

Text: Luke 10:38-42

Theme: Overcoming Distractions

July 17, 2016

Suppose I handed each one of you a half sheet of paper this morning and asked you to create a list of distractions, a list of things that could potentially take your mind off the task of the moment. How long would your list be? What items would be included on your list, and, most importantly, how many of those items have created distractions in the past? We're all familiar with our text and with distractions. The challenge posed by our text is how to overcome our distractions.

I. Daily, Jesus calls us to focus, to listen as He speaks. A. But frequently, we get distracted. 1. We get distracted because we worry. In Matthew 6, Jesus asks, "Why do you worry?" and our response is, "Lord, I have a lot of things going on in my life. I need to be in control and when I'm not, I worry about what might go wrong that I should have been able to prevent!" Sound familiar? Like it or not, we worry about many things, most of which are insignificant. We are more like Martha than we want to acknowledge. As worries enter our minds, they distract us. Suddenly our mind takes a detour, and, like Martha, we find ourselves distracted instead of listening.

2. We get distracted because we have too many things on our plate. Golf league, horseshoes, bean bag, kid's or grandkids summer sports schedule, social obligations, work obligations, friend's expectations. Sound a bit overwhelming? We can't do everything, but our problem is that we can't figure out the important from the unimportant. Martha's situation looks so simple. Just forget about preparing food and everything will be fine. But whether it's Martha or one of us, the problem still exists - there are too many things to do and too little time to get them all done. The result? We're trying to do too much and in the process, we get distracted.

3. We get distracted because we forget life's purpose. Why are you in this place at this moment in time? Why do you have the abilities you have and someone else has very different talents and abilities? The answer is simple. The reason we live is to give God glory. But accomplishing that single purpose is another matter, isn't it? If we remembered that all we needed to do today was to give God glory, would things distract us? God didn't create you to compete, to be better than. He created you to be you, to take what He gives you in each new day and to use it to give Him honor and praise. When we do that, we will be on the road to conquering our distractions.

B. Since distractions are crippling us, how do we overcome our distractions? 1. We teach ourselves to be still. Look at Mary. What was she doing that was commended by Jesus? She was sitting at His feet. "But I don't have time to sit. Life's different today!" Yes, life is different, but the need to be still hasn't changed. Listen to the Psalmist, "Be still and know that I am God." Were those words only for the original audience? Until we learn the value of being still, we will never conquer our distractions. When we tell our hearts, "I can be still; I will be still. My God is waiting for me to be still," we learn that in that stillness is when God most often speaks and acts.

2. We overcome our distractions by determining what ultimately matters. In our text, it was sitting and listening, something so simple that a child could have done it. Jesus says, "One thing is necessary." Our challenge each day is to determine what matters most to God. The more things hanging on our imaginary "to do" list,

the more easily we are distracted. As we face daily tasks, we ask, "Will it matter to God if I do this today, another day or not at all?" As we ask, we reduce our distractions by increasing our focus. By asking, we determine what ultimately matters and once we know what matters, we know what is merely a distraction.

3. We overcome our distractions by letting God worry for us. What change would we see on our worry meter if we could simply push a button and suddenly God took all our worries and left us with nothing to worry about? Martha was anxious; she was worried about many things. Her mind was going in multiple directions and, at the end of the day, Martha failed because worry got in the way. Every day, Jesus says to you, "For the next 24 hours, I will do the worrying about whatever needs to be worried about. You spend the next 24 hours focusing on your purpose for existence. As you do, your focus will be in the right place all day long."

4. We overcome our distractions by seeking help. We're not very good at asking for help, are we? In our minds, we need to do it ourselves. It's only when all else fails that we ask for help. But if that's true, why do we quote the Psalmist in our liturgy as we say, "Our help comes in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth?" Distractions burrow in because we're trying to be the Lone Ranger. If Martha had asked Jesus for help, for instruction since she didn't realize at that moment what mattered most, would she have been distracted? The more we ask for help, the less our minds take us on wild goose chases down distraction road.

5. We overcome our distractions by solo tasking. Our world today praises multi-tasking because productivity is all that matters. But productivity isn't our life goal. Look at Mary. Mary was doing one task - listening. Then, look at Martha. Martha was trying to do multiple things which she thought were all appropriate, but in the end, she failed. Distractions decrease as we focus on a single task saying, "This is what my Lord wants me to do at this moment. When I finish it, I will consider the next important task." One focused task will be more productive in the sight of God than attempting and failing at multiple tasks which He never intended us to do in the first place.

6. We overcome our distractions by asking, "What will honor my God most?" We're not told, but somewhere Mary asked that question before she sat down to listen. Somewhere she arrived at the conclusion that all the other things didn't matter at the moment, that this one task was most important. As we face our lengthy list of tasks, of things that seem so important, our God gently says, "Ask the question. Your heart needs to know. Ask what will honor Me most. As you do, you will find peace of mind; you will find yourself in the right place doing the right thing. And then, you will discover that those other things weren't important to Me after all."

7. Distractions surround us and often bombard us leaving us exhausted and feeling like we've accomplished nothing. As you seek to overcome your distractions, allow God to help you focus, to enable you to discover His purpose for your existence. Amen.