

Series: Becoming like Jesus and Living for Others

Presence over Program

Luke 10:38-42, Ephesians 1:17-19

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, January 18, 2026

A reading from Luke 10:38 through 42: “As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what He said, but Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me.’ ‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her,’” the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Paul: Thanks so much, Mike, and thank you, Scott, for sharing part of your story with us, and just so grateful for your ministry and your time at Waterstone. I am really excited about today’s message and our time together, so excited, in fact, that I really do not have an introduction. We are just going to jump straight into the text today as we continue in this series, Becoming like Jesus and Living for Others. The premise of this series is really our mission statement, how we have been called as a church to lean into the future of who God is calling us to be, which is to become like Jesus and live for others, and if you call Waterstone home, that is not just a slogan we are trying to say. That is not just like a cute thing we want on the wall. It is supposed to be the thing that our life really revolves around. We want to become more like Jesus in every area of our lives, and we want to learn to live for others. So, as we have been walking through that, one of the things over the last few weeks is we have been exploring some values we have as a church that give some guidance to what it means to live that mission statement. These values came over a long process, where our staff worked and prayed and discerned and listened to the Spirit about what we feel like God is calling us into for the future, but here is the thing. What I do not want to do in preaching this value series is to give you the value and then go and try to scour scripture and try to come up with a passage that gives us the kind of language we need to make this value make sense for our church. So, throughout this series, what we are going to be doing is we are going to go to scripture first, see what scripture has for us, and then we are going to tie the value into the scripture that we have just talked about, and so today we have two passages before us. I rarely preach two passages. If you think, “Man, Paul, you use one passage, and it takes you forty minutes. How are we going to get through two?” That is why there is no introduction today, all right? So, we are just going to dive in. Let me pray for us, and then we are just going to get straight into the text. So, if you want, as I am praying, or before I pray, you can turn to Luke chapter 10. That is where we’re going to spend the first half of our time together today, but first let me pray for us as we get going.

Heavenly Father, God, this weekend, as we have been gathering for worship, both last night and then this morning, I have just been struck by this image as we have been singing, worthy of it all together. God, I have just had this image of you enthroned above the cosmos, God, just thinking of this weekend and the football games and the NCAA championship, and there are so many different things that people

give their time and their attention to. There are going to be stadiums today filled with hundreds of thousands of people coming to celebrate our culture, and yet here we are as a community, a few hundred followers of Jesus, gathering together because you are worthy of it all, and you sit enthroned above the entire universe, and yet at the same time, you know each and every one of our stories. You know the person who has walked in today who is weary after a long week. God, you know the marriage that is struggling this morning, even on the way to church, who has been in an argument before they got here. You know the person sitting in these chairs today who is lonely. God, you know it all, and so you are worthy of it all, because you hold all things together in your hands, and yet you at the same time know our stories intimately, our desires, our failures. Jesus, I just pray today that we would bring all of that before you, wherever we find ourselves, God, that we would just turn our hearts, our minds, and our souls to be attentive to you in this moment. Speak to us, Holy Spirit, and it is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray, amen.

All right, so Luke chapter ten, we are starting in verse 38. It is the story of Mary and Martha, probably a story that many of you are familiar with. Maybe you have heard this story before, but it begins this way: "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha had opened her home to Him, and she had a sister, Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what He said." Now, here is something right off the bat that we need to understand about this story, because I think this story, for those of us who are familiar with it, there are a lot of times when we come to this story and we have a misunderstanding of what this story is about, because we see this as a story about two women. Two women, one who is too busy doing all of the things that women get too busy doing, and another woman who sits at Jesus' feet and listens to what He has to say. That is actually a misunderstanding of the text. This is not about which woman is in the kitchen doing the things women are supposed to be doing, according to how culture might define that. This is a story about two disciples, first and foremost, and we know that, because this phrase about how Mary is described, it is not just going out of its way. Luke is not just telling us that Mary is someone who sat at the Lord's feet and that is just a part of the story. What it is telling us is that she is taking the posture of a disciple who is sitting at the feet of her rabbi, and so really this story is about two postures of two disciples. They happen to be sisters, they happen to be women, but they are disciples of Jesus first and foremost.

