

We are in a series called *Worth the Cost*, looking at some very difficult and challenging things Jesus says about truly following him. It is the third series that focuses on abiding in Christ and discipleship. We spent the summer looking at the **call of Jesus** through his original disciples and how they responded faithfully and unfaithfully as they walked with him. We then looked at the **invitation of Jesus** in Matthew 11, *Come to Me*, and his heart towards us as we imperfectly walk the path of discipleship. We're now looking at the **challenge of Jesus** to give him *everything* in that discipleship. Last week in Luke 9, Jesus commanded us to remove all obstacles in order to maximize our usefulness in the Kingdom of God. It's a high and magnificent call because it makes clear we all have a contribution to make, all have a purpose to live out. But it's also a call that has the potential to mess with our hearts.

The risk of focusing on what we do *for* Jesus is that it can begin to define us. We can make it our identity, and when that happens, our performance becomes more about us than about him because our value comes from our activity and success instead of from him. I have said many times I feel most alive and in union with Jesus when I am on the move with him, serving, building, and taking ground in his name. And while there is something good and true in that, God has been revealing to me over the last few years that something is also missing. For many of us, our ambition and need for approval is the driving force in our lives. We live in a culture where activity and achievement are king, where making much of ourselves is the way to win, and that finds its way into our spiritual lives, or it takes the place of it. When our hearts deem that most necessary, it shows us Jesus is not at the center, and we wind up missing out on the most important thing.

This morning, we are going to see this tension play out between two sisters. I was going to say two sisters and a savior, but that sounds like a bad sitcom. If you are one who sets the bar high, pursues success and achievement, and spends every minute of every day in that pursuit, Jesus may have something for you this morning. Those things may not be wrong, but you may have something out of order. Let Jesus search your heart and show you.

[Luke 10:38-42] ³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. 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." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Jesus and his disciples are still on the way to Jerusalem and arrive at the home of Martha. Luke doesn't mention it, but this is in a small town called Bethany, just east of Jerusalem. If you are reading through Luke, you'll notice in a later passage they are much further away. It's important to note Luke is not telling all this story chronologically but topically. He wants us to see what is most necessary in the hearts of these characters and wrestle with what Jesus shows us in our own hearts.

Mary: The necessary place to be is at Jesus' feet.

When Jesus arrives Mary's reflex is to be with him. Luke doesn't record her saying anything, but only that she immediately sits at Jesus' feet and listens to his teaching. She is close, intimate, attentive, soaking in his presence and his word. She is in the position of a disciple and a posture of worship. With everything going on around her, there is no place she'd rather be.

It reminds me of weddings. I married a young adult couple this past Friday and it was awesome. Invariably, there are all the moving parts and planning and stress of preparing for the wedding. But in the end, the bride and groom really just want to be with each other as man and wife. All the noise goes away, and there is a hyper focus on being with each other.

That's what Mary chose to do. Jesus says she has chosen the good portion, a phrase that refers to the best part of a meal. Of the buffet of options she has, she chose to be with Jesus. While Martha is working on a meal, the best food is what Jesus is giving out: his presence, his Word. Man does not live on bread alone but on the very words of God. And that is what Mary has chosen. It is costing her anything else she could be doing right now. In the field of economics that's called opportunity cost. My time and resources dedicated to one thing keeps me from dedicating them to any other alternative. For Mary, it is worth it. She knows that when you pay the cost, you get Jesus.

Does that describe your heart? Is that what you choose most days, or do you wake up, blow right past Jesus, and get to the day's activity? Drive-by devotionals lead to dried up spiritual lives. But here's what Mary reminds us of. **The Gospel is the gift of God, and that gift is himself.** Yes, it's God made man, a perfect life lived, a death on our behalf, the resurrection, the defeat of sin and death, the promise of heaven. All those are glorious. But what does all that accomplish? You and me being with God forever! Jesus saved us so we can sit at his feet for all eternity, starting today! Discipleship is relationship, and when you trust in Christ, the best thing you get is Christ! Is Jesus so captivating that he is the greatest desire of your heart? If you had unlimited control of your time, would you fill it with the presence of God? If not sure, will you give the time to let him show you who he is to captivate your heart? It will cost you, but it will be worth it.

Martha: The necessary thing to do is serve Jesus.

This is a tough character to preach. I am married to a woman named Martha who is a doer and thinks this Martha gets a bad rap. So, I'm feeling a lot of pressure here! But what can we learn from her? While her sister is at Jesus' feet, Martha is working. We read that and think it makes sense. She's got guests, she's in a culture where honoring your guests with hospitality is a must, and she gets to serve the Lord with her work. But something is off. Luke describes her as doing "much serving". Too much? Probably, because he says it is distracting her. He uses a word that's found nowhere else in the New Testament, and it means "to be pulled away". Her Messiah is in her home, but she is too busy serving him to actually be with him.

All of us are susceptible to spiritual ADHD. We are so easily distracted, pulled away from the Lord. How many of you have said in the last year "Yeah, I just haven't been spending much time with the Lord lately." We often say that with this sense of not really being sure how it happened.

