

God and the Rest of the Week

Title: Part 5 – Soul Destroying Busyness

Date: September 17, 2023

Transition: Band Continues Softly

Amen. Thank you God for filling this place with your presence as we praise.

Let's begin this way today, everyone—even those joining us in our extended family online—everyone take the deepest breath you can take, hold it, now slowly breathe out. One more time... Now take in the words of Jesus in Matthew 11, Jesus says to you today: (v.28-30)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

For the past few weeks now, we have been talking about how to bring God into the REST of the week. We tend to ghetto God into an hour on a Sunday and then we get busy with our lives and forget about Him until the next Sunday or even the Sunday after that.

AND maybe that's why we feel the chaos and busyness and hurry so much! That's why Jesus offers this invitation to come and learn that He has so much more FOR us and wants to be so much more TO us. Today, as we continue this, I want to preach a message I am calling:

Soul Destroying Busyness

But before we go any further let's pause and pray and ask God to open our hearts and minds and free us from the distractions that would rob us of the blessing He wants to impart.

[PRAYER TIME]

Before you grab a seat, take :30 seconds and say “Hi” to some people around you, tell them you are glad they are here today. Welcome again to our online family. We are glad you are here too! Let us know how we can pray for you, and if this message blesses you, then share it with your friends and family.

We are busy people! Turn to some of those people you just said “Hi” to and tell them, “We are busy people!” We are busy! According to one survey I found online 86% of men and 67% of women work more than 40 hours a week at their job. Yet 2/3 say they still don't have enough time to get everything done in the work week. I totally understand that feeling, work is never done. Get this though, only 57% of Americans use all of their allotted vacation time in a year! Come on, how many of you have said, “It's just easier to not take time off... come on be honest!”

AND it's not just us hard working adults anymore, according to a psychology central: The majority of children (88 percent) are participating in organized activities four to five days per week, with 58 percent of kids going to more than one activity in a single evening!

AND you don't need me to tell you this, but there are a lot of negative side-effects from all this, not just on our families, but also on us personally. CNN did this six-year study of 2,500 different workers and they found that those who worked 11-hour days were 2 ½ times more likely to become depressed than those who worked eight-hour days.

Oh, and don't forget about this. We are not getting enough sleep anymore! The average American gets about two hours less sleep per night than recommended, which leads to all kinds of problems: heart disease,

kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, obesity, and depression. Sleep deficiency is also linked to a higher chance of injury in adults, teens, and children.

So, we're busy at work, our kids are busy every night of the week, we're not getting enough sleep, we're not taking vacation time, and most of us are anxious and depressed... Does that pretty much sum up your life? Who has time for God in all of that!

That's why as we continue this conversation about bringing God into the **REST** of the week we have to talk about how you set up your calendar for the glory of God and in a way that will not kill you! Because, bold statement time, there is nothing as damaging and potentially soul destroying as busyness. Forget drugs, forget porn, forget that atheist professor from college who tried to destroy people of faith... there is nothing as damaging and as potentially soul destroying as busyness. Busyness will eat up your joy. It will cripple your capacity to give and receive love. And busyness will even cause you to lose your ability to hear from God. AND the real tragedy is you never see it coming!

I want to show you this today from a familiar story that Jesus told in **Luke chapter 10**. If you have a Bible and want to follow along that's where we will be, Luke 10. Many of you will recognize this story that begins in verse 38 but try to experience it with fresh eyes today. Here we go: (v.38-40)

Now as they [They being the disciples, 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. But Martha was DISTRACTED with much serving.** [In other words, she was really, really busy] **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."** [So, she's tattling (A), she feels self-righteous (B), and now she's (C) bossing Jesus around, right? We're talking three strikes here, verse 41] **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."**

Some Bible commentators suggest that in this story you have two different personality types that are clashing. Martha is an ENTJ on Myers Briggs and Mary is more like an ISFP. And that might be true, but I am pretty confident that Jesus is not trying to indicate that He prefers Mary's personality the best. He created both personality types and He's got a purpose for both!

And Jesus is certainly not saying that no one should ever be busy preparing meals, that we should all just sit around all day every day meditating and reading our Bibles. That would go against so many other things that Scripture teaches. In fact, two of the spiritual gifts that God gives us as Christ-Followers is the gift of hospitality and the gift of service.

So, I don't think from this text that we can conclude Jesus was telling us we're not ever supposed to be busy. So, then here's the question. Why is He just picking on Martha? Why did He not say, "Martha, you ought to take a break every once in a while, but Mary, you should probably get up off your rear end and help every once in a while." But that's not what Jesus did, so why only pick on Martha? This is a question that has bugged me about this story for years since I tend to be more like Martha.

