

Life on Mission: An Unhurried Life

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Introduction

Last week we looked at the story of the Good Samaritan. We concluded last week by recognizing that while we are to follow the example set by the Good Samaritan story, we ended by saying that ultimately, Jesus is the Good Samaritan. In the story, we are the helpless traveler left for dead on the side of the road — and were it not for Jesus seeing us, pursuing us, binding up our wounds, caring for us, nursing us back to health, laying down His wealth, His rights, His privileges for us — we'd all be done for. *Considering that reality, how could we not do for others in need what He's first done for us?*

One of the reasons why we're pressing into this "loving your neighbor" idea is because too often when we think about the "Mission of God" or the "Mission of the Church"— we think "BIG." It's easy to think that it's the professional church person's job to DO the mission — and the rest of us are outside observers and spectators, waiting for the mission to happen.

But when Jesus invites you and me to follow Him — He doesn't say, Follow Me and observe other people accomplishing the mission while you do whatever you feel like doing. He says...

Matthew 4:19

Follow Me, and I will make **YOU** fishers of men.

The call to follow Jesus means that you'll be changed by Him and live on mission WITH Him. It means you have been entrusted with and given ownership over the mission of God on the earth. Do you understand how EMPOWERING that is!??

The Christian life is **not about the many observing the few people — but about the few empowering the MANY to get involved and begin to live on mission.**

We're focusing on all these practical elements because it's SO easy to drift into complacency, to lose focus, and abdicate our responsibility — expecting someone else to do the work FOR us. And we Grace Chapel, will not be lulled into the deceitful slumber, believing that our Christianity is a spectator sport. If WE ALL ARE the Church, then WE ALL need to get in the game and LIVE ON MISSION.

REMINDER:

1. A few ways we're doing that... **#forwilco** —
2. Last week, "Neighboring Maps" loving our literal neighbors...
 - a. These could be applied to your workplace as well. You may pick up extra copies of the maps in the Resource Center.

"If we don't take Jesus' command (to love our neighbor) literally, then we turn the Great Commandment into nothing more than a metaphor. We have a metaphoric love for our metaphoric neighbors, and our communities are changed—but only metaphorically, of course. In other words, nothing changes."¹

- Jay Pathak and Dave Runyan, *The Art of Neighboring*

¹ Jay Pathak, Dave Runyan. *The Art of Neighboring*. (Baker Books, 2012)

We need to get focused and intentional; if we're going to see anything change in the lives of those around us, and in our community.

OBJECTION: If you're exploring faith, or if you're skeptical of Christianity... you might be saying... *"This is the part I can't stand about Christians... they're always trying to convert people... you shouldn't do that..."* There's a lot more discussion to be had around this, but this is a brief look...

1. ***This isn't about converting... this is about revealing.*** God has called us to live in such a way that the world around us can clearly see the goodness, kindness, generosity, grace, and love of the God that we claim to love and follow. While there is HOPE that someone would trust in Jesus, we cannot control whether they do or don't. We can't control what other people do. **The greatest commandment ISN'T Love God and Convert people.** It's love God and LOVE people. So, we will LOVE people whether they ever believe in Jesus or not — because every human being is made in the image of God and therefore worthy of dignity, and respect.
 - a. So, our motive behind living on mission REALLY matters. We don't do it perfectly... we blow it sometimes. But we're learning and doing our best to represent Jesus well.
2. If you say, *"You shouldn't try to convert people to your viewpoint, that's wrong, narrow-minded, bigoted even."* A gentle push back on this... isn't that exactly what you're trying to do? Convert me to your point of view? What we need to realize is everyone is evangelizing and trying to convert people all the time... it's just a matter of what you're trying to convert people to.

TODAY we're going to look at what likely is THE BIGGEST BARRIER in American culture to us living on mission. This will challenge and stretch you, and we'll end with another very simple, yet very practical step as we move toward this together.

Luke 10:38-42

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. 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." 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."

Today we're talking about our...

**PACE
PRIORITIES
PURPOSE**

Pace

What's fascinating about Luke 10:38-42 is what we're told about these two sisters. **Martha...**

1. Welcomed Jesus into the home, she's being very hospitable to Jesus. Probably a good idea.
2. We see that she's serving Jesus, also a good idea.

And at first glance, it looks like Martha is really the mature and responsible one. She's prepared, she's ready... I actually feel bad for Martha... she gets a really bad rap. We've heard phrases in church, "Don't be a Martha," poor Martha! She's a God-honoring woman who is doing her best to be hospitable to Jesus — everything she's doing is good work!

Earlier the text tells us that she was distracted.

But when I read about Martha with my modern American filter, I'm looking at Martha thinking... "She's not distracted! She's focused! She's getting stuff done! She's getting results!"

And then Jesus comes along and messes all that up! Think about this... *Jesus reprimands Martha for serving Him...* is that not totally confusing?

