

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Jonathan Pokluda
Series: 7 Deadly Sins of Suburbia
January 9, 2022

Busyness
Luke 10:38-42

“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.[1] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Good morning! Happy New Year! I haven’t seen you guys. If we haven’t met, my name is JP, or Jonathan Pokluda, and I have the privilege of serving on staff here. And this time of year, the new year, it’s a really great time of reset, reflection. I’m sure you have some sort of practices in your home or your personal life that you used this season to think, “Okay, what are things I want to do in 2022? What are things I want to change in 2022? How am I not going to get Covid in 2022?” And all the things that you’re thinking about. And I am no exception to that, and so we as a staff take off between Christmas and New Year’s, and we have that time to be with family, the offices are closed, and that’s a great mental reset. So, Monday, we’re back at it. Back in the rotation, if you will. Every Monday for me starts with a “management meeting,” where the people that report directly to me, we gather up and kind of plan the week and debrief Sunday and all the things.

So, I’m going to that management meeting. I get there early, and I’m thinking about one of the things that I want to do better this year is just be a great encourager. I know that good leaders are great encouragers, and I want to just think about how I can encourage those around me. And so, I’m reflecting on that, and I begin to go through each person that I’m about to sit with in my head and just think about the words of encouragement that I want to speak over them. And so, as I’m doing that practice and kind of mentally preparing to just shower them with encouragement, I begin to think about all the things that we need to do. Because this time of year is really hectic because we have, let’s see, staff retreat, we have that leadership team retreat, management team retreat, we have elders retreat, and then sermon planning retreat where we really plan out the entire year. And don’t let that word “retreat” fool you, because nobody’s retreating; it’s all just figuring out the year. But then you have the relentless return of Sunday, which looks like, “What am I going to say Sunday? We have 66 books to choose from. What are we going to teach? Where are we going? Where are we headed?”

And I just start thinking about all the busyness. Oh, and this past Sunday, I need to make sure that I share with that... And then I’m hit with this thought, “Busyness is the enemy of encouragement.” And so, I’m sitting there in my truck, planning to encourage some friends. I’m

flooded with all of the thoughts of busy work. And I just have this thought, “Busyness is the enemy of encouragement.” So, I think, “You know what, I’m going to sit them down, and I’m going to share that, because that just sounds like some brilliant, tweet-able wisdom I’m about to drop on these guys.”

So, we gather up, and I’m just like, “Hey, this is a thought that I had this morning that I want to share with you guys: ‘Busyness is the enemy of encouragement.’” And then Scott, who spoke last week, taught last week, did a great job, also a tremendous encourager, he just says, “Hey, think about how many things you could put in that blank.” And I said, “What do you mean?” And he goes, “Well busyness is the enemy of blank. You could put so many words there.” And so, we did. We went around, and we just began to fill that blank with words. I want to do that for a minute with you. What would you say, busyness is the enemy of what? What would you say? Happiness? Busyness steals joy from us because we’re so busy doing other things. Busyness is the enemy of happiness. What else? (someone says “relationships”) Relationships? Busyness is the enemy of relationships, so I cannot go deep with someone I can’t pour into that relationship—I heard connection, I can’t make that connection with them if I’m focused on all the things that I have to do. What else? (someone says “freedom”) Busyness is the enemy of freedom, because I’m a slave to my to-do list. What did you say? (someone says “Sabbath”) Sabbath. Busyness is the enemy of Sabbath, busyness is the enemy of rest. Busyness is the enemy of stopping, being still, reflecting, contemplating. What else? Relaxation, I can’t relax if I’m busy. Too much to do to relax. Somebody else? I heard prayer and productivity. When I go to pray, to talk to God, all the things that I have to do flood my mind and it feels incredibly unproductive. Productivity, because maybe I don’t do what I need to do because of all of the other things that are robbing from me. And I’m sure, that if we just sat here for a while, we could see that busyness is the enemy of a lot of things. Or, it’s a tool that the enemy uses. I’ve heard the acronym B.U.S.Y.: Being Under Satan’s Yoke. Which is a little hokey, that’s made up, that’s not necessarily in your Bible. But I’ll say this, it’s a tool that he uses to steal all of those things from you, for sure.