Here's what God began to show me about this though. The world usually values Martha's more than they value Mary's. Fair statement? Martha's are usually considered to be great workers, they are the leaders, the go getters, the ones that get stuff done. AND, come on, Martha's usually value themselves a great deal too! So, Jesus chooses to deal with a rather dangerous temptation for competent, responsible, Martha type of people. See, and I think this is key, just like it is harder for rich people to enter the Kingdom of

Heaven, it's also harder for competent people to find the will of God. Just like it is harder for rich people to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, it is harder for competent people to find the will of God.

See, here's what Jesus does in this story. He: {READ SLOWLY}

1. Shatters a myth.

2. Confronts an emotion.

3. Points to a better way forward.

He shatters a myth, confronts an emotion we all battle, and then points to a better way forward. Simple enough, right? Myth, emotion, way forward. So, here's the myth Jesus shatters:

Myth: Busyness equals faithfulness.

Jesus shatters a well-entrenched, deeply held belief that busyness equals faithfulness. Many of us like to be busy because it is when we feel busy that we feel important, and we feel needed, and we feel valued by other people, and even valued by God.

It's interesting in the studies I cited earlier, the Wall Street Journal actually did a study on people overworking and their investigation uncovered that the hours most people report in surveys are inflated because we feel like we need to exaggerate to prove that we are useful. How sick is that? BUT the same reason we overwork is the same reason we exaggerate how much we overwork, because busyness makes us feel useful! "Look, God, I'm tired!" "I'm burned out. I've got nothing left!" "You must be so proud of me..."

In this story Jesus tells us, "Ah, no... just because you are busy doesn't mean I am proud of you." Jesus debunks the myth; busyness does not equal faithfulness. BUT also, number two, Jesus confronts an emotion. What was it that really drove Martha's busyness? Answer:

Emotion: Fear.

She was afraid! Look at verse 41 again, Jesus says:

"Martha, Martha, you are ANXIOUS and TROUBLED about many things..."

Anxiety is brought on by fear! So, what are Martha's fears? Well, I'm sure it was the fear that it's not gonna get done if I don't do it. Right? I'm sure she was afraid everybody's gonna think poorly of me. Everybody's gonna be like, "Yeah, that's the girl that when Jesus came over there were dust bunnies all over her floor and toothpaste spots on her mirror. Laundry piles everywhere. Didn't even have any hors d'oeuvres..." Martha's busyness was driven by fear. Fear it wasn't gonna get done. Fear that everybody's gonna think badly of her. Fear of what Jesus would think...

BUT before I tell you how Jesus confronts that fear, come on, let's get real here, isn't a lot of your busyness and mine driven by the same fears? "Well, what will they say if I don't host the shower, or do the overtime work, or volunteer to coach the team, or bring the cupcakes, or meet them for coffee, or whatever it is. We are afraid of people's opinions.

Maybe it's you're always trying to prove something. You can never rest because you're always trying to prove something to your parents, an older sibling, an ex-girlfriend, a high school coach, maybe even to yourself. There's a voice behind you and inside of you always saying it's not good enough. You gotta keep working, you've got to do more.

Maybe it's the fear of not being important, that your life doesn't matter unless you are producing. This is a toxic lie I have had to repent of, in fact I wrote in my journal last August that I feel like the only reason people love me is because I produce. Ever feel that way? And the moment I stop producing God will find someone else who can. Maybe that fear drives you.

Maybe it's a fear that if you don't keep up with everybody else, you're gonna miss out on life. So, you always take the extra work or the extra hours, you have to hit that next rung on the ladder because if you don't then you're not gonna be able to afford the things that your friends have. I mean how could life possibly be good if you didn't drive this, live there, or go on vacation here?

Maybe it's the fear that if you don't pile up a lot now you're gonna be without in the future. Maybe it's the fear that you're not doing enough to earn God's approval. Many of you are insanely busy taking your kids all over the place. Why? You are driven by the fear that your kids are gonna fall behind!

I saw one study out of George Mason University that said they finally have enough data on this now but having kids involved in all these extracurricular activities made no statistical difference in how the kid turned out or how far they went in school or life. Zero! As long as the parent was involved, as long as the parent had a good relationship with their kid, it made zero statistical difference if they did zero activities or 100 activities. What they did notice, however, is that the parents that were hyper scheduled, what did happen is they put on their kids what they call secondhand stress. The stress of the parents and the worry of the parents got infused into the kids and that caused emotional problems. Yet so many of us are driven by a fear that if we don't have our kids hyper scheduled then they are going to fall behind.