This is a story about discipleship, and I say that because sometimes I think men have a tendency to just sort of dismiss this story. "Well, this is about women. It is not really about me and how I engage with the Lord," and that is not true. It is not true. This is a story about what it means to become like Jesus, to be a disciple of our rabbi and our savior. So, Mary has taken up this posture of discipleship, sitting at the Lord's feet, listening to what her rabbi said, but her sister, in contrast, has a very different posture. "Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left for me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me.'" Now here is the thing that we need to understand about Martha. I think sometimes she gets a bad reputation. She is seen as the woman who is too busy doing too many things. She is caught up in the pressure of hosting, and she is trying to prepare everything, and she is trying to meet other people's expectations, and we get this image of her as being a shallow person. She is not caring about the things that are most important, and that is actually not true either.

What you see in Martha is someone who is doing what is expected of her. She is doing the things that many of us would be praised for doing, the preparations for hosting a group at our home, cleaning, preparing, getting the food ready, doing all of those things. Those are good things. She is serving in a good way. It is not what she is doing that is the problem. It is her posture as she goes about doing it. We know that because Luke gives us this key word about how she is engaging with the task that she has for her. She is distracted. He says that she is distracted as she is going about this work. Now that word is fascinating because in the original language, this word, “distracted,” carries with it the connotation of being pulled apart and being so distracted that you have all of the expectations, all of the things that you think you are supposed to do, all of the busy work, all of the productivity, all of the things that you know are good and that are expected of you, and then pulled apart in another desire to also be with Jesus.

I wonder how many of us can relate to that feeling before, that feeling where you are going about living your life, you are engaging with all of the things you do, you are checking off the list, you’re walking through the calendar, you’re making sure everybody gets to where they need to go, you’re doing all of the things that make life work, it is the travel, it is the planning, and you suddenly realize that you are busy doing life, making everything happen, and suddenly you realize, “Oh my goodness, where does Jesus fit into this? Where is Jesus a part of my life? Where is he a part of my story?” and you are so caught up in the productivity race of what you are trying to do that you have forgotten to include Jesus in your life. That is literally the posture that we see of Martha at this moment. She is not being pulled apart between what is bad and what is good. She is being pulled apart between Jesus and everything that feels urgent in her life, the to-do list, the places that she thinks she needs to be, the calendar. Where does Jesus fit into all of it? Jesus is in the room with her. I think that is fascinating, because so many times we think, “If I could just see Jesus, if I could just experience life with Him, if I could just be with Him, then suddenly He would be the top priority in my life, and everything would line up,” but Jesus is literally with her. He is literally with her, and she is still distracted.

I have said this from the beginning of this series, that I think many of us are not living in open rebellion to Jesus. That is true for some of us, but I think what is true for most of us is that we are busy living sincere, well-intentioned lives, but we are so distracted and carried along by the pace and pressure of our day that we begin to lose order of how things are supposed to be in our lives. We get to this place where, like Martha, we just become distracted. We feel pulled apart because of the expectations and the pressures and the things that we are supposed to do, even as a good Christian, and we get to this place where we just feel worn out and distracted and overwhelmed by what is on our plate. I am guessing that I am not the only person who has felt that way in my life.

There was a time recently when I was with one of my best friends, and he and I get together about once a month, and we hang out after our kids go to bed, and we will go to a restaurant for like a late night snack and get to talk about life and Jesus and kids and work and all of the things, and I love my friend. Like I said, he is one of my best friends in the world, but there is this fascinating moment where while we are talking, he gets a phone call from his wife. So, he picks up, and he answers the phone, and he begins talking to her about checking to make sure the kids are okay and doing the thing, and when he hangs up, he just immediately looks at his phone, and he just starts swiping. So, he swipes to hang up the call, and then there are like a million tabs open in his phone, and he just starts swiping to close them, and I just sit

there fascinated, like it took him, I am not, this is actually not an exaggeration, I think it was like a minute to close all of the tabs in his phone, and I was just fascinated.

