

One Thing Necessary

Luke 10: 38-42

Good morning. My name is Aaron Reyes, and I serve as the Deacon of Worship here at Redeemer. If this is your first time with us today, we want to say welcome, and we want to invite you to join us as we continue on this journey through the book of Luke. We are following the life of Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem. Throughout this book, we have seen that Jesus is on a very important mission to change the world. Up until this moment in the book of Luke, Jesus's fame is growing. He has become a bit of a celebrity honestly; anywhere Jesus went he drew lots of attention. So, along the way, Jesus meets these two sisters Mary and Martha, and as the story goes, we see that Martha invites Jesus into her home to share a meal.

Now, it might be tempting to gloss over this story because on the outside it doesn't seem very flashy. No one gets healed of any disease; no one walks on water, no one is raised from the dead; so, on the surface, it doesn't seem all that exciting. But here we get this brief interaction that takes place between Jesus and these two sisters, and even though nothing explosive happens, we get this beautiful picture of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. What takes place here is so important that if we fail to see it, we could miss what it means to be a follower of Jesus. What I love about today's passage is that it confronts us with this idea of pursuing intimacy with Jesus. Now I know as soon as I say the word 'intimacy' half of us in this room, the bearded half, might shrug a little, and the other half might assume to know what I'm talking about. As soon as we hear the word 'intimacy,' we might automatically think of romantic affection or the closeness we feel

with our family. That's one type of intimacy, but what our story is inviting us to see is an intimacy that transcends what our minds could never imagine. Until we truly know the intimacy of God that is given through his son Jesus, we will never really experience closeness with God.

So, getting back to the story, Martha has invited Jesus to her house for dinner, and before the dinner even begins, things start to get a little uncomfortable. Tensions start to rise between Martha and her sister Mary. Tensions become so high that Martha decides to confront Jesus about what she feels like is something inexcusable. So, let's read what happens.

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."

Ok, so we see right away that Martha is the kind of person that you never really have to guess what's on her mind. You might know people like this in your own life. If there is something that was bothering Martha, you were going to hear about it. So, Martha begins to voice her concern and immediately starts to tell Jesus what's bothering her. Now what I want us to see is that the root of Martha's outburst is revealed when she's says '*Lord, do you not care?*' Now we have to stop and hear what she just said because it's really profound. Notice that it's the same thing that the disciples ask Jesus when they were on the boat with him during a massive storm right before Jesus wakes up and speaks to the storm, and the storm stops. They asked Jesus, *do you not care that we are perishing?* Now Martha asks the exact same question. It's a different context, but the

position of her heart is the same. *Lord, do you not care?* And if we are honest, this is often the position of our hearts. We often approach God and ask, *Lord, do you not care? Do you not care that I'm single? Do you not care that I haven't slept in 2 years because of my 2-year-old? Do you not care that my marriage is falling apart? Do you not care that my adult children won't talk to me?* Even though we know better, are we still not tempted in the mists of our trials to say, *'God, it doesn't really look like you know what you're doing'?* I know I've had prayers like this before. I've had conversation like this with God. I've often prayed, *"you know, Thy will be done Lord, you know what's best for me, but honestly this doesn't make much sense."*

The point I'm getting at is that we should be able to relate to the rising tension in this story. We should be able to hear our own voice in Martha's complaint. Now before we get to Jesus's response, I want to take a second to point out a few things about Martha's confrontation with Jesus. Notice how demanding Martha has become. Notice Martha has the nerve to tell Jesus what to do, like you're just going to tell Jesus, the guy who can walk on water, how to fix all your problems. So, we might sit here, and read this from our perspective and begin to scoff at Martha for addressing Jesus this way, but what's important to see is that the problem that Martha has and the problems that we have are very similar. Anytime we respond in frustration towards God like Martha has, it's usually a sign that somewhere along the course of our relationship with him, we feel like maybe we aren't as close as we thought we were. We usually get this way when we feel like we are not being understood, or we feel like God doesn't have our best interests in mind. The real problem we see in the text is that Martha has distracted herself with much serving.

The root cause of Martha's problem is that she has mistaken 'closeness' with God with 'service' to God. This is the danger I feel like we can easily fall into. I can't tell you how many times in my own life where I've mistaken 'service' to God as 'intimacy' with him. Before becoming a minister, I had given a lot of my time, and energy to volunteering in the church, and pouring myself out to people. For years and years, I have equated activity for God as closeness with him. They were the same thing. As a result, I became frustrated when I felt far away from him, like I couldn't feel him, when in reality I had never really invested in building trust and intimacy with him personally. Are we to serve the Lord and pour ourselves out to others, yes, absolutely, but never are we to mistake activity for God as intimacy with him. For example, if you were to ask me how I cultivate intimacy with my wife, I would never respond with: "Yeah, you know, I take out the trash, I mow the lawn, I clean the kitchen every night, and as a result, we have a super intimate marriage." I would never say that because that's not how intimacy works. I would never equate what I do for my wife as intimacy with her. It just doesn't work that way. Likewise, when we approach intimacy with the Lord, I feel a mistake we could easily make is thinking that the way to build closeness with God is through doing lots of things for him. I am often reminded of those haunting words that Jesus spoke in the book of Matthew where he says; *'On that day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'* ²³*And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'* That would truly be a devastating thing to hear Jesus say. Please leave.... I don't know who you are. I don't think it's an over-exaggeration to

say that having intimacy with God is the highest goal we could ever achieve. So, let's continue reading.