No matter what fear is driving your busyness, Jesus confronts that today, He says, "You are ANXIOUS and TROUBLED about many things, but only ONE THING is necessary." And now He gives us the way forward and at first this is gonna be exactly what you'd expect a preacher to say, but hear me out. Jesus says:

Way forward: Be with Me!

What does Jesus say? Martha, Martha... the repetition in the original language shows this intense emotion, He says only one thing is needed, come be with Me! And I will try and explain why this was so important.

First of all, His approval is given as a gift. His approval is not given to you because you are insanely busy. Jesus gave it to you because He purchased it on a cross. Receive this today, God could not love you more or less regardless of your level of busyness or your usefulness for His Kingdom! God does not accept or approve of you because of the sweat on your brow! He accepts you because of the blood of His son!

So, Jesus is like, Mary, my approval's a gift, you can't earn it!

But the second thing this meant was that all that we are striving for is found in Him. He's basically saying to her, in Me, Martha, you have the absolute approval of the only One whose opinion really matters anyway! If I am saying to you, "Well done good and faithful servant," then why are you busy trying to manage the opinions of everybody else? Why are you obsessed with what people say about you? My approval is the only one that actually matters!

Jesus said I am the Bread of Life, which means that when we feast upon Him then we have everything we need!

BUT the third thing He's saying to her is I'm competent, so you don't have to be. I mean think about this. Why is Martha stressed about dinner? Isn't this the guy that can take a Launchable and feed an entire stadium? Here's the better way: Come to the feet of Jesus, find your sufficiency in Him, and then

do what He tells you to do! Let me say that again because that was a nugget! Come to the feet of Jesus, find your sufficiency in Him, and **THEN** do what He tells you to do.

See, it's not that Jesus is saying don't work. He's just saying don't start with work. Start with me! Start at the feet of Jesus resting in Him and hearing from Him. AND *then* when He tells you to do something, then you go and do it with all your might and intensity and excellence. I mean, don't you think if Jesus had said to Mary, "Hey Mary, can you go make everyone some dinner, don't you think Mary would've got up and done that? Of course! But she started at His feet first!

The question is not, listen to this, what needs to be done? The question is, what does He want me to do? The question is not what needs to be done, the question is what does He want me to do? We live in a world of seemingly infinite need, so if we ask what needs to be done then we'll never find rest because there's always one more need to meet, one more person who needs us, one more rainy day to prepare for. So, Jesus says don't start there. Start with resting in Me and then ask Me what I want you to do.

We have been looking at this throughout this collection of messages. A couple verses we have hit a few times. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, remember this:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

I love that verse because it so simply tells us what is my responsibility, and what is God's responsibility. What's my responsibility? My responsibility is to trust in the Lord with all my heart and in all my ways submit to Him. What's God's responsibility? To make my path straight! God says, "I'm the One who makes your path straight. I'm the One who makes the provisions. I'm the One who takes care of everything. I don't need you to be competent, I need you to acknowledge me in all your ways and trust Me."

Here's the other one, Psalm 127: (v.1-2)

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved [What?] sleep.

This verse implies, this is important, that you have a job during the day, right? You're the one during the day guarding the city. You're the one that's growing the crops. You're the one taking care of the house. But then there comes a point that God gives His beloved sleep or you could translate as REST. AND that's where the fear comes in! Who's gonna watch the city? Who's gonna harvest the crops? Who's gonna take care of the house? God will! Because He never slumbers or sleeps! The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary! So, you can do what you're supposed to do during the day and then sleep at night knowing that God is the one in charge! You can rest in Him and rejoice in what He has told you to do and then leave the rest of Him!

Martha is running around saying, who's gonna get dinner? Who's gonna take care of all this stuff? The One who multiplies fish and bread will! We are to do the things that God has given to us and then we are to judge our success by faithfulness in those things.

In *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey calls this the Big Rocks Principle. Basically, he says, you've got a bowl of rice and a bowl of ping pong balls, then you have a third bowl that you try to put them all together in. But if you take the rice and pour it in first and then try to put the ping pong balls on top you'll never fit it all in. But if you put the ping pong balls in first and then pour the rice on top of it, miraculously it all fits together! Try it at home with your kids and teach them this.

BUT the principle is there are certain big rocks, the pinging bong balls, in your life AND if you will prioritize those, then all the little things, which are the grains of rice, will kind of fit around those things. But if you start with the little things, with all the emails, all the requests, and don't know what your God established priorities are, then you're gonna find that the most important things God has called you to do, by the end of the week, have not actually been done.

Jesus is teaching Martha (and all of us) that we've got to learn to set priorities based on what Jesus has made a priority for each of us. Because, hear me on this: Not everything that comes from heaven has your name on it! You've got to figure out, with the Holy Spirit's help, what actually has your name on it! THEN you can pursue those things with excellence because in pursuing those things is when you are actually being faithful to Jesus. Does that make sense? Is that helpful for anyone?

