

One Thing

Luke 10:38-42

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

Well, it is good to be back preaching this morning and I hope I can remember how to do it! It's actually not the preaching that is difficult and taxing, it's the preparation to get ready to preach, and I can't thank you enough for affording me the month of July to have a mind break and prepare for this Fall season in our church.

We are going to be starting a series in the book of Daniel in two weeks that I'm really excited about – calling it *Unshakeable*. But this week and next week are stand-alone messages as we get ready for our Fall kick-off on Aug. 18.

The title of the message today is: **One Thing**

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. 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.”

Illus. Olympics – I don't know about you or your family, but in the evenings this last week or so a few of us have gathered around the television to watch the Olympics during primetime. With it taking place in Paris, much of it is not live but recorded earlier in the day and as long as you stay off the news and X, you can watch and be surprised by the results.

If you have been paying attention to it, much of the talk has been around Houston's own, Simone Biles and the women's USA gymnastics team. It's been referred to as Biles “redemption tour” after withdrawing from the Olympics several years ago in Tokyo for reasons that included her mental health.

Fun fact, we have a member of our church, Michelle Barr, who practically helped raise Simone as a little girl. She was her babysitter and would take her to gymnastic lessons across the street! Simone's gym that she trains at now is actually in Spring right off 99 on the other side of 45.

Before Simone and members of the US gymnastics team left to go to Paris, her gym had a sending off party. And Michelle asked several us from Champion Forest to come to the event and pray over the athletes.

I was so proud of how Michelle leveraged her faith and her influence with Simone to encourage her in this way. As you can see in this pic (**SHOW PIC**) each received a Bible with their name on it and we signed a little note to each of them inside with John 11:25 as the scripture.

It was a fun moment and memory to pray over them, give them a Bible and send them off. Now, I'm NOT saying that my prayer won them the gold and allowed Simone to be the GOAT that she is, BUT...you can't prove that it didn't either! I think the Lord heard my prayer!

What I love about the Olympics and what we saw with Simone and the rest of Team USA gymnastics is that you get a medal for producing! There aren't any slackers in the Olympics...it's for the best of the best.

The Olympics is a time of action and what we witness is years of hard work ultimately being rewarded and given to those that are at the very top of their game.

Reward follows work. It's this way in the Olympics. It's typically this way in life!

- In school, you do the work - you get the grade. You get the grade, you get the scholarship...
- At the office, you do the work long enough and it's done well enough – typically you get the promotion...
- In your marriage, you work at communication and being a good forgiver, and work at keeping your relationship a priority, you have marital health...
- Think about it in athletics or in playing an instrument. You practice, you work hard, you make the team, you become a musician...

We live in a world where hard work is valued, and rewards are given for those who produce...those who work the hardest...those who do the most.

In this passage of scripture that we are looking at today though, we learn an important lesson from Jesus – and that is in terms of spiritual health, it not about our work or how much we produce for God that ultimately matters...that's NOT what moves the needle as it relates to really pleasing God.

What Jesus teaches here in Luke 10 is that more important than what we could ever do FOR him is our need and his desire for us to sit BEFORE him.

For Jesus, intimacy FUELS ministry. And ministry (what we do for him) is NEVER a substitute for being WITH him. THIS is the point of Luke 10:38-42.

Jesus and his disciples are (v. 38) – “on their way...” On their way, where? To Jerusalem.

We are getting nearer and nearer to the cross. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem and enters a village – in all likelihood this is Bethany where Martha and her sister Mary lived along with brother Lazarus.

And the Bible tells us that Martha (v. 38) – “welcomed him into her house.”

Now, just a couple of things here. This is the first mention of Martha in scripture. Many believe that she is one of the women mentioned earlier in Luke's gospel (8:3) that traveled with Jesus and the disciples.

This would not be the last time that Jesus is in her home. In John's gospel he visits on two different occasions, once to raise Lazarus from the dead and another the week before his death, it's in Martha's home that Mary takes some expensive perfume and anoints the feet of Jesus wiping his feet with her hair.