“But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,

Notice Jesus doesn't say, *Martha, how dare you question my love for you!* He doesn't say, *excuse me, do you know who I am? Do you know what I am about to do for you? Do you know that I'm about to go to the cross and die for you and for the sins of the whole world? How dare you ask if I care? Of course, I care!* Jesus doesn't scold Martha, but also, he doesn't cater to her either. He doesn't say, “*You know Martha, I see you point, Mary, why don't you go back and help you sister finish preparing the meal and then we can all sit together.*” He doesn't scold her, but he also doesn't answer her request. Instead, Jesus gently responds, ‘*Martha, Martha.*’ This double use of Martha's name is very important to hear. There are only a handful of times in the bible where people are addressed with the repetition of their name. It's used to indicate a deep, personal relationship of affection. God addressed Moses, Jacob, and Abraham this way. This shows us that when Jesus rebuked Martha, he was doing it in the most tender and gentle way possible. Jesus looked at Martha in the eyes and spoke to her soul saying; “*Martha, Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things.*” Again, this is important to see. When Jesus rebukes us, he doesn't aim just to correct our behavior; he's aiming at our hearts; he's aiming at our desires; he's aiming at our worship. What Jesus is saying to Martha, and what he's saying to us is that it's possible for us to know him intellectually; it's possible for us to do many good things in his name without truly experiencing him at all. We can see that Martha respects Jesus. She might even honor

him. She seeks him out. We see that Martha has been given the gift of hospitality. She excels at service. She has a desire to know him, but she's completely distracted from intimately knowing him. So, what Jesus is showing us is that in all the things Martha has in front of her, she's missed the most important thing, the most necessary thing. She's missed what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

One thing I've noticed about my own life is that cultivating intimacy with God takes time. There is no life-hack or 3 step processes to it; there is no recipe for intimacy where we just add water and bam: it's done. Intimacy isn't something you can just microwave. Take eating a delicious meal, for example; you can't microwave a piece of raw meat and expect to taste a delicious steak. Preparing a steak takes time. It takes careful attention. You know what you're getting yourself into when you microwave ramen noodles. You get sadness every time. It's true. The best meals I've ever eaten required careful attention to make. Likewise, generating intimacy with God takes time to develop, but there are a few things we can do to prioritize intimacy with God. One of the ways to do this is to simply take an audit of your time. What do we prioritize in our lives? Most of us in this room are Christians, but I would venture to guess that a lot of us struggle when it comes to feeling intimacy with God. We know we're supposed to love God, we know we are supposed to serve him, we know we're supposed to pray and read our bibles, but when it comes to intimacy with God, we often struggle. Nothing can choke out experiencing intimacy with the Lord faster than busyness. Nothing can choke out intimacy with God faster than investing our time on non-essential things.

Now, it's important to note that busyness can take on different meanings. There's the busyness that comes from everyday responsibilities, then there's the busyness that we

willingly invite into our lives every day that believes the world is coming to an end, so I need to stay continually informed on current events. And look I get it; we live in strange, strange times. It seems like it's almost impossible not to be informed on what's happening in the world, but I'm going to go out on a limb and say I don't think it's healthy for us to check twitter every 5 minutes. I don't think it's beneficial to constantly glued to 24-hour news. I'm not saying we should just avoid what's happening, but what I am saying is that for the sake of your sanity, put down the phone, turn off the T.V for a second and sit at the feet of Jesus. Remind your hearts that Jesus sits on the throne and no matter what happens at the end of the day he is still the King. There is a social anxiety that tells us we need to live in constant fear, but part of being a Christian means our lives don't have to be controlled by anxiety. Are we taking advantage of the gifts God has given us? God has given us the gift of prayer, the gift of his written word, and the gift of his church. Until we begin to prioritize these things in our lives as most important, our lives will be ruled by fear and anxiety, and our relationship with him will suffer. God is calling us to reorder our lives back to him so that we can truly rest and experience inner peace.

Let's read the rest of Jesus response to Martha.

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."

Jesus' call to Martha is a call of necessity. Jesus is calling us to intimacy over activity. Notice what Jesus didn't say. He didn't say Mary has chosen the good part, and Martha has chosen the bad part. He didn't say that service to God is a bad thing. This isn't a contrast, but it is a comparative evaluation. Basically, what he is saying is that

service isn't a bad thing, but the BETTER THING, the HIGHER THING, the HIGHER CALLING is the one that Mary has chosen. Service is an extremely important virtue in the Christian life. Service is a means of grace that God gives to mold us into the image of Christ. We serve not simply to do good things, but through our service, we are aiding in our own spiritual growth, in our own sanctification.