And so, we’re starting a new series called the 7 Deadly Sins of Suburbia. The 7 Deadly Sins of Suburbia. If you’ve ever heard the term, “The 7 Deadly Sins,” that was made up by a monk, whose name is challenging to pronounce, Evagrius Ponticus. If you’re gonna name your kid something, that’s available. Evagrius Ponticus came up with the 7 Deadly Sins, and then they were made known later by Thomas Aquinas. And here’s the originals, the original 7 Deadly Sins are pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and slothfulness. But I’m just asking the questions, what are the 7 Deadly Sins that we face? Because when he used the word “deadly” he didn’t mean that it will literally kill you, he’s saying, “Hey this will rob intimacy with God from you. If you give yourself to these things, you will not be able to deepen your relationship with Jesus at the same time.” And so that’s what we’re going to spend 7 weeks talking about. What are the 7 Deadly Sins of Suburbia?

Life if really full. All of us have a limited amount of time, and we all have this same amount of time. I know for us, over Christmas, our family got Covid—all of us. And what that meant is that Christmas plans changed. So going to see my family was cancelled, going to see her family was cancelled. And so, we just, we sit there, but we still have to do those things. But then all of the other things come in. So, we still have to find a time to go see my family, still have to find a time

to go see her family, but then we have basketball practices. All three kids playing basketball, all of their practices are at different times and different places, because it would be way too easy if they were at the same place. And then you have the games, and the games are spread out. And then you have all of the retreats that I mentioned, sermons to write, speaking here, have something to say, what if I go somewhere else and I'm talking, need to prepare for that and then plan the year. Oh, and I'm under contract for another book, at some point I need to write a book!

And don't for a second think that I'm trying to sound important. Because you have all your own stuff to do. I know that as I say that, you think, "Yeah, practices, assignments, work, family, have to do this, this thing around the house." All of you have some working to-do list flooding your mind right now. Some of you are hyperventilating, and I get it. I get it. We are busy. But here's a grim reality for me: I don't like myself when I'm busy. Like, I don't like who I am when I'm busy. And I get a hunch that you don't like me very much when I'm busy, and I probably don't like you very much when you're busy. Because when you're moving fast like all of you said, we don't love people well. When I'm busy, what falls off is kindness. When I'm busy, what falls off is focus. I'm with you but my mind is writing a sermon, I'm doing something else, I'm figuring out where I need to be next on time, and I am not being a good follower of Jesus with you in that moment. When I'm busy, what I lose is peace and joy.

And I just don't like myself, I don't like who I am when I'm busy. And what happens is I take a victim mentally, "This happened to me. Don't you get it? I'm busy! Like, I'm busy. I know you just need to understand that I'm busy!" And I just kind of turn outward and begin to lash out at everybody because, "I'm busy! You need to know that I'm busy! This happened to me! I'm a victim of busyness!" It's not like I got cancer. I just didn't manage my time well. It's not like I got a disease, I just didn't say, "No" to some things. And I got myself in this situation that I'm now projecting on you. And that's what we do, and that's why this is a tool that the enemy will use to kill intimacy with Jesus.

