

DISTRACTIONS

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Scripture: Luke 10:38-42

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their journey, they came to a village where a woman welcomed Jesus into her home. Her name was Martha and she had a sister named Mary. Mary sat down attentively before the Master, absorbing every revelation he shared. But Martha became exasperated by finishing the numerous household chores in preparation for her guests, so she interrupted Jesus and said, "Lord, don't you think it's unfair that my sister left me to do all the work by myself? You should tell her to get up and help me."

The Lord answered her, "Martha, my beloved Martha. Why are you upset and troubled, pulled away by all these many distractions? Are they really that important? Mary has discovered the one thing most important by choosing to sit at my feet. She is undistracted, and I won't take this privilege from her."

Heavenly Father, again this is an account of Your Son while He was here on earth. Would You Lord, now through the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, guide us into truth that we may be able to glean what You have for us this evening, and even further to be able to apply it to our lives, our situations and our circumstances. In Your Son's name we pray. Amen.

I must admit that every time I read this passage, and I'm sure you too when you read it, tend to fall on Martha's side and think that Jesus was just a little bit harsh in dealing with her. After all, wasn't Martha preparing things so that Jesus could have a good meal or a clean house? And Mary was just hanging around sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to Him. You can imagine Martha doing all the work inside the kitchen, and finally in exasperation, coming out and telling Jesus, "Jesus, You've got to do something. I'm all alone, I'm doing the work by myself. And here's Mary sitting at Your feet. Tell her to come and help me!"

And yet, when we see Jesus' answer, we must come to the conclusion that there's something important that Jesus is telling us, for Him to actually defend Mary in this situation. He says to Martha, very lovingly, "Martha, My beloved Martha. Why are you upset and troubled, pulled away by all these many distractions?" That's what Jesus called the many things that Martha was doing – distractions. "Are they really that important," He questioned, "those things that you are doing, that you want Me to tell Mary to join you in? Are they really important? Mary has discovered the one thing most important by choosing to sit at My feet. She is undistracted, and I will not take that privilege away from her."

When we try dispassionately to look at it, without trying to become passionate towards Martha, because Jesus seemed to have put her in her place, and said, "That's not where you ought to be." And we think – Jesus would always be just. He would always want us to do the right thing. Then it seems as if the right thing in this instance was to be sitting at His feet and listening to Him and not be distracted by anything else. Mary got that. Mary knew that the most important thing she could do at this moment was to listen to Jesus; and that's what she was doing. Martha didn't get it.

Distractions have a way of coming into our lives and taking us away from the main thing. I wonder today, as we look at this Word, and as we open ourselves up to God's Holy Spirit, whether we too are guilty of losing the main thing and focusing on distractions.

I love this verse Ephesians 3:17 where Paul says, "I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts with faith." Or as the Weymouth translation puts it – That Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts by faith. Beautiful!

There's this beautiful little book by Robert Munger 'My Heart; Christ's Home' and in it he says, "Without question, one of the most remarkable Christian doctrines is that Jesus Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit will actually enter a heart, settle down and be at home there. Christ will live in any human heart that welcomes Him."

Have you welcomed Him into your heart, beloved? Does He live in your heart? When He does, everything changes. We have the King of kings, the Lord of lords, living in our hearts, inputting into our lives, leading us, guiding us, sharing with us all those beautiful moments that the Almighty God can share with us.

Munger goes on to say, "I will never forget the evening I invited Him into my heart. What an entrance He made! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real, occurring at the very center of my soul. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness, and harmony where there had been discord. He filled the emptiness with His own loving fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ, and I never will."

I am sure, beloved, that's the same for you as it is for me. I too, have never ever regretted opening my heart to the Lord, and saying, "Will You come into my heart? Will You stay with me? Will You take charge of my life?" That's the best decision I've ever made in my life and I'm sure you would agree with that.

But Munger goes on to ask the question: With Christ living in our hearts, how and what does our home look like. I'm going to paraphrase this little book of his 'My Heart; Christ's Home' in my own words, and see if it can bring us some understanding of what Christ living in our hearts looks like.

He goes on to say: This person invited Jesus into his heart, and then was so excited about it that he cleaned up the living room, puffed up all the pillows, and made sure every painting was in place. Then Christ came in and he was so happy. He said, "Have a seat." He was chatting with the Lord. then he felt the Lord's eyes move around and finally settle on a painting in his house. Following the Lord's gaze, he realized that the painting was of somebody who had hurt him very deeply. Every time he looked at that painting, he would be reminded of what happened; he would go over and over that instance and remind himself how this person hurt him and he had never forgotten or forgiven this person.

He saw the look on Jesus' face and he realized, "Oh gosh! I should have gotten rid of that painting, but I didn't." Then he looked at the Lord and said, "Lord, I've tried many times to forgive and to think about something else, but I've not been able to." And Jesus said, "Don't worry! That's why I'm here. That's why I'm in your heart, in your home. I'll help you take care of that particular painting." And He gave him another painting of Him on the Cross, wounded for our transgressions. And He said, "Every time you see this particular painting,

think of Me. Replace it with Me on the Cross, embracing you and saying – for this I died.” And he said, “Lord, that’s what’s going to happen immediately.” And he took off that painting and he put the Lord’s painting there.