It just sort of happens. We let the busyness of life take over, one day becomes two, that becomes a week, and then weeks...and all the while we have a lot of motion in our life without a lot of devotion to the Lord. Anything come to mind? Let's keep reading because it may be an indication of something going on in our hearts.

Martha is working her tail off, seemingly alone, and she finally gets so frustrated and angry with Mary that she tells Jesus to confront her on it. Demanding something of Jesus is always a good indication something is off, and Jesus knows it. He tells her she is anxious and troubled. You know something is wrong when the Prince of Peace is telling you you are anxious and worried. Now, we have to read into it a little, but I think we can see what is going on with her. She is split-minded. She's trying to serve two masters; Jesus and ultimately herself. There is a striving in her work that goes beyond being a good host. She is seeking approval, working to be seen, wanting to show out. Her service is less about making much of Jesus and more about making much of herself.

Can you relate? I can. As I said earlier, I love to be on the move with the Lord, but Jesus, because he loves me, has shown me how it can get warped if it pulls me away from him. There have been a few times over the last several years where I convinced myself this church would fall apart if I didn't carry it on my shoulders. The heart of it was sincere: I love this church, I love you, I love the Lord, and I want him to be made much of and our people to grow. But hidden in there was also a desire to prove myself, and what came with it was the message to others that they better keep up. I was distracted, anxious, and worried, so I was going to do it all, even if it killed me. But God was good to remind me that someone already died for this church, and someone already promised to build it. That's not on me. God was also good to show me how far away from Jesus I was when I got that way.

What about you? Our identity gets wrapped up in our performance and our fulfillment in our success. Busyness becomes a badge of honor, and you can tell how much you find your worth in it by how much you tell others how busy you are. Our Kingdom work takes priority over the King. Or, we have our eternal salvation through the promise of heaven, but between now and then we are going to crush it in our job, achievement, etc., and it becomes a secondary salvation we seek to achieve ourselves. We want to make much of us, and everyone else simply becomes a conduit for that. So what would Jesus say to you today if that were true? He'd say what he said to Martha. ...

Jesus: You're both right, but in the necessary order.

We may expect Jesus to respond harshly to Martha, but he doesn't. He says "Martha, Martha." It's a double vocative, a gentle, lowly, tender invitation to take a deep breath and listen. "Martha, Martha, you've got it all mixed up. You're so worried about all this stuff, but you don't have to be. All it's doing is causing you to miss out. There is only one thing necessary right now, and it's me!"

The worry of life robs us of the wonder of Jesus. All the doing pulls us away from simply being. The doing isn't bad. A life of following Jesus is active. **Jesus wants your presence more than**

he wants your performance. He does not invite us to simply be workers in his Kingdom. He invites us to be worshippers of him and to work out of that place of worship.

Worshipping the King redeems doing for the King. Our identity is affirmed in him. We don't have to work for approval. We stand approved by our God because of what Christ has done for us. We don't have to make much of ourselves. We rest in his love for us and desire to make much of him. We don't have to drive ourselves into the ground. Our service is out of a place of relationship, not in place of a relationship.

Do you know how freeing that is? Over the last couple of years Jesus has kept saying "Kurt, Kurt. It's ok. Stop with all the worrying. Stop with all the striving. Just come sit at my feet." And so, I've continually prayed for Jesus to be the greatest desire of my heart, and he's answered that prayer. If you change your prayer life, you change your entire life! Yes, I want to be on the move for the Lord, but more than anything I want to be with the Lord, because when I am I rest in his love, I am reminded of who he is and who I am in him. And the work he calls me to becomes my faithful response to my loving and faithful God, not something to prove myself. He wants to do the same for you. Will you let him? To do so, you've got to answer one other question.

What is your one necessary thing? What is Jesus pointing to right now in your heart. What is the one thing, above all else, that is guiding and driving your life? What is your heart most devoted to? It's been said that if you look at a person's checkbook and you'll see their heart. I also believe it can be said that if you look at someone's calendar you can see what is going on in their heart.

As you came in this morning you were given a discipleship tool called the Time Audit. We want everyone to audit how you are spending your time and then begin to evaluate why and at what cost. Last week I was with some Fellowship people and a woman, moved by this series, said she was taking stock of how she spent her time and realized she has 28 things she does every week. She placed no value on them yet, but it was the first step to figuring out how she is spending her time, why she's spending it that way, what it is costing her, and what cost she is willing to pay to get to the things she finds most necessary.

We want to do that same thing as a church family because Jesus is calling us to focus on what is most necessary. Our staff worked on this earlier in the week and I discovered I spend a ton of time in meetings and writing sermons. Our challenge is to find one hour and repurpose it for the Lord. God may ask you to do more but start there. As you identify your time, ask the Lord to show you the heart behind it. It will be easy to give up something for a couple weeks. It will be quite a different thing to ask God to change your heart and make him the one necessary thing.

When you identify your hour, block it on your calendar and declare it to someone else. Life Groups, you are essential in this. Support and encourage one another. What will God do in our church if we repurpose thousands of hours to abide in him in October? Be part of it and see!

So take a few minutes now and then we will worship as a faith family and let the worship of our Lord begin to change our hearts.