I know there are some of you out there, and I am not one of you, but there are some of you out there, that that is the way you live your life. It is that you have a thousand apps open at all times. It is the work e-mail. It is the Maps Quest. It is the, some of you are turning to your neighbor and nudging them, and you are like, “That is totally you,” and then some of you are like, “Is he judging me right now?” It is like, a little bit, I might be, I know I’m not supposed to, but just little, and I was totally judging him in that moment, because as I saw him swiping all of these apps, I thought, “Oh, you are like one of the most distracted people I have ever met in my life. This all makes so much sense. This is how you are operating your life, with all of these tabs open and everything going. Everything is cooking at the same time. No wonder you can’t focus. No wonder you have literally over five-hundred unread text messages on your phone. It just causes anxiety in me, but that is just how you are living your life.”

I think when it comes to formation and living for Jesus, many of us, we might have our phone locked down a little bit better than my friend, whom I do love, even though I am judging him a little bit in front of all of you, but many of us, we live in this place where we have too many things going at one time, too many things spinning. It is the work. It is the kids. It is the roommates. It is the relationships. It is all of the things that are pulling for our attention, and we just feel this being pulled apart within who we are, and we can’t seem to focus. We can’t seem to be present with the people that we love and that we care about. We feel like we are just attached to our phone, or we are always trying to get to the next e-mail. It is when the kid is trying to come and talk to you about how their school day was, and you say, “Just a second, I need to finish this phone call.” It is that moment when your roommate is trying to tell you about their day, and all you can think about is all of the things that you need to get done, and just hearing their words continue to come out of their mouth, and you start to get more and more anxiety about the fact that you have to get things done, and you do not have time to listen to them. It is this place of productivity where we can be so drawn to trying to make all of the things happen that we are supposed to do. That is Martha at this moment. She is just feeling the weight, the overwhelm of the need and the expectation of everything running, of the responsibilities of the pressure. She can’t even focus on one task. Everything is humming in the background, quietly draining her of joy and attentiveness and peace.

Have you ever felt that way before? The pace of our life is just draining the life out of you, and I think the problem that we see with Martha and that if we reflect on our lives long enough that we begin to recognize is that when we live in that place of urgency, when everything is running our lives. The decisions we start to make, the ways we start to interact with others, the way we begin communicating with the outside world, it does not come from a place of wisdom or grounding or presence. It comes from urgency. We stop noticing Jesus, and we are constantly responding to whatever feels loudest in the moment. This story is not trying to say that Martha is really busy and that Mary is too lazy. It is not trying to say that Martha is careless or shallow. She is doing all of the things that we look at, and we think that those are the things that we are supposed to do. It is not saying she is a bad person for being busy. It is the posture of her heart as a disciple, and you notice what Jesus sees in her. Notice what He says to her: “Martha, Martha,” which we are told the repetition of her name is Jesus seeing the internal chaos, the internal torment and toil and all of the expectation, and He is speaking straight to her heart, trying to call her back

to being grounded. It is a name of compassion. “‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘You are worried and upset about many things.’” She is anxious because of the weight that she is carrying of everything that needs to be done. She is irritated because no one seems to be helping the way that she thinks that they should. She is overwhelmed because of the endless demands, and it leads her to this place of resentment where she says, “Jesus, can you not see that I am working so hard, and this person is doing nothing?”

Again, I am sure none of you have ever said this before, had this internal dialogue where you just look at the people around you in your life and think, “Can they not see how much I am doing to keep our place clean and running and functioning? Can they not understand the weight of everything I have to do at work, and of course I would be stressed? I mean, it is that place where we go, where we think that other people do not understand how much we have on our plate. We just want some empathy, because we are feeling so overwhelmed, so upset, so anxious by the demands on us, and it leads us to this place of resentment and irritability, where we snap at the people who are closest to us, and we call them out, and we are not kind. We do not follow Jesus in those moments.