This is a family that Jesus loved according to John 11:5 and this scene that we are privy to is just so real. You've got Martha, who it appears is the oldest of the siblings and this is as Luke mentioned "her house".

Many believe that Martha could have been a widow and was pretty well off, having a home and being able to perhaps travel with Jesus and help fund his ministry. We don't know this, but what we do know is that Martha is trying to get the house in order!

As a host she has the responsibility to feed and take care of guests in her home which would include Jesus and probably all of his disciples – this is a job!

I mean just think about the work you have to do when you have people coming over! You know what it's like to host something at your house!

- Kitchen has to be clean!
- Living room has to be picked up!
- Tidiness and order is important!
- Food has to be prepared!

When you are a host, it falls on you to make sure things get done – who else is going to do it! That's why you are called the host! And the last thing you need as a host is the people in your home sitting around while you're working to get everything ready!

I mean when we are having people over there is NO WAY I'm sitting around! If Debbie is working, I will find something to do just to give the appearance I'm doing something – NO WAY I'm going to sit around if people are coming over and just let Debbie do it on her own.

But that's exactly what Mary, her little sister is doing and Martha is none too happy about it!

Luke 10:39-40 – “And she has 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.”

Now, if you've been in church and ever heard this passage taught, Martha gets kind of a bad rap, and admittedly she deserves it a little bit. Jesus is going to lovingly point out where she is mistaken in just a moment but before we just light into her, let's give her some grace.

I bet she wanted to be sitting at Jesus feet just like her sister was doing, but as stated she was the host...and I bet she thought if I could get a little help in here, THEN we could both sit down and listen to Jesus, the “Lord’s” teaching.

I wonder if she was kind of banging on some dishes thinking, “Maybe this will get Mary’s attention and she’ll come in here in help.”

Illus. trashbag – You know I can be locked in on the tv in the living room or tucked away in my study and if I hear this, it cuts through everything...hearing this means, “I’ve walked by the trash one too many times!” It means “Debbie can’t live with this anymore!” and I am up and at it!

I wonder if Martha was trying to get her attention, but to no avail...and it makes sense, after all Mary is listening to Jesus teach!

- How exciting is that?!
- To listen to Jesus teach...I bet she was hanging on every word!
- Surely, everything else noise-wise was blocked out!

Talk about being tuned in...and with every passing minute of Mary sitting there “doing nothing” and with every passing minute of Martha doing everything - on her own...it wasn’t long until Martha’s blood begins to boil, and she can’t take it anymore!

She storms into the room where Jesus is teaching and interrupts him! Can you imagine? She interrupts Jesus!

Luke 10:40b – “...**Lord**, (btw, you can’t call him “Lord” and interrupt him! He gets to interrupt you NOT the other way around!) **do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?** (And she not only interrupts him, but now starts bossing him...this is where you know she’s lost it! She’s bossing the “Lord”) **Tell her then to help me.**”

Now, it MUST be emphasized here that Martha being busy and her being consumed with serving was NOT the root issue...or problem! We know this because of how Jesus answers her.

Luke 10:41 – “**But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha,** (repeats her name...this is spoken with care and love and a sense of endearment) **you are anxious and troubled about many things...**”

Busyness wasn’t Martha’s problem. Knocking things off her “to do” list is not what got Martha a subtle rebuke from Jesus. The root issue was that Martha’s busyness and serving was distracting her (v. 40) from what was MOST important and that is sitting at Jesus feet which was not only a sign of attentiveness, but submission!

This is why Jesus said in **Luke 10:42** – “**but one thing is necessary** (intimacy with Christ). **Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.**”

If you're taking notes, write this thought down. This is something to be warned of today. I'll put it on the screen for you...spiritually speaking: **Distraction creates distance**

See, this is Satan's goal. It's to create distance between you and your Savior. He doesn't want you experiencing intimacy with the Almighty.

If the "ONE THING" (intimacy with Christ) is the best thing...the good/better portion...what do you think Satan wants to do?

