

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- 22nd October 2023 am

TITLE: "Serving without Burnout"

TEXT: Luke 10 verses 38-42

Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 10:38-42 Now as they went on their way, Jesus^[d] 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.^[e] Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

When God created the earth, and then created man, he told Adam that he (Adam) would be responsible for caring for the earth. First, however, there was to be sleep followed by the day of rest when God walked and talked with him in the garden, sharing fellowship, and then a second night of sleep before Adam started the work he had been given to do. There is an important principle here:

Our work and service for God is to flow out of our rest in God and our fellowship with God.

However, we have turned this creation principle around so that, rather than working out of the rest we have in God, we work out of our own strength and resources. Then we find we need to rest because we have burned ourselves out. That applies in every area of life. Our home lives are busy with:

- Meals that need to be prepared and rooms that need tidying
- Getting children to school, adults to work and, later, doing retirement activities
- Vehicles that need to be insured and serviced
- Homes and gardens that need maintaining
- Family gatherings that need planning and friendships that need maintaining

Then there is serving in church, which seems to be an endless round of doing, especially if you are one of the 20% doing 80% of the work. There are meetings to

plan, prepare for and attend, emails to be answered, documents to be read and people to see and minister to. The list is exhausting in itself!

How has it come to this, where we are so busy and just plain exhausted? What is missing from these lists is

The rest of fellowship with God.

Sin has turned us in on ourselves, so that now we find our identity in who we are as an individual, what we do and what we have achieved, rather than in our relationship with God. Our first question to someone we meet is often 'What do you do?' We are constantly striving to achieve as much as possible so that others will admire us and we can feel good about ourselves. We find it hard to say no when we are asked to do something in our service to the church and in the rest of our life in case it reflects badly on us in their eyes.

We have made life all about us, rather than about Christ and our relationship to him.

In the passage above, the problem of busyness is laid bare, using an example from everyday life, and we can see the solution that Jesus offers us. There are three particular points to note.

1. **There is a service to be avoided.** Don't miss the fact that Martha is doing a good thing and Jesus loves her. It is Martha who welcomes Jesus into her home, and is serving him. If Martha was with us today, she would be one of the 20% who does 80% of the work. One of the reasons Jesus was willing to come to their home is because of his love for this family and that love includes Martha. In scripture, when a name is doubled up (**v41**), it is almost always an expression of compassion coming from a heart that sheds tears for the person being addressed. Jesus is going to rebuke Martha but it is because he loves her and wants the best for her.

That is true for us too, and we need to remember that if we find ourselves rebuked by Jesus for our busyness, that

rebuke comes from the one who loves us so much that he died on the cross for our sins.

Although Martha is serving Jesus, he rebukes her because her service has distracted her (**v41**). Her mind was wholly on the meal she was preparing, and this pulled her

away from what mattered most. By contrast, Mary chose the better portion, sitting at the feet of Jesus (v42). She is:

Fellowshipping with Jesus

Being distracted is a great danger for all of us. We can be so busy doing the things we think Jesus requires of us that we are pulled away from fellowship with him.

We can become ministry workers who allow ministry to squeeze Jesus out of our lives.

- 2. There is a relationship to be pursued.** While Martha was distracted by preparing a banquet of food, Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to him (v39). Mary was pursuing a relationship with Jesus. She sat at Jesus' feet (a position that showed she was under his authority) and she was listening to his teaching.

Mary was submitting her mind to Jesus' teaching.

She wasn't listening superficially in order to tick a box, as we so often do when we are following a Bible reading programme, or just mindlessly reading the verse for the day. She was taking time to really hear what Jesus said, weighing it up and thinking about the implications.

- Do you do that with your Bible reading?

Jesus commended her for the way she was listening (v42).

- Martha was busy doing
- Mary was resting at the feet of Jesus, submitting herself to him and his teaching.

Martha wanted Jesus to send Mary back to the kitchen, but Jesus did not do that.

Both ladies were serving Jesus, but the core of their service was very different.

The core of Martha's service was activity

The core of Mary's service was relationship

- 3. There is an objection to be answered.** Some of us are doers, and not reflective people and if everyone was a Mary, then how would any work get completed? However, Jesus is **not** rebuking Martha for serving.

Rather, Jesus is rebuking Martha for:

- Making service and ministry more important than fellowship with him
- Serving out of her own strength and with her own agenda, rather than out of the rest of fellowship with him

There is work that needs to be done, but if you have so much to do that it keeps you from spending time with Jesus then it is not Jesus who has loaded you up with the work.