We live in a world that values productivity, achievement, and results above everything else. If you don't spend every waking minute being at least somewhat productive — then we feel what? Lazy? Guilty? Fearful that we might get left behind — that we're going miss out or lose in the competition of life if we're not living at the hurried and frantic pace of everyone else around us!

I.E.: Our technology... our smartphones... they're supposed to help us be what? More productive, freer, have more connected relationships, to be more accessible.

Now, we can be reached anywhere at any time, we can get work done from any place. We have task lists that can be shared through our phones. Other people can schedule meetings with us, and it just shows up on your calendar without you even giving permission.

What I've found is — the more accessible we become to those far from us, the less connected we are to those who are near to us. It's the family that's in the same room — but they're never together.

With the advancement of technology in our culture, it's not actually helping us to slow down, which it was supposed to do — it's encouraging us and FORCING us to speed up — causing us to cram more into our over-full lives. Our pace of life just keeps getting faster and faster and the expectations are only getting higher and higher — and so we're MORE distracted, MORE anxious, under MORE pressure, MORE stressed, MORE medicated, MORE hurried than human beings have ever been in HISTORY!

INTERESTING: All of this is true of 21st American culture. But Jesus is telling Martha that she is too distracted and needs to slow down. In fact, He's constantly telling His disciples that THEY need to slow down — that their pace of life is not in step with the Spirit of God. He's constantly saying this....**in the 1st century!** No cell phones... no landlines! No email... no 24/7 news cycle... No social media... You could only be connected with the people who were in proximity WITH YOU. Martha could only be connected with those who were literally with her — and Jesus is telling Martha, "*You are moving too fast, you need to slow your roll,*" in the *first* century!

The BIGGEST BARRIER that keeps us from fulfilling the second half of the Great Commandment, to simply love our neighbors, is our pace of life. We simply don't have time. We're going too fast. We're just like Martha "*anxious and worried about many things.*" We're rushing from one task to the next, one meeting to the next, one **good thing** to the next. Jesus is saying, not that all those things are bad, but He's saying, "*Your life is filled with so many good things that you're missing what I said was the greatest thing.*"

John Ortberg said...

“Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. The reason why hurrying is so dangerous is because love and hurry are fundamentally incompatible. Love always takes time, and time is the one thing hurried people don’t have.”²

If you are always in a hurry, if you’re living at this frantic pace trying to keep up with the world, if you have no margin or breathing room in your life, you will not love your neighbors. Why? Because you have no room for them. You don’t have time.

Priorities

Luke 10:39

And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

In Hebrew culture to sit at the feet of a Rabbi indicated a powerful bond between a teacher and a disciple. Mary’s sitting at Jesus’ feet was completely against many socially acceptable norms.

1. In that day, in Hebrew culture, women were not supposed to be students.
2. They definitely were not supposed to be disciples of any Rabbi.
3. Their job in this scenario would have been to show hospitality to and serve their guest of honor — in this case, Jesus.
 - a. In other words, everything that Martha was doing!

When you compare these two sisters... it seems like Mary is in fact doing the wrong thing and Martha is doing the right thing by working hard.

But Jesus interjects — notice that He doesn’t draw distinctions between right and wrong here — instead, Jesus is saying, “It’s not about what is right and what is wrong, but between **what is good** and **what is best**.”

One translation says that Mary has chosen “the better thing.” Even though according to every culturally standard in their day, Mary’s actions would have been wildly rejected as unacceptable and offensive. But Jesus praises her for it.

What this means is — if we choose what Jesus says are the most important things — that will involve living contrary to some of our cultural expectations.

- When everyone is saying “yes” to crazy schedules, or to the billion wonderful and good things you can say yes to — that we’re willing to slow down say “no” — for the sake of, first sitting at the feet of Jesus... of being with Him, near Him, to love and be loved BY Him... but also in creating space in our daily, weekly, monthly rhythms to love the people around us.

If you just say, “Yeah Rob, go get ’em... and tell us how it went next week. But you yourself are not wrestling through what it means for YOU to literally love your literal neighbor... what that tells me, and what that ought to tell you is that you’re not actually following Jesus! You’re adhering to cultural Christianity which is not no Christianity at all.

Jesus would look at you and me today and tell us, “Please don’t cram your life so full of good and decent things that you miss out on what Jesus says are the most important things.”

² John Ortberg. *Soul Keeping* (Zondervan, April 22, 2014)

Think back to the story of the Good Samaritan...the Good Samaritan — he not only was prepared with materials to bind up the traveler’s wounds, but he was prepared to help financially, and *he had the TIME to help.*

Illustration: A few years back, two Princeton psychologists implemented an experiment with seminary students...

The students were interviewed and asked why they wanted to go into ministry. They all said, some version of they wanted to help people. Then they were asked to prepare a short sermon—half of them on the story of the good Samaritan and the other half on other topics. Finally, they were told to go over to a building on campus to present their sermons.