The next day, he comes down the stairs, and he has a little place where he would do his quiet time. The Lord was waiting there. He said, “Lord Jesus, You are here.” And Jesus said, “I thought we will have a quiet time together.” And he said, “That’s wonderful, just to have You to explain things to me.” So, they sat down and they had a wonderful time in this little place that he had, overlooking the mountains, enjoying the scenery and the vastness of what was happening. The Lord helped him understand scripture. They began to do that every day, until a week or two in, he came in late and didn’t have enough time. The second day he missed it, and the third day he just kept going, didn’t go to that place.

After about three weeks to a month, he came back to that place, and he saw Jesus sitting there and he said, “Lord, I’m so sorry I haven’t been coming and meeting You here. But You’ve been here.” And Jesus said, “We agreed to meet here. I’m here.” He said, “Lord, forgive me. I’m going to come back to this place,” and he sat down and he began to have Jesus explain the Word again and things were going along well.

Then one day, he came home, went up to his room, had a shower, came back smelling of cologne. He saw Jesus sitting there, asking him – where are you going? He said, “Oh! We have an office party today, and I’m going. Jesus said, “Great, I’ll come with you,” and he said, “Not this time, Lord. I’ll go by myself this time. You may not enjoy it.” And Jesus said, “Well, I thought when you invited me into your home, that we’d do everything together.” He said, “Just this time, Lord, I’m going by myself.”

And he did. He went for this party. But he realized that after having Jesus in such beautiful proximity, it wasn’t the same. He realized how hollow the entire evening was. Even the coffee didn’t taste as good. He came running back home, burst into the house, went up into the room where Jesus was and said, “Lord, please forgive me. It wasn’t the same at all. I’ve got so used to having You with me. This was terrible. Lord Jesus, wherever I go, I want You to be with me.” Jesus said, “That’s why I’m here. That’s what we’ll do.”

Days went by, and one day, Jesus met him and said, “I don’t know about that room there. There’s a bad odor coming from that room.” The man looked at Jesus and said, “Well, let’s not deal with that room.” And Jesus said, “Why? I thought we’d go in and see what’s causing the odor and clean up.” And he said, “Jesus, when You wanted me to have quiet time with You, I agreed. When You told me to replace the painting, I agreed. I realized that we needed to do everything together. But that room is mine. Don’t interfere with it.” Jesus said, “Well, if that’s what you want, that’s how it is.” And He sat down.

A day went by, and another day, and the man felt terrible. He went to Jesus and said, “Lord Jesus, here’s the thing. I’ve tried to get rid of the things in that room. But they are things that I think about, things that I see that I don’t want anyone to know about. These are things that limit me. I’m not happy about it, but I’ve never been able to do anything about it. Will You help me?” And Jesus said, “That’s why I’m here.” The man said, “Lord, here’s the key to that room. Will You clean it up?” And Jesus said, “Sure will do.”

And Jesus cleared up that room, and the man realized something. He said, “You know, Lord Jesus, I need to make You the one who owns this house, and allow me to just be the guest.

You need to have ownership, and I want to just follow after You doing everything that You want me to do.”

The story ends there; at least I'd like it to end there. But here's the thing: as we look at distractions in our lives, there are so many things that we can invite into our home, which is our heart, our mind, our soul, that really are side things. And we lose sight of the main focus that Jesus applauded Mary for. I wonder, this evening, as we sit in our homes amidst the corona virus and all that is going on with it, whether Jesus is saying that this is an opportunity to do something together that we may not have done before. It is possible that you are getting caught up with distractions. It could be that the Lord is saying to you: Let's do something. Let's spend more time in the Word than we've ever done before. Or maybe, He's saying: Let's read something together – a devotional book. Or maybe, He's saying: Why don't you take the time to call up somebody? Or maybe He's saying: there's a relationship that you need to work on, or maybe do something in terms of bringing back a conversation with a parent or a sibling or a spouse or a child. Maybe that's the focus during this time. But let's not get caught up with any distractions during this time. Let's see what Jesus is saying to us from within our homes as we give Him complete control.

This is a time when Bill Gaither's song comes to mind:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, there is no fear.
Because He lives, I can face the future
All of this because Jesus is on the throne, beloved.

So, as we look at our lives this evening, let's just say, “Lord, You keep the distractions as bay. Help me to focus on the most important thing that You want me to deal with today.

Will you pray with me?

Almighty God, bless each person watching this video. Lord, may they sense Your presence. Take away any fear of the situation and give us single-minded devotion to allow You to do what You want to do in our lives. Welcome Lord, to our homes, our hearts, take charge and may Your will be done. We love You, Master. We pray this prayer in Jesus' precious name. Amen.