And that's why today we're talking about busyness. From the Scripture, I'm going to be in Luke Chapter 10, if you want to turn there. Three things that busyness is the enemy of, really four things that busyness is the enemy of. What's happening in this chapter of Luke, is Luke writes about Jesus sending the 72 disciples. Then he writes about the story—if you've been in church long enough you know—the good Samaritan. Which the good Samaritan is really a story about margin. Right? The priest goes by, the Levite goes by, there's a man injured on the side of the road, they don't have time to care for him. Then the Samaritan comes and kind of clears the way, and cares for the person. I don't think it's an accident that Luke put these stories all together here in this chapter, because that leads us to where we are today, the story of Mary and Martha. And so, I'm going to be in Luke Chapter 10 verse 38. He says this, **"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. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."**

Let me leave the topic of busyness for just a minute to give context to this text. I'm going to give you a little bit of insight into our world. We almost always—anybody that's teaching from the stage—almost every single time, takes a passage and teaches the passage. Even if it's a topic, some people will say, "Well, do you teach exegetical or expositional?" Even if it's a topic, we teach a passage, we practice expository preaching. Right? And so, to give context to what is happening in this passage, there's a few things, a few observations. One, Jesus had friends. That's just cool to think about. Jesus, when He was on this earth, like He had buddies. He had people He just hung out with. And it's different than the apostles, it's different than elders. These are just friends of His that, they are investing in Him, He is investing in them. Which leads me to my second observation from this text. So, well let me say this. So, His friends, His friend group is a sibling group: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. These three people are friends of Jesus; that's cool.

The second thing I want to bring your attention to, is these women ministered to Jesus. Like that's neat. In fact, if you were to look at the entire New Testament and said who ministered to Jesus, it's a group of women and angels, primarily, who ministered to Him. And I think that's neat that that's kind of a reoccurring thing. This word "minister" if you grew up in a culture, you might have some baggage with that word. I think we've taken that word and put a formality to it that was never meant to be there. Ministering to someone, it just means rendering aid to those in need. That's all it means. So, a minister is someone who renders aid to those in need. And so, there's this controversial topic that you may have stumbled upon. Can women be ministers? And I would tell you that there's not a woman who is a follower of Jesus Christ who's not doing ministry. That all followers of Jesus are called to ministry. We've even taken that word "calling" and we've made it something that it wasn't meant to be, or you don't necessarily see spelled out in the Scripture. And if I'm a follower of Jesus, am I called to ministry? Are you called to render aid to those in need? Without a doubt you are.

The reason I say that is to make this third observation. Jesus is preparing Mary for ministry. You may not see that in there, but when it says that she is sitting at His feet, that word selection there is very specific to say something, so let me explain. In the first century, you would not lead with where you went to school. You would not point to your degree. You wouldn't be like, "Hey, I did undergrad at Stanford and went to grad school at Harvard." That's not the way you would talk about it. You would point to a person. Like Paul in Acts Chapter 22, he says, "I was trained under Gamaliel." So, you wouldn't say to someone, "Hey, I trained at Truett Seminary." You would say, "I trained under Dr. Todd Still. That's who disciplined me." And so, your effort would be to connect yourself to a rabbi. You would find a rabbi and say, "Hey, would you pour into me?" And then for the rest of your life your credentials would be, "I trained under that rabbi." And so, they would inspect you to determine if they see you as a suitable student, and if they would, whenever they teach, they would give you the honorable position of sitting at their feet.

So, in this text, when it says, "and Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and He taught her," it's saying something radical. It's saying something much bigger than you might think at a face reading, and here's why that's important. Because the dichotomy that this text presents to you is not that Martha was doing busywork and Mary was doing nothing. I think that sometimes that's what we think is like, well "Martha's getting after it and Mary's just resting." No, she's not. The dichotomy that the text presents to you is Martha's doing busywork, and Mary is learning from

Jesus. You see that? So, the thing that it's trying to give you, right out the gate, is that we need to prioritize learning from Jesus.