Because here's the truth and then I want to make this practical, the person who never sets priorities is the person who does not believe in his own finiteness. Newsflash, Jesus was God, you are not! You go sit at the feet of Jesus, you find your sufficiency in Him, and then you do what He tells you to do.

So, what does that look like practically speaking. I've got four quick things this practically looks like, write these down and we are done:

1. Sleep.

Leave the city, the crops, the family to God. It is not your busyness that indicates closeness to God. It is your ability to sleep! If you've got medical insomnia, I'm not saying you're unfaithful to God, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that there's a sense of rest that comes from walking with Jesus.

I'm not sure who actually said this, lots of people get attributed with it, but the quote goes: sometimes the most spiritual, faith-filled thing you can do is take a nap! You're like, this is the best sermon ever, I think I'll practice it right now! D. A. Carson (a great theologian) once preached a sermon on doubt where he said there are six major causes of doubt, five of them, pretty standard. But number six was this, "sleep deprivation." He said, "When you burn the candle at both ends, you engage in more and more cynicism..." He says, "God made us complicated beings, uniting our spiritual health to our physical well-being."

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap. Work hard in the day and then sleep and rest and leave the city or the crops or the family to God. Here's the second thing, flows right out of it:

2. Refuse to worry about tomorrow.

Refuse means you make a choice. I'm not going to worry about tomorrow. Here's what Jesus said in Matthew 6:34:

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Jesus is going back to a principle in the Old Testament that was called the Principle of Manna. Moses leads the people of Israel out of slavery and into the wilderness, but they soon run out of food. So, God rains down "hot now" Krispy Kreme donuts every morning. BUT the rule was you could only collect enough for that day. God was teaching them that He could be trusted, but of course even back then there were the type A, Martha types who were like, "Well, you can't just collect enough for one day. That's not planning ahead. That's not wise. Dave Ramsey wouldn't approve of this. I've got to collect as much as I can for as long as I can. I'll build a manna shelter and get some manna insurance and get some guns and write a

manifesto so when everybody else runs out of manna I'll be prepared..." But what happened? The moment that you stored more than you could eat that day it bred worms and maggots and rotted.

God was trying to teach them to trust Me for your provision today! And tomorrow, guess what, I'll give you more provision for that day too! You trust Him today and let God worry about tomorrow. It's a choice we make each day. It's a matter of our mind and our focus. Refuse to worry about tomorrow.

3. Create margin.

Margin is the space between your capacity and what you are currently carrying. But why do I need that? Because when your schedule is packed you can't deal with the things that God genuinely brings to you. This is the whole Big Rocks Principle, right?

So, what would creating some margin look like for you? Pulling the kids from some activities, fear not! Maybe it's saying "no" to some extended family obligation, fear not! Maybe you need to set some boundaries with your boss, fear not! Maybe you need to let your standards for your house or yard or cars cleanliness slip a little, fear not! Maybe... and hear me out, maybe you need to put the phone down or at least turn off all your notifications!

Create some margin and ruthlessly eliminate hurry. Number four:

4. Practice the Sabbath.

When God set up the economic structure of Israel He said six days you work, but on the seventh you rest! No work, no commerce, no catching up on all that didn't get done. AND that doesn't seem revolutionary to us today because we're Americans and we feel like our God given right is to take off Saturday and Sunday. But back then nobody took any days off because in an agrarian society, the crops had to be harvested daily, the animals needed tending, the fields needed plowing, if you weren't working then you weren't eating! The idea that you would work for six days and then just take off a day and do nothing was crazy!

BUT here was what God was teaching His people. God was forcing them to create some space for Him to show up and multiply what they did on the other six days and give them more than if they had worked by themselves for seven days! The principle of the Sabbath is that God sometimes wants you to back off of what you feel like you need to do to give Him some space so that He can do what only He can do! God is not a god of addition, He is a god of multiplication, amen! But we have to leave space for Him to do it.

The same principle applies to money. We touched on this last week. God told His people to tithe. It wasn't about the money; God owns it all anyway. No, He told them to tithe because He wanted them to have less to meet their needs than they felt like they needed so that they could give Him space, 10% of their budget, where God could show up and multiply and show them that He was the God who provided all their needs according to His riches and glory!

The Sabbath, sleep, the tithe... they're all gifts that God gives to you to relieve you of the burden of provision. Isn't that what Jesus said as we opened the message today, look at it again, He said:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The sign that you're walking with Jesus is not busyness. It's rest! The Sabbath, sleep, the tithe, they're gifts that God gives you, unique privileges for those walking with Jesus.

