

Tuesday, May 26, 2020

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"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.'"

(Luke 10: 38-42)

One of my passions as a pastor is to see more and more of God's people involved in regular worship and Bible Study. Nothing impacts our lives more than time spent in God's Word. I admit that it is an awkward thing to bring this topic up with people who need to hear it the most. Even as a pastor, I feel shy to mention it. In the reading above, the two sisters, Mary and Martha, were very different from each other. Mary was content to let the dishes sit while she sat and listened to Jesus, while her sister, Martha, believed that being a good hostess meant that you kept your "company" well-served.

Martha complained to Jesus about her sister, and asked him to order her to help in the kitchen. Jesus responded by telling Martha that she was "distracted with much serving." He went on to say that Mary had made the right choice by spending time with Jesus. This is not to say that serving and working is always the wrong thing to do. It has to be done ... but at the right time. Jesus described Martha as being "distracted." Not "conscientious" – not "helpful" – not "responsible." Simply, "distracted."

Sometimes when I invite people to be involved in Bible Study or to be more regular in their worship attendance, they tell me that they have a lot going on. They say that they are busy. Would they say the same thing to Jesus if he personally invited them to be involved in Bible Study or worship? "Sorry, Jesus, but I have a lot going on in my life." Translation: "What I need to do is more important than getting to know you better." Not only do I believe that this hurts Jesus' feelings, but I can imagine Jesus saying, "Really? Can you fill me in on what is more important than your relationship with me?"

The current coronavirus pandemic is showing us that all of the "distractions" of life can easily be taken away. What constitutes a "distraction"? A distraction is ANYTHING that takes my focus off of Jesus in such a way that I lose intimacy with him. Does that include my job? What about exercise? What about my favorite hobby? How about my social life? What I call life, Jesus might call "distractions." This pandemic has given us a little glimpse into the difference between "distractions" and "the one thing that is necessary."

Martha wasn't doing a wrong thing. You and I are not doing something wrong when we remain responsible in managing our lives and doing what needs to be done. These things are not inherently wrong. But they can be considered distractions if they infringe on the "one thing" that is truly necessary: our closeness with Jesus. The closer we are to Jesus, the more we are able to handle the ups and downs of life. Somehow Mary realized this, but somehow Martha still needed to learn this. This is why Jesus did not order Mary to go help Martha in the kitchen. Martha was "distracted" from the most important thing. After all, Jesus was in her house!

God's peace!
Pastor Jim