- It is you who are wanting to cook him a ten-course meal when all he asks of you is a sandwich.

The work Jesus calls us to do is the work that he does through us as we fellowship with him.

- It is work that flows out of relationship with Jesus and that is done out of true rest in him.

This is the kind of service that God originally intended for us. That service may be

- Caring for your family and taking care of your home
- Doing the day job or studying at school or university
- Working in the local church

Whatever you are called to do, what Jesus commends is work that is done out of relationship with him.

What is the core of your service?

- Is it activity – doing all that you can do for Jesus?
- Is it relationship – listening to Jesus, loving him, talking and fellowshiping with him?

Many of us have a bit of both in us but how can you tell what the core of your service is?

When the core of your service is activity:

a) **You will have inner turmoil** as Martha did. She was anxious and troubled about many things (v41). Her goal was to put on a feast for Jesus, and the success of the meal would reflect her ability to serve Jesus well. She needed ministry to give her a sense of self-worth. When it seems to be going wrong because Mary will not help, the result is inner turmoil.

When serving, or achieving success, squeezes out Jesus the result is inner turmoil.

b) **You will get irritable with people.** Martha needed the meal to be a success but Mary was not following Martha's agenda, and as a result, Martha was mad with her.

**If you make serving and achieving success your god,
you will get irritable with people when they don't play their part.**

c) **You will be suspicious of God.** Martha thought that if Jesus cared about her, and what she was doing, he would tell Mary to help her. To her, Jesus did not seem to care about her and what she was doing even though she was doing it all for him (v40).

When serving does not go well, you will be suspicious of Christ's love for you
If these things are true of you then it may be that
**you have made your service for Jesus more important than your fellowship with
Jesus.**

When the core of your service is relationship:

You will follow Mary's example. She listened carefully to Jesus and pondered what he said, taking time to understand it. As a result, she came to understand what the disciples did not – that Jesus was going to die – and she showed her love for him by anointing his feet with ointment as we read in **Mark 14:6-8: She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.**

- True service to Jesus is relational, taking time to sit at his feet and bringing your mind under the authority of his word.

The result of this relational service is

- a deeper appreciation of who Jesus is and what he came to do
- a deeper love and devotion to him.

**Then we serve out of love for Jesus, not out of the self-love that marks so much of our
activity**

This applies to every area of our life, but it is especially true when it comes to church life. We need to ask ourselves:

When we gather as a church, what is the greatest priority for us? Is it fellowship with Jesus or to make sure everything is done just how I like it to be?

We would all say the former in theory, of course, but:

Think about how you react when the service does not go according to plan, or someone does something that does not fit with the church agenda.

Think about how you feel about the member who, in your estimation, is not pulling their weight.

- If you feel inner turmoil, irritable towards that person, or annoyed that God hasn't done what you asked,
it is possible that doing church has become more important than fellowship with Jesus.

If you had nothing to do in church except come and receive, would you be happy?

- Do you need ministry in order to enjoy church, or can you be happy just being a child of God?
- Do you need to have everything just how you like it?
- Do you need to be busy to find your sense of self-worth?
- Can you be happy when other people are doing what you would normally do?

These are diagnostic questions to discover where your heart is and they are not intended to crush you. We need to work through them for the sake of our joy now and eternally.

The greatest joy we can experience is not the joy of doing.

It is the joy of being in the presence of Jesus.

Psalm 16:11 tells us:

**You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore**

Adam was meant to work out of the rest of fellowship with God, but because of his rebellion, sin has turned us all in on ourselves so that we do not do that.

God's answer to this was to send his Son, who not only modelled serving out of fellowship with the

Father and the Spirit, but also purchased this fellowship and rest for us. This fullness of joy in the presence of God has been purchased for us by Christ, at the cost of his blood shed on the cross of Calvary.

**The place where we will be most effective in ministry in any part of our lives
is the place of resting in fellowship with Christ.**

Jesus invites us into this fellowship with himself to find rest and fulness of joy. Out of that rest and fulness of joy, he invites us to serve him in the strength that he supplies.

- Pray that, by his Spirit, you will more and more seek fellowship with Jesus, and then serve out love for him in the knowledge that you are doing the work he has called you to do, and doing it in the strength given by resting in that fellowship with him.