Alright, now back to our topic of busyness. Let's just talk about what's going on. Jesus comes to town, He's with his friends, Martha's there. Martha is a 1 wing 2, she's got it together, she's proactive, she's a perfectionist, she's a homeowner, okay? They're at Martha's house, she's balling out of control. That's what the Greek says, "Balling out of control." She's got her act together. Right? And so there she is. And then there's Mary. Mary's a 4. She's artsy, creative free thinking, little flippant, little flighty. Hey, Mary's going to help out with this, she's going to show up— She might, she might not. We never really know with Mary. She's couch surfing, she's a freeloader, she's hanging out over at Martha, her sister's house, because Martha has it all together. And to the Martha's of the world the Mary's are extra annoying, because it just kind of seems like they get a free pass, right? It's like, ugh, she just doesn't have her act together. And so, when Martha comes to Jesus and says, "Tell her!" And then He says, "She's done what is better." That's like the biggest (JP slaps his hands). Everybody's like, "Jesus's kindness and compassion and everything!" I mean, Jesus just put her in her place. Could you imagine the perfectionist 1 who has it all together and is like, "Hey I'm trying to do all this, would you just tell her to help?" "Well, she's actually doing the better thing than you're doing." I mean, ugh! Feel the weight of that, right? Feel the weight of that. Verse 40, "**Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.**" Distracted is the word that Luke uses right there. And so, my first point.

1. *Busyness is the Enemy of Focus*

Busyness is the enemy of focus. Jesus is going to call Martha to the one thing at the end of these verses. And He's saying, He's making the point that many things steal from the one thing. Martha, Martha! It reminds me of the Brady bunch, "Martha, Martha, Martha." "**Martha, Martha, the Lord** (There's like, two of you got that, that's fine.) **the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better."** You're distracted. Busyness has robbed you of focus.

Let me tell you what it looks like. There we are in my home. We have prepared a meal. We have plated the meal and served the meal; it's on the table. Monica's there and the kids are there, and we're sitting around our table. And our family is there, and all is right in the world. And it's like, "Hey, why don't you pray? Yeah, you pray!" And the kids are good. And it's that moment that if you want to see your pastor's house, that's when I hope you look through the window. Like, "Oh, wow, this is exactly what I thought it would be like!" And there we are, all is right in the world, we're about to eat, break bread, we might say, together. We're gonna break bread together. And then I hear the ding! Ding! And it's a DM, it's a text message, it's an email, I'm not sure what it is, but somebody needs me. "Green beans, pass the—Hey I'm gonna be right back, I'm just gonna check the phone real quick." I go to my phone, it's smart, a smart phone, okay? Brilliant phone, because this little device in my hand has all the worries of the world just flooding in. And there it is, there's the message, "Yeah! Glad I took this one, because it's important. And somebody—they're talking about how much...yeah! That's good. And now I'm back with you guys!" But I'm not back with you guys. Because I'm "here," I'm "present." But up here (JP points to his head), it's like, "Luke 10, good Samaritan, Mary and Martha, I need to

write that sermon, I need an illustration, maybe I could talk about this, that'd be crazy. You know, just all the things, the worries of the world, staff and retreat, and we gotta go there, and do we have a place to stay, and I need to figure that out.”

I'm there, but I'm not there because I'm busy, and when I'm busy I'm distracted. Because busyness is the enemy of focus. It doesn't allow me to be with those that I'm already with. I'm home, but I'm not really home. I had a pastor friend, who would say that he would be in that environment, he'd be at the house, and the phone would ring, the church office would call, “Hey! Something's on fire, we need you!” And he would get in his car, he'd drive to the office, he'd drive to the church. And he would say this prayer on the way there, “Lord, I'm doing your work. I'm doing what you've called me to do. So, I just need your Holy Spirit to sort that out at home. Make sure my wife feels loved, God. Your supernatural power, make sure she feels loved and cherished and cared for. And make sure those kids get disciplined and trained up in the way of you. Because you know me, I've gotta go to the church—your church, Lord. I gotta go be with your people and put out this fire and care for them.” And he said he realized he was praying backwards. That what he needed to do, “Hey, at the church, something's on fire!” “Okay, hey, I'm going to stay right here and do the things that only I can do, sounds like you're there. I'm going to pray for you that the Holy Spirit would do everything He needs to do to make sure you get that done.” And you know, that's obviously pastor talk, but you can replace your situation. You can put in your work in that little illustration. “I've gotta go in! They need me, I've been called in, been tapped in. Gotta get there.” And sometimes you just say, “Hey, you know what? I'm actually gonna stay right where I'm at, and I'm gonna trust you guys to get it done. You've got what you need.” Here's the question, what are the things that only you can do?

