

Introduction

Tonight is all about Balance.

Many people say BALANCE isn't achievable. But tonight we're not talking about life being perfectly balanced; we're talking about not being out of balance in our faith.

You know who comes to mind immediately when thinking of this spiritual principle of balance? Mary and Martha.

Let's jump into the scripture for tonight:
Luke 10:38-42

At the Home of Martha and Mary

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one.⁴³ Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

I want to give some context before we jump into this story. I find it very interesting that before this story of Mary & Martha, we find two pretty popular accounts of the life of Jesus. The chapter starts out with the sending of the 72, then the teaching of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Then we find ourselves in the story of Jesus at the house of Mary & Martha.

Can I be honest? I LOVE the sending of the 72. I LOVE the parable of the Good Samaritan. But I am often puzzled by the story of Mary & Martha.

Not that I'm actually confused, but why it happened / is included often feels irrelevant to me. I'm like, "I get it God. Slow down, sit at the feet of Jesus. Okay now I'm ready for the action again! Let's go out and make disciples!"

But that's exactly what God is doing... He's slowing us down, asking us not to glance over making disciples NOR to glance over resting at the feet of Jesus.

Jesus isn't rebuking Martha or telling her that the way she is, is bad. He's not saying she has a design flaw or is particularly wrong for wanting help with making preparations. Rather, Jesus is inviting her into what she cannot see at the moment – the **better** thing.

So my first reaction to hearing this story was: So then RESTING in God is better than making disciples!? But that's kind of like what Jesus gave us as the Great COMMISSION! Like the very last thing he said to the disciples before he was taken up into heaven!? Wouldn't that be SO MUCH MORE important than this short story about resting at Jesus' feet?

And that's just it. That's kind of the whole thing. We, in our very humanness, want things to be black and white. We want them to be THIS or THAT. We stand ten toes down on the side we agree with, refusing to see that not everything – especially regarding faith – can be compartmentalized.

What Jesus is showing Mary & Martha here is that we are called to balance, in our faith. We are called to a BOTH/AND faith. Meaning yes, resting at the feet of Jesus is important. And making disciples/building the kingdom is important. We are not so high & mighty as to say that one is more important than the other.

That brings us to our Big Idea tonight which is: **Radical Disciples hold truth and love, action and devotion, together.**

A Radical Disciple – someone who lives so differently in this life that it begs deeper questions of WHY from those around us – must understand that we cannot live a polarized faith, preferring one aspect of faith over the other.

We must hold truth WITH LOVE. It is said that “Love without truth is hypocrisy, and truth without love is brutality.”

Jesus shows us all over the New Testament what it looks like to do this – even in the story with Mary and Martha. He doesn't condemn Martha for her busyness, but lovingly reminds her what the better thing truly is.

He brings Action & Devotion together.

STORY:

Trying to do ministry while my devotional life was dry

Pastor Sean often reminds our church that you cannot give what you do not have.

And when we do, we become imbalanced people – not living as Christ has shown us, or as the Father has intended for us.

That brings us to our first point tonight: **The Danger of Imbalance**

Three points of CHAPTER 6:

1- BOTH Individual Disciples AND a Church Body

- We're reminded that we have both a responsibility to individually follow Jesus, and corporately be part of a collective family of believers.