Along the way, the researchers positioned an actor in an alley to play the part of the man who was mugged in Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan. The actor was slumped over and groaning loud enough for the students to hear as they passed by.

The researchers hypothesized that those who said they went into ministry to help people and those who had just prepared the sermon on the good Samaritan would be the most likely to stop and help. But that wasn’t the case. And the reason is the final variable introduced by the researchers. Just before the students left to give their sermon, the researcher looked at his watch and said one of two things.

To some students, the researcher said, *“You’re late. They were expecting you a few minutes ago. You better hurry.”* To others, the researcher said, *“You’re early. They aren’t expecting you for a few minutes, but why don’t you start heading over there?”*

- Only 10% of the seminary students who were in a hurry stopped to help, while 63% of those who weren’t in a hurry stopped to help.
- In several cases, a seminary student going to give his talk on the parable of the good Samaritan literally stepped over the victim as he hurried on his way!

What they concluded is that didn’t matter whether someone wanted to help people or whether someone had just read or was preparing to preach on the good Samaritan. **The only thing that mattered was whether or not they were in a hurry!!!** They concluded that *hurry* had the effect of making someone who was ordinarily compassionate into someone who was indifferent to suffering.

**Maybe we need to start saying “no” to some things
that everyone else is saying “yes” to.
So that we can say “yes” to what most of people are saying “no” to.**

We need the discipline to begin to practice an undistracted, unhurried life. So that when the moment arises, we’re ready to help those around us in need.

When you look at your calendar, how well does it match up with the command to Love God and love your neighbor? Jesus asked Martha to say “no” to “serving Him” for goodness’ sake!

Purpose

When you read through the Gospels... have you ever had the sense that Jesus was in a hurry? That he was frantically rushing from place to place, person to person trying to cram as much in as he possibly could?

Nobody would ever describe Jesus as a hurried person.

Jesus was constantly pulling away from the crowds; he was constantly seeking time to be alone with His Father, slowing down to be present with those nearest to Him — think of how many ministry opportunities Jesus missed!

*No one would ever accuse Jesus of being unproductive.
Yet, he was never rushed! Jesus was never hurried...
How is that possible?*

There are times when the crowds wanted more of Jesus, more time with Him and He's saying, "I know you want more from me, but I've got to go to the next town."

Jesus had something that many of us don't (other than His Divinity, of course).

He was absolutely clear on WHY he came — and he was never distracted from His purpose. He was never taken off track...

- **Luke 19:10** "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
- **John 10:10** "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."
- **John 17:4** "I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave me to do."

Jesus had such clarity on His mission, on His purpose for breaking in on human history, that he lived this totally undistracted, unhurried life.

How many of us have that kind of clarity?

Maybe you've wrestled with this, "I just want to know God's will for my life!" "I just wish he would tell me what He wants me to do!" "What is the most important thing I could do with my life!!?"

The answer Jesus gives is...

Mark 12:30-31

"...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

You and I have a very clear mission, but it gets muddled through the busyness and frantic pace the world DEMANDS that we live it. And one of the callings of every Christian is to live in the culture, but counter to the culture. Everyone is in a hurry. Jesus calls us to slow down... stop the hurried pace, so we can be with Him, and be present with the people that are near us. Jesus made it crystal clear. Anything that distracts from this purpose... that pulls you away from loving Him... and loving others... set it down... root it out.

1. What is **one thing** God is inviting you to say "no" to, so you can say "yes" to loving Him with everything that you are, and loving your neighbor as yourself?

- a. One thing that's in the way of you doing what God says is the most important thing...
- b. Don't rely on yourself, pray... ask the Lord what He thinks, needs — to go or be dialed back. You don't have to be the one to solve it... ask the Lord to provide the solution.
 - i. What is something that is distracting you from prioritizing time w/ Jesus? What is keeping you from being able to be present with your neighbors? What activities are making you so busy that you don't have time, to be present with Him and with others?

If you heard from the Lord, obey Him — if you didn't, keep knocking, keep seeking, keep asking.

- The reason why — follow, change, mission. Doing these small practical steps are what helps us get there.
- We're inviting God to do something radical in all of us.
- Continue to pray and watch God move.

Discussion Questions

1. If we're going to see anything change in the lives of those around us, and in our community — what personal attitudes do we need to have? *focused, intentional*
2. Discuss: "You shouldn't try to convert people to your viewpoint."
3. What is the biggest barrier in American culture to us living on mission?
4. Discuss the differences between Marth and Mary. Which one do you have a tendency to be like?
5. Discuss: "It's not about what is right and what is wrong, but between *what is good* and *what is best*."
6. What is something that is distracting you from prioritizing time with Jesus? What is keeping you from being able to be present with your neighbors? What activities are making you so busy that you don't have time, to be present with Him and with others?
7. What changes can you make in your life, so that you have the time to "love your neighbor"?

NOTES