

July 18, 2010
Luke 10:38-42
Creekside COB

“First Things First”

As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, "Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on 280. Please be careful!" "Hell," said Herman, "It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!"

Once upon a time, many years ago, there lived a king who had a beautiful daughter. This princess had many offers of marriage, but she couldn't make up her mind. A romantic girl, she wanted a man who would love her more than he loved anything else. Finally, she devised a way to test the love of her suitors.

An announcement was made and sent throughout the kingdom that on a certain day, there would be a race. The winner of the race would marry the princess. The race was open to every man in the kingdom, regardless of his position. All that was required was that the man had to love the princess more than he loved anything else.

On the chosen day, men rich and poor gathered at the starting line. Each man was told that the princess waited at the finish line. Whoever reached her first could take her as his bride.

Just before the race was to begin, the king made an announcement. Not wanting any man to run in vain, the king had liberally scattered some of his finest treasures along the course. There were necklaces and pendants and jewel-encrusted cups and swords and knives. Each runner was welcome to take as many as he liked. The race was begun.

One by one, the runners, princes and paupers alike, turned aside to fill their pockets and carry off what treasures they could. Blinded by the immediate promise of wealth, they forgot the princess and all their professions of love.

All except one. He pressed on, ignoring what to him were trinkets when compared to the incomparable beauty of the princess, finally crossing the finish line, the winner.

We too get distracted from our journey with Jesus too.

Martha is distracted.

Jesus tells Martha today. There is one thing needed.

We know what that is. Jesus shows us today. It is Him. It is us sitting at His feet – learning, growing, understanding His ways. That is what we need.

This is a true story:

A Michigan woman and her family were vacationing in a small New England town -- the same town that actor Paul Newman often vacationed in. One Sunday morning, the woman got up early to take a long walk. As she arrived home after a five-mile hike, she suddenly was seized with a not-to-be denied craving for a double-dip chocolate ice cream cone. Consequently, she hopped into the family car, drove into the center of town, and went straight to the combination bakery/ice-cream parlor. The only other customer in the store was film star Paul Newman, sitting at the counter having a doughnut and coffee. The woman's heart skipped a beat or two as her eyes made contact with the celebrity's baby-blue eyes. Newman nodded graciously and the star-struck woman smiled demurely. then she quickly composed herself. "You're a happily married woman with three children," she said to herself, "a mature forty-five-year-old, not a teenybopper." The store clerk filled her order and she took the double-dip chocolate ice cream cone in one hand and her change in the other. Then she went out the door without even a sideward glance toward Newman. When she reached her car, she realized that she had a handful of change but the other hand was empty. "Where's my double-dip cone? Could I have left it in the store?" she thought. Back in she went, expecting to see the cone still in the clerk's hand, or in a holder on the counter, or something. With that, she happened to glance over at Paul Newman. His face broke into his familiar warm, friendly grin as he said, "You put it in your purse."

This woman was distracted.

There are so many things that distract us.

In this world of entertainment we have

Movies – We have Netflix.

Reality TV – where we can live as a star for a short time.

Planes – that will take us anywhere

Even Hobbies distract us

Internet – Where the World is at our fingertips

Computers, electronic gadgets

Facebook – Twitter- My Space

Speaking of Facebook, I recently saw on someone's Facebook Flair (a Flair for all who do not know are the buttons that proclaim your feelings, kind of like identity buttons)

The Flair said, "You call it ADHD, I call it random multi-tasking."

We live in a world that rewards our busyness – our success. We live in a society where the more we can do at once the better we are. I remember when I would scan the paper for jobs. The job description would read must be detailed-oriented and a multi-tasker. You can't be all things.

Even here in the church, we can get ourselves into a state of busyness. There are so many needs. I found it appropriate that this lectionary text came up in the same week as the Fish Fry. I wish it would have been last week as I know that the volunteers for the Fish Fry were scurrying to get the details ironed out.

We are like Martha we get distracted in our journey with Jesus.

We sometimes get it mixed up. We live in society that wants to see tangible results – places of measurements. We are lauded for our work. I'll hear people say 'What hard workers they are.'

