

The Crazy Busy Family

Luke 10:38-42

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Somewhere along the way in life we learn conversational liturgies. There are certain things we say because that is what it expected. "Good morning." "Good evening." "Hello." "Goodbye." There are liturgical responses. "Hello, how are you doing?" "I'm good, how are you?" "I'm good." You occasionally encounter the grammar snob who responds to your "I'm good" with "I'm well." That always feels a little condescending, doesn't it? Your "well" makes me feel not so good.

We are talking about the reality that lies behind one of these liturgical responses. "How are you?" "Busy. Busy. Busy. Like, crazy busy." Often, that is the reality. Yet, there are a lot of other words we could share that we don't, "I'm tired." "I'm worn out." "I'm frazzled. I'm about to go postal." "I don't have time to talk to you." But we don't say those. Option A is, "I'm busy."

There is no doubt that we are all busy. If you're not busy, you are lying on a couch all day. Otherwise, we are all busy doing something whether that be profitable busyness or selfish busyness. We are all giving our precious minutes away toward something.

The question isn't whether we are doing something, the question is this, *Is what we are primarily giving our time and energy to wise? Good? Significant? Pleasing to God? Are we living a healthy, sustainable lifestyle as God intended we humans to live? Is the life I'm choosing to live one that I'll be glad I did one minute after I die?*

Last week we had a wonderful message here at our Crown Point campus by our Gary campus Pastor, Dexter Harris, on Mary and Martha. With it being a holiday, many missed it. His message was from Luke 10:38-42. I'm going to do a brief review as my message is largely an application of this passage.

"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 ESV)

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were among Jesus' very best friends. He sought out time with them in their home. He overnighted with them. He cared for them. We see this in his weeping at the grave of Lazarus later in the story, knowing full well he was about to resurrect him. Yet, he wept.

These are people in the inner circle of Jesus' life. This ought to encourage us as we see very typical human dysfunction in Mary and Martha's relationship. It sounds a lot like every day in our homes.

So, Jesus is coming over. God is coming to dinner. What effort would you put in if God was coming to dinner? When God comes over it's not paper plates and cups. It's the best of

what you've got and borrowing from friends what you need. We don't know how long Martha had known that he was coming; likely not long as this wasn't the day of telecommunications. People showed up when they showed up.

The text says Martha welcomed Jesus into her house. Open homes often reflect open hearts. Martha's heart was open to Jesus and so was her home. Now Martha had a sister named Mary. There are many Marys in the New Testament and we shouldn't confuse her with Jesus' mother or Mary Magdalene. Yet this Mary is also famous for her devotion to Christ. She will later anoint Jesus with very expensive perfume as a lavish gift of love.

But we aren't there yet in the story. Martha welcomes Jesus into their home and immediately begins scurrying around making preparations. Let's be quick to say that ministry and hospitality generally requires making preparations. No problem with that. The problem was that while she was in fast and furious mode, her sister, and for some reason, I assume her *younger* sister, Mary, is seated at Jesus' feet. To sit at the feet of someone is a metaphor for listening to their teaching. Mary was listening to Jesus.

Is this so hard to imagine? One sister is fuming that she must do all the work. I hear pots and pans banging loudly. Cabinet doors slamming shut. A kind of stomping sound emitting from the kitchen, until finally, she can't take it anymore. Martha storms into the other room, abruptly interrupts Jesus and says, *Jesus, tell Mary to help me with all this work!*

Might Jesus' response here be what he would say to us crazy busy types? "*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things.*" (Verse 41) Jesus identifies symptoms to Martha's problem. She was anxious and troubled. Anyone here see that as a general summary of your emotional condition? Anxious and troubled. How about the culture of your home? Jesus doesn't say, *Don't be anxious, Martha*. Rather he points out Martha's real problem. "*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.*" (Verses 41-42)

This probably rocked Martha to the core because getting things done was her role and identity. Martha was the older sister, get it done, work harder and faster type. Her favorite books were the *One-Minute Manager* and *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Jewish Women*. Sit down? *Jesus, I'm not the sittin' down type*. But what is Jesus really getting at here? He says *one thing is necessary*. What is he referring to? Mary has prioritized her time according to a value set that placed being with Jesus and listening to Jesus as more important than the meal and the table. Jesus further identifies Mary's example as "the good portion."