That is what Jesus is recognizing in Martha in this moment. He is saying, “You are worried and upset about many things. There is this inner restlessness to you. There is a life crowded out by too many concerns pressing in on you at once. You are worried and upset about many things,” and then listen to what He says. “Many things, you are upset and worried about many things, but few things are needed.” See how He lessens the list? “Or indeed only one,” many things, few things, one thing. “Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her.” So Jesus sees this woman at this moment, this disciple, who has this posture before Him of being distracted, overwhelmed by the pace of life and all the things that she has to do, and He says, “Time out. Just take a deep breath, and let me just point out to you for a moment that you do not need to worry about all of this, and you do not even need to worry about the few things. There is one thing in front of you that is of utmost importance, and that is what your sister has chosen.”

The question is, what is the one thing? What is the one thing? Because whatever it is, that feels like something I would like in my life. In the midst of the chaos and the busyness and feeling overwhelmed and distracted and irritable and all of the things that come with a life of urgency and productivity, there is one thing He says we need to focus on, to find the stillness and the peace and the grounding that many of us are longing for, so what is it? I think if you look at the story, there is really only one thing we are told about Mary in this story, and it is what I pointed out to you at the very beginning. She is sitting at the feet of her rabbi. She is simply present with Him. There are so many things going on and a ton of things to do, and she has taken a posture of presence with her Lord and Savior. It is as if what Jesus is saying in this story, and I think the subtle way that it pushes on some of our convictions and our assumptions about who Jesus is and what He wants from us, is I think what it is saying is that it is entirely possible to live a productive life for Jesus, serving Him in all of the ways that good Christian people are supposed to serve Him, and still entirely miss the person and presence of Jesus Christ.

Let me put it to you another way, because I think this is important for us. I think what the story is telling us is Jesus’ deepest desire for you is not your productivity. His deepest desire from you is not your productivity. It is your presence. Jesus wants you. He wants you, your attention, undivided, undistracted, your presence with Him. That is his longing for you that we see in this story. He is saying, “It is possible

you can be productive. You can do the thing. You can serve me in all of these ways, but what I really want from you, what I really long for from you, is that you would be with me.” I think this is where the story really begins to press on us, because I think in our culture, in Christianity, as we engage with church and trying to be a disciple of Jesus, so many of us confuse busyness with faithfulness, and we think that if we are good at doing church, if we are good at doing all of the Jesus stuff, if we keep ourselves busy enough with all of the things that we are supposed to do as Christians, then that is ultimately what God wants from us, but I am here to tell you, God never says, not once in scripture, “Well done, good and productive servant.” He does not say that. What does He say? “Well done, good and faithful servant.” It was an entirely different paradigm. In this story, what Jesus is asking Martha to do is not to stop doing things. It is to reorder her life around Him, start with being present with Jesus. Mary did not do less. She chose the first thing first.

I think sometimes we have this idea that presence with God or Jesus is the reward after we’re done. It is after we get done with all the things that God has called us to do, and someday we die, and then we get to heaven, and then we get to experience God’s presence, but that is actually an inverse of the story, that the request from Jesus is that we would begin by being present with Him, and we carry that mentality to so many different places in our lives, don’t we? I mean, if I could just get through my to-do list, then I can spend time with my kids. If I could just get to the place in my career where I want to get to, then my family will get the priority that I want them to have. If I can just get to the place where I have done enough, and then things will begin to fall in line, and Jesus is trying to flip that order entirely. He is saying that it begins with presence, not with productivity, and what He desires most from you is simply you. Just you.

So, here are a few questions for you to reflect on as we continue with this story. Where do you potentially have too many tabs open in your life? It might be that you just need to close your phone down a little bit. Where might Jesus be inviting you to close something so you can be present with Him? Where has your life become too full for you to be fully present with Jesus? What good things have quietly become distractions in your life? Where might Jesus be inviting you to trade productivity for his presence? Jesus says that what He wants most from you is your presence, not your performance, not your productivity, and if He is saying that is the better way, the best thing, the one thing that we should choose, then the question is, “How do we do that in real life?” In real life, with the calendar, with the to-do list, with all the things that are on our plate, with all the places we are supposed to go and all the people we are supposed to see and all the text messages that we have to respond to and all of the emails that we need to get to, how do we, in the midst of that chaotic life, be a people of presence, who give ourselves and our presence and our attention to Jesus first and foremost?