He wants to keep you from experiencing it because he knows what Mary knows - there is NOTHING like sitting in the presence of Jesus and taking in his teaching...listening to his truth! Satan is well aware of the transforming power of intimacy with Christ and his best tool to prevent me and you from experiencing it is, distraction!

This word "distraction" here means to "drag away". Hey, question for you, what is it "distracting you from intimacy with Christ?" What is it that's dragging you away from spending time at his feet?

- Is it another relationship?
- Is it your job?
- Is it just constant activity? What's that quote, "if Satan can't make you bad, he'll just make you busy!"
- It could be that sitting at Jesus's feet is just not a priority to you right now!

It could be good stuff that's distracting you...it can be ministry! Are you hearing this? We can be busy- just like Martha serving the Lord, but if that's happening at the expense of intimacy with Jesus or in place of intimacy with Jesus, Satan's got us right where he wants us!

Listen to this: ministry that does not flow from intimacy or if it's ministry in the place of intimacy, it will always lead to burnout and frustration. Martha is a prime example of this!

Satan has her distracted and she has lost sight of the one thing! What about you? Satan got you distracted today?

Distraction creates distance. Is there distance between you and the Lord? School is about to start up.

Illus. School Supplies push – School will be starting up soon, and it's just part of it, with school comes tests! Tests are meant to determine how much and how well you know the material in that given class. Tests are the great revealer!

Well, in honor of going back to school, let me give you a test today. You get to grade your own paper – that's always a good thing!

I'm going to ask three questions and how you answer these three questions can help determine whether you are distracted spiritually and in answering these questions honestly, it could reveal a

distance between you and the Lord that you might not have even been aware was there. This is particularly good for those who are busy “doing” for the Lord!

I get these three questions right from the life of Martha:

1. **Am I exhibiting a critical spirit?**
2. **Am I comparing myself to others?**
3. **Am I complaining?**

We see in Martha’s actions and words (which reveal her heart and motives), these three characteristics. She’s critical, she’s comparing what she’s doing to what Mary is doing and she is complaining – ALL of these characteristics point to someone who is distracted spiritually and is distant from intimacy with the Lord.

You can’t tell me you are walking closely to the Lord and exhibit a critical spirit at the same time...no way! Joy is the fruit of walking intimately with Jesus. Do you get any sense of joy in Martha’s life? NONE. Why?

Because she has fallen to the great joy-killer called comparison. Mary’s doing this while I’m over here doing this, and the thief called comparison has sapped any joy she once had.

Intimates with Jesus are not complainers. Because intimacy with Jesus changes our perspective and whatever it is we are going through, intimates have learned to trust in the Lord because they know him and trust that he will see them through.

Intimates are rarely (v. 41) “anxious and troubled about many things” because they haven’t lost focus of the one thing that is necessary – sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Are you distracted today? Are you distant? Don’t equate ministry with intimacy...often times it’s ministry that can keep us from intimacy.

Satan is TOTALLY okay with a world FULL of ministry going on by people who are “serving the Lord” in their own strength and own power, NOT out of overflow of intimacy with Christ – and the reason he is okay with it is because he knows it won’t last!

Serving the Lord in our own strength and own power is recipe for burnout and frustration. And having a critical spirit, comparing yourself to others, and complaining are warning signs that you’re getting there.

We can never allow what we do “for God” to be a substitute of time “with God”. We have to make sure that sitting “BEFORE” the Lord gets the priority and outweighs what we do “FOR” the Lord.

To put it in the words we’ve been using: **Intimacy fuels ministry.**

It's NOT the other way around. In fact, you do ministry without intimacy and anxiety and a troubled spirit will be yours just like it was with Martha.

illus. Summit push (Text 77069)– Over the next couple of weeks as we gear up for Fall here at Champion Forest, we are going to ask you if you are not in the game to get in the game and serve somewhere...and for those serving, we have our annual Summit leadership training coming up that we hope you will be a part of.

God is blessing us in amazing ways. As a church, are you ready for this? This weekend we surpassed our church baptism record and we still have nine weeks to go in the church year!

Over 755 baptisms this year alone! Our worship attendance is up 14% compared to this time last year- reaching nearly 8,000 people in all of our services and our life groups worship attendance is up 12% - over 5,000 people attending life groups.