Now ask yourself, as you sit here today, which sister does the culture of your home resemble? Scurrying Martha or sitting Mary? Anxious and frazzled Martha or worshipful Mary? I don't think it's fair to say Mary wasn't doing anything. Mary was doing something. Martha was doing something, it's just that the something Mary was doing was the more important, the better, the wiser, the more enriching, the eternally significant. Are you busy doing the one necessary thing? Was 2017 a year in which you prioritized your time and energy around the one needful thing?

Let's talk about crazy busy families and crazy busy marriages and crazy busy Christians. There are obviously life circumstances that are thrust upon us that create seasons of craziness. Illness. Unique employment situations. Extended family responsibilities and crisis. With these we must trust in the providence and sovereignty of God. We can't control them, and we simply must do the best we can.

But Martha wasn't dealing with a life-altering circumstance. This was dinner. This was her own expectations, not Jesus' expectations. This was more about Martha's dinner than Jesus' dinner. Martha chose to be in fast and furious mode. Sure, she could justify it perhaps like you are justifying your own lifestyle now, but I doubt your calendar includes having God over for dinner. We prioritize so many things way less important than God coming over and even those things keep us from the feet of Jesus.

Helps for the Crazy Busy Family

Identify the idols behind the busy

Idols are good things elevated to ultimate things. It is easy to pick on Martha here. Meals are good. Silverware is needed. Jesus ate many meals, and all of them required preparation. There's nothing wrong with any of that and it certainly can be done with proper priorities. But Martha elevated a secondary thing to a primary thing. Mary realized that when God is in your home, the most important thing is him. Jesus trumps the table setting.

Why are we so busy really? Are we forced into these crazy schedules? Do we go to jail if we aren't crazy busy? No, the really crazy thing is we choose to be crazy busy. We choose to be exhausted with little or no margin for the things that when we are dead we will wish we had spent our time and energy doing. Why? The main reason is the elevation of good things to ultimate things.

- Identity in my achievements/fear of failure
- Success of my children
- Desire for more money/mind on earthly things
- Perception by others of significance/importance
- Affirmation by parents, spouse, family, friends, social media
- Security in accumulation
- Perceived as "having it all together"

Obviously behind most, if not all of these, is pride and the worship of self. *"For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world."* (1 John 2:16)

Busyness and the exhaustion of life is often self-inflicted. Again, none of us are victims here. We choose to live this way, but Mary saw one thing as necessary and it led her to quiet herself and listen at the feet of Jesus. Is that faithful exegesis of Luke 10? Martha was worshiping self while Mary was worshiping Jesus. Busyness can mask so many heart issues.

*"Busyness serves as a kind of existential reassurance, a hedge against emptiness. Obviously your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day."*¹ (Tim Kreider)

Can you be honest with yourself? Why do you live at the pace you do? Strip away the self-justifications and platitudes. Really, why do you do what you do? Idols are terrible slave-masters and if we find ourselves at the precipice of a breakdown, it's rarely the Marys who are falling apart. Would the start of 2018 be a good time to repent of the idols of our hearts in 2017 and make this year a year striving to live for the one necessary thing?

¹ Tim Kreider as quoted by Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*, p. 31.

Jesus wasn't crazy busy

This is just a fact. I know of no verse that says Jesus hurried. There were times when we could say he should have hurried, like to go heal Lazarus, and he chose to wait. Yet, if anyone had the right to live at warp speed it was Jesus. Anyone here shouldering more responsibility than Jesus? Anyone reading this tasked with saving humanity from eternal wrath? Shockingly, despite this incredible responsibility, Jesus:

- *Slept*
- *Practiced the Jewish Sabbath/one day of rest a week*
- *Regularly got away to pray*
- *Initiated times of refreshment with the disciples*

Jesus is the perfect human. Other than Adam and Eve prior to the Fall, he is our only example of being a human exactly as God designed us to be. His life was measured, moderate, balanced, restful, prayerful, and perfect. We can argue that we must live like we do, but Jesus surely trumps our responsibilities and convicts us of our sense of self-importance and our slavery to our schedules.