What are the things that only you can do? And let me give you an answer. Only you are in charge of growing your relationship with Jesus. In the church world, I can't tell you how many times I've heard, “I just don't feel like I'm growing. I'm sitting in my small group; it just doesn't feel like they're feeding me.” Nobody else is in charge of you eating. You're in charge of your own spiritual growth. Let me tell you, let me add to the list now and just say, no one else is going to be able to be their father. No one else is going to be able to be their husband. No one else is going to be able to be their wife. No one else is going to be able to be their mother.

God placed you in that classroom. No one else is going to share the Gospel with that person who sits in front of you who you know is far from God. What are the things that only you can do? Make sure you know the answer to that. Bring focus to that. Verse 40, second part, **“She came to him and asked, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?”** Don't you care!/? Tell her to help me! She's the victim. Mary's against her, Jesus is against her, no one's for her, I'm having to carry this all by myself. She's blaming everyone else for her problems, because busyness breeds a victim mentality. Don't they see all I have to do? Don't they know how busy I am? And it's as zero-sum game, because you have a list to do, and everybody in the world—you move toward master utility. Utilitarian. Everyone's either for you or against you. If they can help you do your list: great! If they can't, then they're wasting your time: Next! And you begin to see people through that lens. “If you're not helping me get this done, then you're not for me.” “Tell her to help me! Are you not on my side?” I'm not interested in what you have going on, because I see my tasks as more important than yours. And so, my second point is busyness is the enemy of empathy.

2. *Busyness is the Enemy of Empathy*

I can't slow down to focus on whatever you need, because I have my own needs. Busyness is the enemy of empathy. Empathy takes time and there's, "No time, we're running out of time, there's never any time!" And this is why I think this shows up right next to the good Samaritan. The priest, he's off to the races. The Levite's got stuff to do, places to be. The Samaritan clears the day, trips over the person, ministers to them.

"Don't you care?" Do you ever feel like that when you're really busy? "Don't you care? Do you not see how busy I am? Don't you care?" Now answer that, one and done, for the rest of your life. "Doesn't anybody care how busy I am?" Ready for the answer? Nah. Nobody cares. Do you know why nobody cares? Because everybody's busy. Life's busy. Everybody has stuff they're doing, so when you're like, "Don't you care how busy I am?" The answer is, "No."

This week my friend Bill called me around lunch time—this is a weird story by the way, trigger warning—and he says, "Hey, do you have a minute to talk?" and I'm like, "Man, just a minute, because, honestly, I've had to go to the bathroom since 9am, and I haven't had time to go to the bathroom, right? I've just been holding it." And I guess you say that because I just want you to know, I'm busy. Right? Like, he's gonna be like, "Oh no! You haven't had time to go to the bathroom, you must be really important! That's incredible!" But, I love it, he's just like, "Well go to the bathroom. Stop and go to the bathroom and call me back." And I love that, right? Because that's what some of us need to hear. Stop.

Stop, and do what you need to do. And then pick it up. "It might not get done!" It might not get done. It might not get done. Busyness is the enemy of empathy. I need you to know this, for the rest of your life, because I do think in America, we've believed a lie. We've made, "I'm busy" synonymous with something that it's just not synonymous with, it's just not the same as. You ready? We think, we have believed the lie that "I'm busy" means "I'm important." Let me tell you something, clearly, forever, "I'm busy" does not in any way mean "I'm important." Okay? So those two things do not mean the same thing. There's somewhere in your subconscious, you have put the idea, more than likely, that somewhere in there you believe that if they just know I'm busy, they'll know that I'm important. But those two things do not mean the same thing. So, what does it mean? Let's just talk about, literally, what do you say when you say, "I'm busy." Here could be what you *literally* mean, like these could be synonymous: I'm busy; I manage my time poorly. I'm busy; I'm 41 years old and haven't learned how to say "no." I'm busy; I am a slave to what others think of me, and I don't want to disappoint anyone. I'm busy; I'm on the verge of a mental breakdown because I don't... Those might be synonymous, but it does not, in any way, mean I'm important.