- What does it mean to individually follow Jesus?
 - That means: reading your Bible on your own, not just at church or Bible study.
 - Worshipping God in your own time, not just waiting for the worship team to sing a song you like on Sunday or Wednesday.
 - Being obedient to Him, prioritizing His voice above all others, and seeking Him daily.
- What does it mean to participate as a part of the family of believers in a local church?
 - Taking the sacraments seriously – Like communion, getting baptized,
 - Attending corporate worship services regularly.
 - Getting connected to others – building your community / accountability partners / spiritual friendships forming
 - Tithing – giving back to God what He so graciously has given you
 - Allowing yourself to be led spiritually by who God has placed in the church has Spiritual Authority like our Lead Pastoral team of Elders.
- So what are the dangers of imbalance here?
 - Individually following Jesus and being disconnected from a local church family
 - being easily swayed by tiktok / youtube preachers or by different types of false teachings.
 - Being an easier target for Satan to attack because you don't have a regular family of believers to live life with.
 - No one to hold you accountable for the life you're living
 - Missing out on the blessing of belonging to a spiritual family on this side of eternity aka while we're here on earth.
 - Imagine showing up to Heaven like, "I seriously don't know anyone here." That's a joke but can anyone attest that this Christian life is hard sometimes? We need other brothers and sisters to help us in this journey!
 - Being part of the local Body, but not being an individual disciple –
 - No one is responsible for your salvation except for you
 - No one can believe in Jesus for you
 - No one can know the Word of God for you
 - No one can experience transformation FOR you
 - The church is a wonderful place, and again a necessary component of our Christian faith – but you can't expect your pastors, church family or spiritually mature friends to always be the ones feeding you. As a baby gets older, they learn to feed themselves. As you grow in spiritual maturity, the only way to grow is to learn how to "eat" for real!
 - **Jesus said the only thing He's building on this Earth is His Church!**

2- BOTH Worshipers AND Witnesses

- A worshipper is not just someone who sings songs all day long – though if we were in a Disney movie, that would be pretty on brand.
 - A worshipper is someone who:
 - Spends time adoring God

- Spends time knowing God through being in His presence & reading His Word
 - Seeks the Father's Will for their life
 - Chooses humility, meekness, and obedience daily – submitting to God as the ultimate master of their life; choosing to believe that their life is not their own.
- A witness is someone who:
 - Knows the Gospel for themselves
 - Shares the Gospel in both WORD and DEED
 - Lives the Gospel daily by being reminded of their TRUE identity in Christ
 - Seeks out those who are lost to share the Gospel with them
 - Engages in Relational Evangelism
 - Lives a changed life, even though mistakes happen – they seek to live out the transformation they've experienced
 - "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Hide it under a bushel, NO!"
- So what are the dangers of imbalance here?
 - I would say simply it's this: when we seek to share about Jesus without spending time with Jesus, it's informational not transformational.
 - When we seek to worship Him and never share Him, it's Spiritual Gatekeeping.
 - If I had the cure to every issue you've ever had and refused to share it, that's what I would consider heartless withholding.
 - Don't spiritually gatekeep the open gates of heaven!! We want to make heaven crowded! We want to see revival! Not because it makes us feel good or for any reward we could receive, but because JESUS has not withheld any good thing from us – that's what it looks like to have our eyes on eternity!

3- BOTH pilgrims AND citizens

- What's a pilgrim?
 - I usually think of thanksgiving off the bat & it's really hard not to see little outlines of pilgrims around a turkey in my head. However, another word I really like for remembering what a Pilgrim is, is the word SOJOURNER.
 - A Sojourner is one who is a "temporary resident or traveler" often someone who is somewhere for a prolonged period of time, yet a limited amount of time. Kind of sounds like us right?
- So then what makes us ALSO a resident?
 - Because we are residents of Heaven. We belong to a spiritual kingdom that we cannot yet see with our own eyes. We long for it – a place with no more tears or fears or pains, but simply and only all of God's goodness.
- The dangers of imbalance?
 - There's a phrase I LOVE to think about that goes: Don't be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good.

- And vice versa – don't be so focused on this life here that you forget that we await the day we get to be at home with Jesus in the kingdom we ACTUALLY belong to.
- The dangers here are this:
 - Thinking so much about heaven, you miss the opportunities in the here and now. Relationships aren't as important because you'll be focused on God in Heaven; your job becomes meaningless because you can't take it with you; your health slowly deteriorates because it doesn't matter—you're getting a new heavenly body later anyway!
 - Or thinking so much about things here that you forget the ultimate prize isn't doing the WORK or fulfilling the MISSION here on Earth. No, your ultimate prize is Jesus. Paul writes about this in Philippians 3 – Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.
 - Take care of what's been ENTRUSTED to you, as a GOOD STEWARD of the life you live here... yet, awaiting the beauty of eternity with God.

Because when we lived a balanced life, caring about both what's happening here on earth and what we can look forward to in heaven, we begin to live like Jesus.

The truth is, if we desire to live like Jesus, we must follow His example.