I want you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter one. Last week we looked at a prayer from the book of Ephesians, where Paul prayed for the church that they would experience life in the Spirit, and they would experience how Jesus changes everything, and today I want to look at prayer from Ephesians, where Paul again is praying for the church a little bit earlier in this book, and there is a very specific prayer that he has for this church in Ephesus. He says, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know Him better.” Here is what is fascinating to me as Paul begins this letter to the Ephesians, and he is praying over them.

Notice what Paul does not pray for. Paul does not pray that the church would work harder. He does not pray that the church would do more. He does not pray that the church would become more effective. He does not pray for better organization or stronger discipline or increased productivity. He does not pray that they would be sold out for the gospel and that they would just do all of the things for the kingdom of heaven in radical ways. Instead, he prays for revelation, that God would give them through the Spirit wisdom and revelation so that they can what? Know Him better. Know Him better. This phrase that Paul uses here is a lived experiential knowing. It is not the kind of knowing you can get from a book. It comes from time spent in God's presence. It is not achieved through effort. This type of knowing is only experienced through attentiveness, through experience. It is an experiential knowledge.

I have noticed something about our culture, and teens, can I ask you a quick question, because I feel like this is going on in your world, and it is something I do not quite understand? So, my understanding is that, so I do not play video games at all. Do any of you guys play video games? I got this. Okay, so, all right, so you guys will probably resonate with me. I have heard that if you want to play video games, you can also go onto places like YouTube, and you can watch another person play a video game. Yes, is this true? Okay, I do not understand this at all. That feels like so crazy to me, because a video game is already like a virtual reality thing. You are playing in another world, doing another thing, and then now you are watching another person play out a different reality in another place. Do you know why people watch these games? The girls are like, "Uh-uh, that sounds like crazy boy stuff to me." "It is so they do not have to go through the effort of actually doing it." Oh, shots fired. She said, "So the boys do not have to go through the effort of actually doing it." That feels like shots fired. All right. Do you guys have any ideas why people watch these videos? Yeah, Asher? "Games are expensive." Okay, that is a, maybe it takes, so it is too expensive to do it yourself, so you can get the experience of watching someone else do it. That makes sense to me. I like that. That is a little kinder than her answer. That was great. Thank you guys so much.

Here is the thing. I am not picking on any of you guys, because here is the realization I had. I do not understand that world at all of how someone could spend time watching somebody else play a game and go through the experience of playing a game themselves, and you just watch that, until I thought, man, I do that every Sunday. I have never played an NFL football game before, and I watch those guys all the time. I do that every Sunday, pretty much, for like half a year, and I am in it, and I feel like I am a part of the game, and I feel like if I do not wear the right jersey, my team is going to lose, but that strategy should probably change, because my team never wins, and so, like, we can get into that place. Or another place that I see in my own life is, do you know how many people traveling I follow on Instagram? They go to all sorts of these beautiful places in the world, like the Bahamas or Greece or Rome or Paris, and I have never been to any of those places, but I feel like I am there when I watch them go to those places. I think, "Oh, wow, like I am walking through the streets of Paris at sunset. This is really cool." I have never eaten a croissant in Paris under the Eiffel Tower. I have never had that experience at all, but I watched someone else do it, and I think, like, it is almost the same thing, really, when you think about it, and I live in this place where it is this vicarious living. If I can't do it, then I will experience someone else doing it, and so many of us could joke about games or football or Instagram or wherever.

There are so many places where we look in our lives to try to experience something outside of ourselves that we have not experienced, so that we can know what it is like, and what Paul is saying is that you cannot do that with your relationship with God. You can't just read about it in a book. You cannot just experience it through somebody else. It needs to be a lived, experiential knowledge you have of the presence of God. That is what he is praying for, that the Spirit would reveal to you how to know and experience life with God, and this is then what he goes on to say about what that looks like. He does not say it is about striving harder or collecting more information, but it is about drawing close to God through experience. He is talking about presence. He is talking about, in other words, the posture that Mary takes at the feet of Jesus in Luke 10. He says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened," that the light would come on, "that God would turn on the light of your soul, in order that you may know, experience the hope to which He has called you."