A LOT of these are young families and we need more people to serve in our children's ministries and all across our church. Please sign up for Summit and see where you can plug in. We will put you to work!

But, check this...ministry FOR the Lord can't be a substitute for intimacy with the Lord. Your intimacy with God must fuel your ministry. We don't need you just to work...we need you spending time with Jesus and let that fuel your work – that's where the Kingdom difference is made!

I tell our staff this all the time – “What good are you, if you aren't overflowing with Jesus? Our people don't need you, they need Jesus in you! You've got to get alone and sit at Jesus's feet on a regular basis so you can give and invest in others and do it so that you're not a candidate for burnout and frustration.

And so, here's what I want to do in closing. I want to take this simple story, with this simple lesson and give some simple application, and here it is. I want to encourage you to build intimacy with Jesus – and the only way this happens is by spending time with him in his word and in prayer.

1. Spend time with Jesus in his word.

The Bible is God's word. I remind of the opening verse in John's gospel.

John 1:1 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Every time you open God's word, you are sitting at the feet of Jesus. Look, busyness is a part of life. We're all busy! Sure, there may be some things you can edit out of your life or not spend as much time doing – I'm sure that's true for all of us, but life is busy.

Busyness is not the problem...it's busyness without time with Jesus. I encourage you to get up early (btw, Jesus modeled this for us!), spend time alone with the Lord (sitting at his feet) and be busy the rest of the day FULL of God's word in your heart and on your mind because you made it a priority to begin with.

If in that test we took, you realize that you have a critical spirit...you're comparing yourself to others...you're complaining...get in the Word and let God by His Spirit and through his Word wash all that junk out.

You can't shortcut spending time with Jesus in his Word. THIS is where intimacy is formed and where it grows...it's like adding logs on a fire!

Illus. Spiritual Birthday – Aug. 3, 1989 – 35 years ago yesterday (SHOW PIC)

In 35 years of walking with the Lord, I can tell you the single greatest discipline of my life is spending time with Jesus in his word (whenever my relationship with God feels like work, I've got to take step back, change my routine, and remember what it's all about). The second was we grow and build intimacy with the Lord is:

2. Spend time with Jesus in prayer

These are the basics! Bible reading and prayer. They go hand in hand. This is how we grow. We spend time with Jesus in his word and we pray it into our lives. We share with Jesus our heart, our desires, our needs and listen to him in prayer.

My friend, Tom Mosely put a book in my hand earlier this summer called *With God*. It's a great book and the subject is what we have talked about today. The author, Skye Jethani said we will either live Under God (fearful of him), From God (what we get from him), For God (do something great for him) or what he suggests, live WITH God (in communion with him).

In one of the chapters about this idea of living "with God" the author shared an interview that famed broadcaster, Dan Rather had with Mother Teresa, the famous nun from the slums of Calcutta, India.

He asked her, "When you pray, what do you say to God?" "I don't say anything", she replied. "I listen." Okay, Rather said, taking another shot at it. "When God speaks to you, then what does he say?" "He doesn't say anything. He listens."

Rather didn't know how to continue, he was baffled. "And if you don't understand that", Mother Teresa added, "I can't explain it to you."

That's a pretty good description of prayer. It's this John 15 abiding relationship with the Lord. 9x in 11 verses the word "abide" is given. We read it yesterday in our First Sat. prayer (welcome you to join us 8:00 - prayer is taught and caught).

Read it sometime in your time alone with the Lord and ask him to help you “abide/remain/stay” in him. Apart from him we can do nothing!

It’s interesting that this passage is sandwiched between the story of the Good Samaritan – a passage about “doing ministry” and Luke 11, which is one of Jesus greatest teaching on prayer in the New Testament – “intimacy”. It’s not either/or – it’s both/and!

Let’s be a people who are committed to intimacy with Jesus and let that fuel our ministry for Jesus so that we can make a difference FOR him as we walk WITH him and continually sit BEFORE him.

Amen. Let’s pray together.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.