Doing the work of God is not the same as being with God. That is something I am always mindful of. I need my God time. I need to sit at the feet of Jesus because I cannot get my work confused with my devotion to Jesus.

Jesus reminded Martha of that.

Now I know that all who have ever opened their home or church for hospitality, know it full well. I know the people who run the fundraisers here in the church know it full well.

We can't blame Martha today. She was under pressure to get the work done. The floor swept, the food purchased, cooked and served. She may have had to clear more space for all to sit. It wasn't just Jesus she was serving but it was His disciples as well. WOW. I get that.

Today for Martha the pressure of society is placed on her as a woman. Hospitality in the day of Jesus was important as there were no restaurants and fast food places, no convenience stores or toll road service plazas. Travelers depended on the hospitality of ordinary people to get them from town to town. Martha knew all too well who she was entertaining and her position as a woman in the house made hospitality a duty. She was entertaining Jesus and his disciples.

Byrl and I were living in Southern Indiana and we decided we would have this great big Thanksgiving celebration. We had 17 people for dinner and some of them were staying for a few days.

We began our preparation days before they came and as the day approached it became more intense.

I remember Byrl saying to me that he couldn't believe how much work went into entertaining. He just wasn't as excited about it as he first was when we decided to have it. I get it. I love to entertain but the work is too much.

People who do not have a hand in the preparation part of entertaining, do not get it.

But most of us do, we understand just where Martha is coming from. Jesus does too. He understands more than we do. Because he says to her, "Martha, Martha you are worried and distracted by her many tasks."

Jesus knows the pressures she is under and how she came to be this way. But Jesus teaches her today and He teaches us that there is one thing we need.

It is Him. It is sit at His feet. Without spending time with Jesus, our lives become chaos. There may be many who do not come to church because their lives are in chaos during the week. Their lives are in chaos trying to fulfill commitments and promises, trying to nurture and care for others, trying to make a living. All kinds of things send our lives into a tizzy.

Jesus knows that something good happens when we put Him ahead of our daily schedule and routine. He knows the foundation we need to get through our days.

The more time we spend at the feet of Jesus, the more we become like Him. We begin to develop the Fruit of the Spirit as Paul talks about in Galatians 5: 22 By contrast, the Fruit of the Spirit is:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These are the fruits of our devotion with Jesus.

You know I am not talking about just in prayer in your car between tasks that we are completing but I am talking at the feet of Jesus.

You see Martha is with Jesus but she is not really spending time with him.

Do you see the difference?

Martha is there right now. Her spirit is in chaos. Look at her spirit. Listen to her remarks.

Cartoon of wife to marriage counselor, regarding husband: "And then, do you know what he did on our honeymoon, just 21 years ago?"

Resentment; that is what Martha had.

She is whining and complaining, she is bitter and resentful. She is not bearing that wonderful fruit that Paul talks about.

Her remark wasn't kind, it wasn't gentle. She didn't exhibit joy or peace. She may have loved her sister but her remark didn't reveal it. She was jealous and resentful and unkind.

She is bearing Fruits of the Flesh. Paul talks about that as well right before the Fruits of the Spirit. She was snarly and shrekish.

Martha didn't understand that we cannot feed others if we are still hungry. We can't give bread to others before we feed from the Bread of Life Himself.

Paul says in his Epistle, "He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything."

Jesus wants us to know, if we put Jesus first in all things, all things will fall into place. We no longer asked God to bless the things that we are doing but we begin to ask God what is it you would have us do.

To sit at the feet of Jesus is to be our greatest desire above all things.

To sit at the feet of Jesus is to become more and more like Him. He doesn't require sacrifice but he desires us. He doesn't desire work but love.

To sit at the feet of Jesus means that we allow Jesus to minister to us before we minister to others - before we do something for Him.

When we sit at the feet of Jesus He gives us our Daily Bread. He is our soul sustenance.

To sit at the feet of Jesus means we are in fellowship with the Lord over all. Sitting at the feet of Jesus – We put first things first.