I want to pause for a second; "the hope to which He has called you." He wants you to experience the hope to which He has called you. He is saying that it is not wishful thinking, but there is this settled confidence grounded in what God has already accomplished in Christ that is available to you. He wants you to know and experience that, and second, then he says, "the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people." What is he talking about here? He is talking about a deep sense of identity and belonging, understanding who you are in Christ and how you fit into God's story, that you would experience as a follower of Jesus what it means to be one of God's children, one of his chosen people.

Then third, and I love this, Paul saves the strongest language for last, "that you would know and experience His incomparably great power for us who believe." Not a distant power, not a future power, but a power that is already present and active for you right now. I think what Paul is saying is that presence is what places us in the space where God can turn the lights, on so we can see what life with Him is meant to look like. What he is saying essentially is that the power of God needs to be experienced. It cannot just be explained to you. You have to experience it in your own life yourself, and presence with God is what opens us to that reality of what God is doing in the world, and so we can live with identity instead of insecurity, with hope instead of anxiety, with God's power instead of living on our own strength to try to achieve the things that we are wanting to achieve.

I think so many of us do not live like that power is available to us. I think so many of us do not believe that there is more to life than just trying to survive the busy, productive, rapid pace of life that we are living. We are trying to do it on our own strength. We are trying to achieve what is meant to be impossible, even good things, things for the kingdom. What Paul is saying is that there is a presence available to us in God. There is a source of power that is available to us so that we do not have to live the way of Martha, where we are scattered and distracted and overwhelmed and anxious and upset, but that we can be grounded in hope and security and identity and power.

I have another phone illustration. I do not know why I have two phone illustrations today, but have you ever been in that space where your phone gets down below ten percent, and you realize you do not have your charger with you, and you are out and about, and you need to get stuff done, and suddenly you realize, "Oh my goodness, I only have three percent battery left on my phone," and there is that internal panic? "How will people reach me? How will I know where I need to get? What about my to-do list that I have on my phone?" and we can live in this place where we are so worried about the power that we do

not have that we begin to start shutting down. You just have to close all the apps. You are like, “I am going to try to conserve this power as long as I can. I am going to just try to make this last as long as it can and hope for the best.”

I think many of us have the same posture in our life with Christ. It is that we are living with three percent battery, because we have unattached ourselves to the source of power in our lives, and we are just hoping that we can make it through the day. We are just hoping that we will conserve energy, and I do not have enough strength to do this. I am just going to cut this, and I’m going to do this, and I’m going to shift things, and I’m just going to try to get through the to-do list on my own strength, and I only have a little bit left, and then I’m going to be resentful and frustrated and angry that everything is overwhelming. What Paul is saying is there is a deeper power source available to you. You do not have to go through this life on your own strength, that when you attach yourself to the presence of God, there is a power that is available to you for the life that He has called you to live, and that power that he says is available to you, that power is the same as the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Christ Jesus from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly realms. If I told you that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is inside of you by the power of the Holy Spirit, many of you would not believe me, because you have not experienced it, and there is an invitation available to us to experience life with Jesus in a new way, where there is more available to us, a power that is available to us.

The whole way that Paul is trying to frame this idea, it is not a possession issue. He is saying it is already yours. It is a presence issue, and he is saying you can live surrounded by hope and identity and power and still move through life as if you were running on empty and your battery is failing, that that is the way you can live in life. If that is true, if presence is the place where hope and identity and power can be accessed, if that is the place where those things can be experienced, if sitting at the feet of Jesus, and being a disciple before Him, listening to what He has to say is what the invitation is, if that is what Jesus wants most from us, then that is why the value that I want to give to you today about where God is calling us as a church is this idea of a church that prioritizes presence over program, presence over program. We want to prioritize being with God and with each other over executing polished plans or programs. We could be a church that has the best plans, the best products, the best whatever, and we could still miss the heart of Jesus. We could still miss each other in that process.

