and unhindered time with God. You know what I think one of the hardest commands for us today is? (Ps. 46:10). We have a God that's worth sitting still for. I had a hard time being still for this sermon.

We have to make time to sit at the feet of Jesus. We're going to have to say no to good things to preserve the integrity of ultimate things. We're going to have to plan for it. And when we do, God will reward with the joy of his presence and the pleasure at his right hand.