You're communicating something different than you think you're communicating. And I want to say this right here, for this high compassion group. Christians, we love people. Some of you right now, you're thinking, "Well, what about the single mom with four kids, working two jobs. Right?" If you're here, I'm not talking to the single mom working two jobs with four kids. If that's you, we're here to help. Raise your hand, not right now, afterwards come up and just say, "Hey, I have found myself in these season. Something did happen to me, and I've found myself

in this season where I just need help.” And that’s the beauty of the body of Christ, that we come around you. Galatians 6 talks about a burden to carry and a burden to share. This is a season to share that burden, and we got you. Harris Creek, the church, we got you! We’re gonna life up your arms, we’re gonna carry your stuff. We’re gonna—whatever we need to do to help you in this season. It’s time for you to ask for help. And I don’t want you to hear this message in a way that is confusing, that’s not what I’m saying. What I am saying, to the rest of us, is I’m asking the question, “Who is in charge of your schedule?” And it has to be you. And being in charge of a schedule is a daily, active practice. You determine what goes on, you determine what doesn’t. And you have to actively do that, right, because there’s no one else to blame but you, if you’re busy. Verse 41 **“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things,”** This is what Jesus projects on her, “You’re worried, and you’re upset.” He’s saying that busyness has stolen from you peace and joy. Number 3, busyness is the enemy of peace and joy.

3. Busyness is the Enemy of Peace and Joy

Busyness is the enemy of peace and joy. What if it all doesn’t get done? What if it doesn’t all get done? What if? Just live in that reality. What if I don’t finish the assignment? What if the house doesn’t get clean? What if the kids don’t get picked up from practice on time? What if? And the greatest thing that you can do with that question is answer it. It really removes the teeth of the enemy. What if the house doesn’t get cleaned? You have a messy house. What if the kids don’t get picked up from practice on time? What if? They sit there another 15 minutes? Everybody gets in their car and just talks about what an awful parent you are, somebody calls CPS, like, “Man, you’re not gonna believe this. This person…” What if the ornaments don’t get hung? The stockings don’t get done? Everybody’s coming over, right? There you are, putting ornaments on the tree. What if you don’t finish? Man, I guess we bring you up here and we also just take turns making fun of you, telling you how pathetic you are. I mean, I imagine that’s gonna be a pretty incredible story. Probably a cover story—Waco Trib. “You guys aren’t gonna believe this!” Some journalist is like, “Everybody was coming to her house. She knew it. She’s putting ornaments up on the tree—doesn’t finish. How pathetic is she?” What have we done? How have we gotten here? How did we get here? What lies are we believing about this stuff?

There’s an enlist list of things to do. Life is busy, so if you’re at this place where being busy frustrates you, you’re really setting yourself up for a life of frustration. Because it just gets busier and busier and busier for a long time. Like you just gain more and more responsibility. So, if you’re just resistant to the reality of responsibilities, you’re setting yourself up for a tremendous life of frustration. And so, the world has countless solutions to this problem. I mean, you go to Barnes & Noble, the self-help section, there’s so many books there that are going to give you resources. In fact, there’s a word that you’ll continue to trip over. If you say, “Well my schedule is really full!” They’ll say, “Well you just need some blank.” If you say, “Man, I can’t come up for air. We’re always doing something.” “Well, you just need to build blank into your schedule.” Anyone know what that word is? Margin. They’ll say, “You just need margin. Just create some margin. All you need is margin. The solution to your busyness is margin!” Now let me tell you this, margin’s not bad and they’re not wrong in the sense that when life throws you a curveball, margin’s really helpful. When you have a clear day and a problem comes your way, it’s super

helpful to be able to shift all of your time and energy to solving that problem. In that situation, margin is helpful.