Order your life/schedule/priorities by redemptive rhythms

One day of rest a week

God himself rested on the seventh day. You can argue whether a Sabbath is required morally. We can't deny our basic need for rest. One out of seven is based on the creation narrative and example of God himself. I liked this quote, Peter Scazzero says that "we should view it as God giving his people a snow day once a week."² What do you do on snow days? Something different from your normal day. Something refreshing to your life and soul. A day of worship. Serving others. It can be many things. Do a Sabbath once a week.

Rest is so important. One pastor of a thriving church in Colorado concludes every service urging his people to go home and take a nap. Sleep is spiritual and needed. A Sabbath day away from the norm.

Practice healthy humanity

Way too many of us live like we are demigods and are above what normal humans require. Yet, we are made of dust. To dust we will return. Our creator designed our bodies to function properly with three necessities: Sleep. Diet. Exercise. How many of us are frazzled because we are failing to live a healthy humanity? We don't sleep. We eat junk. And we ignore exercise and then wonder why we feel terrible. I would love it if Bethel embodied an earthy Christianity that celebrated good sleep, healthy eating, and regular exercise.

David Murray recalls, "I once asked a Christian psychologist how he treats people with depression or anxiety. 'Oh, that's easy,' he replied, 'I give them three pills.' I inwardly groaned as multiple caricatures of pill-pushing doctors seemed to be sadly confirmed. After pausing for effect, however, he added, 'Good exercise, good sleep, and good diet.'"³

² Peter Scazzero as quoted by David Murray, *Reset*, Chapter: "Relax," Page Unknown.

³ David Murray, *Reset*, Chapter: "Refuel," Page Unknown.

We can disparage this, but good theology must include good anthropology—we are what God made us to be. Ignore these at your own peril.

Allocate time around priorities that heaven applauds

"This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away."
(1 Corinthians 7:29–31)

Jesus' victory on the cross changes everything. The King has come. The Kingdom is here. The King will return. Life is short. Eternity is long. Hell is real. Heaven is available to all who believe. As Christians, the reality of Christ's victory must alter all the other priorities of our lives. Even things like marriage and grief and parties and commerce (which is what he lists here). Those are big priorities even to this day. Family. Loss. Gain. Money. Vocation. All of it. My whole life's priority is rearranged by my firm belief in the Bible narrative being the true narrative of history and the future.

Think of what you are busy with. Would that be super important if you knew you were going to die this month? I'm guessing a lot of what we think is important would disappear and things that we haven't made time for would become much more important. There'd be a lot less Martha and whole lot more Mary. See your busyness as ultimately a reflection of the true values of your heart. Diagnose your life. You are not a victim. You are choosing to live the way you do.

God offers a life lived by redemptive priorities if we will allocate our time and energy to those things. But you say, *I don't have time for those things*. Really, don't you have the same number of hours and minutes everyone has, including Jesus? Here is an interesting quote regarding our time: *"One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time."*⁴ (John Piper)

This is our greatest struggle. Like Martha, we are distracted by so many things that allow us no margin for the things that actually matter. To this list we can add digital technology, entertainment, news outlets, obsession over hobbies, video games, sports.... Are these sin? No. Tools when handled rightly. But they become sin when they keep us from God's priorities.

Yet we all have some Martha in us. If only we were busy with the right things, if we were exhausted with energy given to eternal priorities, our lives would not feel so empty. All this is before us here in 2018. Our families need reformation and it begins by identifying the idols that drive us, repenting of them, and replacing them with spiritually healthy priorities and then arranging our time and energies primarily around them.

This allows us to have jobs and go to school and mow our yards and take in a ballgame and raise our kids and live in society without obsessing over any of it. We reserve our obsession and exhaustion for what will matter in eternity, because this world is passing away. But its glorious replacement will last forever.

⁴ John Piper, *Twitter*, October 20, 2009, 4:02pm.

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