And **Jesus Held Both Perfectly.**

James 2:14-17 says, ¹⁴“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

We're reminded by James, the brother of Jesus, in these verses that we are called to a balanced faith, just as Jesus showed us.

Can you imagine being in need – a real, physical need such as clothing, food, water, shelter – and someone just says to you “Oh I'll pray for you,” while keeping an extra empty bed, lots of extra clothes, warm home cooked meals that could feed an army, and access to water, away from you?

I'm reminded of what the Early church looked like in Acts 2:45-46

⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,”

I'm broken regularly by the fact that most of the Western Church does not operate in such a way. We are such an individualistic culture that we miss so often what Jesus laid out so clearly.

In John 2, Jesus provided wine for the wedding, and revealed his glory.

In Mark 1, Jesus healed Peter's mother in law from her sickness.

In John 8, Jesus helped the woman caught in adultery and called out her sin in love.

In John 5, Jesus heals the man at the pool of Bethesda and says to "go and sin no more".

In Mark 6 & 8, both the feeding of the 4,000 and the 5,000 Jesus provided food and spiritual food through His teaching.

We can go on and on discussing how Jesus didn't just preach or say "your sins are forgiven", but lived life with his disciples, provided for people's needs, and healed them when they had physical needs. Jesus cares holistically for us. So if Jesus cares that much, why not us, the Church?

James says it clearly – faith without actions is DEAD. How do we share with people that we've been changed? In the way we live it out.

But might we not skip over the fact that though Jesus did so much, and plenty that we don't know about because we only have so much written down... He still had time to get away and be with the Father.

In Mark 1 after healing many people, He went to a solitary place to be with the Father and pray.

In Luke 4, after a very full day of ministry and healing, He did the same and went to a solitary place.

In Luke 5, Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 6 & 9, Matthew 26, John 6, John 17, Luke 3, Luke 11...

A regular BALANCED rhythm of Jesus' life was both living out what He was called to DO and living in relationship with the Father in who He was called to BE.

Why wouldn't we also do the same?

I want to ask a reflection question for you here: Where do you lean more heavily – towards doing kingdom work, as Jesus did, or towards spending much time with Him, without much regard for the building of the kingdom? Where in scripture have you gotten more excited – in the doing, or in the being?

Mary & Martha had their propensities in the account we read earlier from Luke 10. Where do you lean more – because both are valuable when balanced appropriately in your life.

I encourage you to look to the life of Jesus to continue to build your rhythm of balance, living more like Jesus every day.

Because **We Are Called to Live Both.**

Can I give you some scenarios?

*Imagine a church so focused on outreach & evangelism that the congregation never grows deep in their relationship with God, always remaining a baby Christian?

*Imagine a church so focused on growing deep, Bible study, and internal activities that the neighborhood is never changed by the Gospel because members are too focused on their insulated community together?

*Imagine a Christian who is always doing the Kingdom work, but rarely sitting in the presence of God to receive sonship/daughtership, be reminded of his/her identity, or just simply to be reminded that they are loved regardless of anything they could ever DO for God?

*Imagine a Christian who always values personal devotional time over anything else, that they never have time to live it out with friends, family, co-workers or their neighborhood.

What could change if we lived a balanced faith? What kind of things could God do IN US? IN OTHERS? If we lived a BOTH/AND faith.

Yes, it's both resting at the feet of Jesus AND doing the work of building the kingdom.

Yes, it's both sharing the truth of God's Word with others AND being loving in the ways you share it.

Yes, it's both knowing God's Word AND living God's Word.

Might I challenge you tonight to take a look at your life. Where are you out of balance?

Tonight, are you so concerned about living the Gospel out to family & friends, that you don't even really know what it is? Do you covet your devotional time so much that divine moments of interruption in your life are missed because you're so focused on your own inner life that you miss planting a seed in someone else's?

Let's leave whatever misconceptions about our faith we have at the altar tonight. Let's resolve to live balanced lives, modeled after Jesus' own life – commit with me tonight, if you're ready, to live both truth and love; both action & devotion; the BOTH/AND faith that changes us and others.

Let's pray.