The problem is, it's not sustainable, because things are always going to be coming at your calendar. So, I'm going to give you a different word that I think is a biblical word that I think this passage is pointing to. It's a different word than margin. It's a different solution than margin. The word is this. Prioritization. Priority. You have to figure out right now, what are your non-negotiables. What are the things that you will not trade? And it's really counter-intuitive because there's this unseen world and there's this God, and He's created this world, and so sometimes when you put those big rocks in first, everything else falls into place. And you might think that's idealistic, but I'm just telling you, that people, for a really long time, have been practicing that, and they're able to get it done.

Martin Luther, responsible for the Protestant reformation, said this,

“I have so much to do today that I'm going to need to spend three hours in prayer in order to be able to get it all done.”

-Martin Luther

That's not just a statement of faith, it's a statement of priority. He's saying, “I cannot get to all that I have to do today until I get to this.” This is what Jesus says to her, **“42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”** Do not let the many things distract you from the better things. Do not let the many things be the enemy of the better things. Everyone has a different capacity. Everyone can carry different loads of weight. But everyone has the same amount of time, and I'm telling you that anything that you put as a priority over learning from Jesus is a bad trade. Guys, you've gotta hear me on this. You wanting to see your kids go to an Ivy League school, and so, instead, you cut corners on discipling them in the way of Jesus Christ—you've made an awful trade. They will lay their Harvard diploma at the feet of Satan. Okay? It's a bad trade. You wanting your children to play professional sports—they're gonna be one in thousands good, and have an amazing career and make seven figures, and you're all gonna gather around the TV to watch them in the big game—and you got there because the tournaments fell on Sunday, and you know, “Jesus is most important, but we've got to do this, pour into you, get better, private coaches, let's go.” It's a bad trade. It's a bad trade. I'm telling you, it's a bad trade. 100 years from now you are going to see what a terrible trade you made.

You can say Jesus is most important, but people learn what is most important by what you say “no” too. You say Jesus is most important, you say “no” to life group, I'm confused. I thought y'all gathered to talk about Jesus. “Well, we do, but my favorite show is on.” “Oh! That's most important. I gotcha.” “Well, it's different...”

Eric Little was an athlete. He made it to the big stage. He's in the pinnacle competition of athletes of his day and age, which is the Olympics. He's slotted to run a race that he is the fastest person in the entire world in that race. And the race lands on Sunday, and he says “I'm not running it.” And has anyone ever heard the name Eric Little? Anyone know that name? You've heard it before? You've heard that name? The only reason you know his name is because of what

he said “no” too. That’s why you know his name. You can tell them what’s most important all day long, they’re going to learn what’s most important by what you say “no” too.

And so, here’s the question. What good can you say “no” too, in order to prioritize the better? What good can you say “no” too in order to prioritize the better? And so, in summary, busyness is the enemy of focus; it will distract you. Busyness is the enemy of empathy; it gives you a victim mentality. And busyness is the enemy of peace and joy; you’re worried and upset about many things.