This passage that we are looking at today isn't warning us about the dangers of service, nor is it a justification for laziness, it's warning us about how activity can sometimes be a distraction to the one whom we are serving. Choosing to sit at Jesus's feet is far more powerful than activity. This is what Jesus calls the better portion.

Another question that this passage addresses is, what happens when the busyness of our lives starts to weigh down on us so much that serving the Lord and serving others becomes a burden? A crucial point we need to take from this story is that nothing will drain you more than when you divorce intimacy from service. When we forget that the main purpose of the Christian life is to delight in the Lord, then we will find that our relationship with him will become motivated by mere duty. So, when we approach our relationship with the Lord, when we approach prayer, when we attempt to read his word, when we approach service, are we doing it just because it's our duty, or are we drawn to him because we truly delight in him? Instead of being driven by beauty, Martha is being driven by duty. Martha's actions, the heart of her service to God is activity; it's busyness. As a result, she completely misses the beauty of Jesus, and she's just serving because it's her duty. What Jesus is calling us to is a life of true intimacy with him. Until we begin to taste and see the beauty of his daily presence, we will never be able to delight in the peace of God. We will never experience the rest of God or the love of God. So, when we

pray, do we just pray to get things out of him, or do we pray to get in his presence? Do we serve the Lord with gladness or do we serve out of obligation? We need to take a close look at what drives us. We need to look at what draws us to service, what fuels our motivations. We need to still our hearts and sit at the feet of Jesus. A lot of us don't realize that in Jesus Christ, we have been given access to the greatest treasure the world has ever known. We have been given access to a relationship so powerful death itself can't erase it. We need to allow the dishes to be dirty for 15 mins. We need to allow our task lists to go undone. We need to reorder our desires if we want to experience true intimacy with Jesus. This is a hard calling for us, but if we take Jesus at his word, this could change our lives forever.

So, while Martha was fuming with frustration and busying herself with activity, Mary was basking in the presence of Christ. Jesus' final words to Martha are; 'Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.' Now what I want to say about this is: there are only a few things in this life that we can invest our time and energy into that will last eternally. Your college degree will never bring you eternal satisfaction. Your career will never bring you eternal peace. A relationship is never going to bring you eternal comfort. There are only a few things in this life we can labor towards that will be taken with us into eternity. Whatever we get from Jesus, whatever we learn from him will never be taken away. Death itself can't take it away. So, my question for you this morning is, where is your heart in relation to Jesus? Where is your heart in relation to his beauty? Have you ever truly experienced intimacy with him?

A lot of us would call ourselves Christians today because we were raised in church. We were taught that to be a good citizen means that the most important priorities

in life are God, Country, and Career, but if you're anything like me, the reason I would have called myself a Christian in my earlier years is because I simply inherited the faith. My parents did a great job raising me in the faith, but there came a point in my life where I realized that I needed to forge my own relationship with Jesus. Maybe this is you this morning. So again, I ask you, where is your heart in relation to Jesus?

So far, we have detected the problem; we have identified the solution, now how do we do it? How do we prioritize God above all the noise in our lives? How do we chase intimacy with God?

Before we answer this question, we have to understand that fixing the problem of intimacy in our lives isn't something we can just correct by changing our behavior. To understand the real reason, we have intimacy issues with God; we first have to see how sinful our hearts really are. To understand the real problem, we have to go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. We can't achieve intimacy with God by simply trying harder because of what happened in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, an emotion was introduced for the first time in history. Do you know what that emotion was? It was shame. As soon as sin was introduced, shame followed it. The sin of Adam and Eve, our first parents, caused them to hide from God. It caused them to seek a solution to cover their shame. And so what they did was they formed a way to cover their sin and shame by sewing fig leaves together. Now, one thing about fig leaves, I don't know if you know this, is that they make for terrible, terrible clothing. Not durable at all. God knew that fig leaves were insufficient, so what he did was he covered their sin and shame with animal skins. Now in order for that to happen an animal needed to die. A sacrifice had to be made; blood had to be spilled to pay for the sin that was made, and to

cover the shame of their sin. Now God knew that ultimately animal skins would not be enough. He knew that a greater sacrifice had to be made, a greater price had to be paid. Only by the blood of a perfect, spotless lamb could the sins of humanity be atoned for. Jesus Christ is the better portion: he is the greater sacrifice: he is the only one who can cover your shame. Through Jesus Christ, we have been given access back to God. The answer to the problem of intimacy doesn't lie with Martha or with Mary. The answer lies with Jesus. We need a rescuer. You see God cared so much about restoring our intimacy with him that he sent his only son to die so that we could be brought back to him. We are never going to experience true intimacy with God until we see what he did to bring us intimacy. God knew that we couldn't come to him, so through his son, he came to us. The reason we can have intimacy with God is because, on the cross, Jesus lost all his intimacy with The Father. Jesus gave his life so that we could be reunited with him. This is the beauty that drives all intimacy. To the degree that you let this truth sink into your heart, you will begin to experience true intimacy with God. So, Redeemer, let us be a people who long for this intimacy. Let us be a people who are driven from a sense of duty to delight and let us be a people who seek to rest at the feet of Jesus. Let's pray.