

“Be Present”

07-17-16

We live in a world where it's so easy to get distracted by the many things we have to do and the concerns we have. When we let that happen, we miss out on the great experiences right in front of us!

Open to Luke 10. Jesus reminds us to *“be present”* at moments in our lives. It's in these moments of listening and presence, that we're nourished by God. In our story, Mary was *“present”* with Jesus and reaped the benefits of His presence at that moment, while Martha missed out as she was scurrying around the kitchen, consumed by her busyness. Jesus wants us to be present, listening and attentive to the gifts He desires to give us.

Verses 38-39, *“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.”*

When Jesus came to Bethany, Martha invited Him to come to their house for a meal. **Hospitality Was and Is Important.** Martha not only welcomed Jesus but probably also the twelve disciples! Jesus was a regular at their house. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were a family of true believers in who Jesus was. They enjoyed His presence a great deal!

But today, **Martha Busied Herself with Serving.** She like any other host wanted to make sure that everything was just so for this special guest, and everyone that came with Him! The problem with Martha isn't her serving, but rather that **Martha is Worried and Distracted.** Verse 40, *“But Martha was distracted with much serving. 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.”*

Martha's worry and distraction **Left No Room for Jesus!** She didn't take the time to give attention to their guest. In fact, she breaks all the rules of hospitality by trying to embarrass her sister in front of her guest, and asking her guest to intervene in a family dispute. She even goes so far as to accuse Jesus of not caring about her!

Look at Jesus' words in verses 41-42, *“But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”* **Mary Had Chosen the Necessary Thing.** Mary gave her full attention to Jesus and His words!

There's nothing wrong with serving like Martha did! She was being very gracious and considerate of Jesus as a guest. But the one thing Martha needed was to put her own struggles away and to receive the gracious presence of Jesus, listen to His words, and know that she's valued not for what she does or how well she does it, but for who she is as a child of God!

Jesus says that Mary chose the better part because a ministry to your spirit must come before a ministry to others! As Jesus said last week, *“Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”* These commands are always in that order!

If you get them turned around, it'll destroy you! You'll burn out! Only love for neighbor-growing out of a love for Jesus Christ has staying power! Before you can become involved in service for others, you must allow Jesus Christ to fill you!

We live in a culture of hectic schedules and the relentless pursuit of productivity. We're tempted to measure our worth by how busy we are, how much we accomplish, or by how well we meet the expectations of others. I think I understand that pattern!

I'm sure that many people in our congregation likely identify with Martha in the story. Feeling pulled in different directions, feeling worried and distracted by many things seem to be common threads of life in our fast-paced world. And yet, as Jesus says in Luke 12:25, "*And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?*"

We know that worrying does no good, and that much of what we worry about isn't so important in the larger scheme of things, and yet we can't seem to stop our anxious thoughts and frantic activity!

It's true that much of our busyness and distraction stems from the noblest of intentions. We want to provide for our families, give our children every opportunity to enrich their lives, serve our neighbors, and we want to serve Jesus Christ!

To be honest, where would the church be without its "Marthas,?" These are the men and women who perform the tasks of hospitality and service that's so vital to making the church a welcoming and well-functioning community!

The world around us demands so much. It's so easy to get wrapped up in its demands that many times we don't take or have any time or energy for God! Realizing that, I think it's time for us to move from where we've been and Be Present with and for our God! In order to do this, I think there's five areas for us to Be Present In.

Worship. It's so important for you to be here! Your presence in worship gives the opportunity for you to grow and proclaim Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord! It also builds up everyone else who's here as well. It gives you the chance to receive from Him His presence and His body and blood given and shed for you, and to be in community with all!

Prayer. Prayer is the opportunity for you to "*Be still and know that He is God!*" It's taking time to move away from the pressures of this life, and like Mary, sit at Jesus' feet not only pouring yourself out to Him but listening to Him with all your heart! It's God's desire to build a relationship with you in prayer. He's ready to hear from you and He will answer! But that's next week!

His Word! It's not only to take time in prayer, but also daily take time in His Word. It's kind of simple. It's all here in the Bible. All you have to do is open it and read it! Be an active participant in the study of His Word not just a spectator! Read it! Study It! Meditate on It! Know it! Follow it!

Fellowship! It's wonderful to know that as you go through life that you're not alone! We're all in this together! The more you're in fellowship with others here in worship, prayer, and service, the more comfortable you'll become and the more you can offer fellowship to each other. It's not just about eating! We do a good job at that,

but when you're in true fellowship, you know you can talk with anyone and give and receive an open ear, an open heart, and an open presence! What a blessing!

Service! God has placed you here to serve! It might be for you to do a service around here at church or in your family, your work or in your neighborhood. But Jesus' greatest desire is for you to serve as His representative of Him sharing Him wherever you go in whatever you do! He wants you to Be Present and serve in Mission!

The Mary-Martha story is left suspended. We don't know what happened next, whether Mary and Martha were reconciled, whether they were all able to enjoy the meal that Martha had prepared, whether Martha was finally able to sit and give her full attention to Jesus.

We do know that Jesus invites all of us who are worried and distracted by many things to sit and rest in His presence, to hear His words of grace and truth, to know that we're loved and valued as His children, to be in fellowship together, to be renewed in faith and strengthened for service. There's need of only one thing: attention to your guest, Jesus Christ! Be present!