In conclusion, I’ll give you this picture. It comes from Stephen Covey in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, and he just says in the illustration he says, “The sand—“ So this right here (JP holds up a large glass jar) it represents 24 hours. It represents a fixed amount of time that you all have. We all have the same amount of time. This represents time, right? And the sand represents the cell phone dings, the sand is the little interruptions of life. These are the things that come at you, somebody knocks on your door, hey this didn’t print right, we need to redo this assignment, you have to come in something just broke, electricity’s out. These are the interruptions of life. (JP holds a handful of small rocks) The pebbles, if you will, the small rocks, these represent things that if they don’t get done, there’s nominal consequences too. These are important things. Like, these are things that are good in life. These are practices, these are homework assignments, these are job, task responsibilities. These pay the bills, right? These are important. (JP holds big rocks) These are the non-negotiables. These are the big rocks. What happens is, (JP places big rocks in a jar already full of sand and they do not all fit into the jar) these don’t fit in here. It’s full of all the other stuff. I can’t tell you how many times I hear, “I don’t have *time* to read the Bible, I didn’t read the Bible today, I didn’t have *time*.” How’s your prayer life, “Man it’s hard for me to find *time* to pray, there’s so many distractions. It doesn’t make sense for me to sit still for 30 minutes, or for an hour, when I have so much to do.” You don’t want to push out the big rocks. So, what do you do?

You put them in first. (JP places big rocks in the empty glass jar of equal size) The only way you’ll do this is if right now you say, “These are the big rocks and nothing’s going to compromise that.” At Harris Creek, to put some things on this, there’s three things that we really ask of members. You guys are about to do your three “E.” It’s an annual re-up. I hope you’ll do that today. We ask you to gather here, worship corporately, be reminded that Jesus Christ has died for your sins and God raised Him from the dead, and salvation comes through Him alone. You’re gonna be with God, not because of your works but because of His finished works on the cross. So come here. Let us sit at Jesus’s feet as we open up His word and say things He said. Serve. You’ve got gifts. You’re smart, God made you smart for Him. You’re good with kids, God made you good with kids for Him. You serve, you share your gifts with the church, His body. The body of Christ. The bigger we get, the smaller we must become. Life group. I know you don’t have time for life group, some of you... Life group. You gather with those who will encourage you all the more as you see the day approaching. Holding you accountable to knowing God and growing in Him. Loving Him and loving others, right? Put that rock in. You’ve got those in place, pour in some of these things (JP pours the smaller rocks into the jar with the big rocks already in it). Same amount of sand is in here, same amount of rocks as in there. Now these are your interruptions, (JP pours in the sand last) you’ve got your big rocks in place, they’re the foundation, right? In a weird way—and God kind of made us this way, to run on Him as fuel—in

a weird way, when you put those big rocks in, all of a sudden, you have what is necessary to endure the little interruptions of life. And everything fits. (All the big rocks, smaller rocks, and sand fit into the jar)

All of a sudden, you can get it all done. Why? You got the big rocks in first. So, I'm going to ask the band to come out—you can stay seated, don't stand up—let them sing over you for just a minute as you think about what are the big rocks? What are my non-negotiables? 2022. Maybe you've been in church for 60 years man, I don't know. Maybe you've heard Mary and Martha taught 23 times, I don't know. What are the big rocks we're going to put in? And we're going to make that decision right now collectively, as a body, with your brothers and sisters in the faith around you, you're going to say, "This is my non-negotiable. This is the year that every single day of my life I get in the word, not out of legalism, but because I want to learn from Jesus. This is the year; I'm going to go all in on that life group. They've been wanting me to commit—I'm committed. I'll be the first one there. I'm not going to miss. I'm going to come back to worshiping corporately. I've been away for a while, our family needs this. I'm going to come back." Going all in, what are your big rocks? You decide, as they sing.

Father, would you help us. Would your Holy Spirit bring to mind the right things as we sing, as we reflect would you stir in our hearts a prioritization of the better things? Help us not to get distracted by the many things and lose sight of the better things. Father, right now, would you please stir in us, bring our attention to the better things. Would you help us know what those are? Help us to see them. Help us to do a little bit of Christian mathematics; a removal, a subtraction, and addition. Subtracting things that distract us from you God, and adding things that push us deeper into a relationship with you, God. You convict hearts, I am not good enough. If there is something that You want to change in someone, would you do that now, would you start with me? In the name of Jesus, Amen.