This value exists because we live in a world that does not drift towards presence. It drifts towards speed and towards productivity, towards efficiency, towards doing more with less. If we are not careful, that posture begins to creep into the church, and the result is the church makes deeply busy Christians, but not deeper disciples of Jesus Christ, and that is not who we want to be as a church, and so we value margin, creating space to notice God, to be with Him, space to notice people, space to respond instead of to react, space to slow down, to listen with patience, because it takes time. We want to be willing to be interrupted and respond to the Spirit, because a church that is never interruptible is usually too busy to be fully present with others or to listen to the Spirit with us. We want to be a church that believes spiritual power is born in prayerful presence, not just strategic excellence.

Here is my prayer for you, and I think our staff’s prayer and our heart in leading this church into this new direction is that we do not want to lead a church full of exhausted people who are worn out from doing the things for Jesus without ever being with Jesus. Jesus’ invitation to us as a church is to start being

a people of presence, because when presence comes first, pressure begins to fade, and everything begins to fall into its proper place

So, as we close our time together today, here is my invitation for you this morning. It is I want to encourage you, I want to invite you into a place where, like Mary, you sit at the feet of Jesus. You sit at the feet of Jesus. So I think many of us, we come to church, and we give God our semi-distracted attention for an hour, and then we start thinking of the to-do list, or the football game in the afternoon, or how to get our kids ready for school, or the fact that kids aren't in school tomorrow, and so what are we going to do with them for twenty-four hours, all of the things, right? This is where I live, and we get so caught up in the pace, in the urgency of what we feel like we have to do, and we end up living from a place of productivity and exhaustion. I think the invitation for the church is to be a radical counterculture from how the rest of our society is living. It is to step out of the race and not stop doing, but being present with Jesus in a very different way, and letting our presence flow from Him.

I think what happens when we give ourselves to Jesus, when we take a posture like Mary before his feet, is that suddenly the places that we feel that overwhelmed, we begin to remember that it is not out of our strength. In those places where we feel torn apart and distracted, when we center ourselves on Jesus, suddenly we realize like, maybe they do not matter as much as we felt like they did before. Not that they are not important, but we just realize they have their proper place. We suddenly realize we do not have to be as irritable with the people we love, because we can live from a place where there is a power and a strength within us through the Holy Spirit that is giving us the ability to do what God has asked us to do.

The question is, are we willing to tap into that power? Are we willing to attach ourselves to that power? All it requires is being present with Jesus, and so as we sing this last song together, here is the invitation for you. I would just invite you into a place to take the posture of Mary. That means you can stand, you can sit, you can sing along, or you can just listen to the words. It is this internal posture of making yourself available to the presence of Jesus, and it is saying, "Jesus I choose the one thing. I choose the one thing, you, because that is all you really want from me. It is my presence." So let me pray for us.

Heavenly Father, God, I take a moment to just ask us to be attentive and present with you now. God, there are five to ten minutes left of the service today, and then we are going to enter back into the real world and life and the to-do list and the productivity and all of those things. God, in this moment and in that, you are seated on your throne. You are sovereign over it all, and Jesus is giving the same invitation in both places, to simply be with Him. God, for those of us who feel worn out and weary, exhausted by the pressures and the expectations, by the things that we did not choose, that have just fallen upon us and feel too heavy for us to bear, God I pray that we would realize we do not have to carry them on our own strength, that we can lean into you, depend on you, that we could experience your presence in our lives today. It is in Christ's name that we pray, amen.

Heavenly Father, Lord, that is our prayer. That is our cry. That is our aspiration. We do not want to be a church that is living independent of your power and your presence. We want to have the same heart as Moses did, that as you lead us into the future, if you do not go with us, then we do not want to leave this space. God, I know there are so many burdens in this room. I know there is just a weight of expectation and pressure and identity and things that we have to do, and God, it is not to shame any of us for the to-do lists or the calendars that are full. It is to gently remind us that there is an invitation to more, for living

a reordered life that experiences your presence first and foremost, that you want to be with us in the grind of the daily tasks, that we do not have to carry that weight of our own strength, but that we can depend on your Spirit and live from that place. God, we are listening. We long for you. It is in Christ's name we pray, amen.

43:11 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

Message #913