

## Just Too Busy

Luke 10:38-42 Psalm 52 07-22-07

So, were you all busy dashing around last Friday night at midnight securing your copies of the newest and latest Harry Potter book? I know one or two of you from here did, indeed, do this. As if there is not enough to do without this little extra, as much fun as it was. But this was one of those times, when added busyness had some true value for the person you were putting yourself out for. It was no waste of time.

Do you ever have times in life when it seems as if you always run out of time before you run out of work? You are so busy that there is never enough time to squeeze everything into 24 little hours. It takes discerning folks to understand what to pack into life and what can be just left out or put on a second list of things “to do.”

I am sure we have all heard the little story about the teacher, the jar, and his class. Let me remind all of us how this little story goes.

A teacher is lecturing a class about effective time management. To illustrate his point, he picks up a jar and fills it up with large stones. He then asks the class, “Is the jar full?” His class eagerly replies, “Of course.” He then pours gravel into the jar and shakes it up so that the gravel fills in the spaces. Then he asks the question again, “Is the jar full?” The class again responds affirmatively. Some of the students however, are starting to sit up in their chairs and take a little notice. He picks up some sand and pours it into the jar. Then he shakes the jar so that the sand falls into all the itty-bitty spaces, and asks the question again. By now the class is wise to the experiment and says, “No, it’s not.” He reaches down again and begins to pour a jug of water into the jar. He then asks the class, “What did you learn from this experiment?”

One of the students answered, “Even when our schedule is completely filled up, it is always possible to add another appointment or other thing to do.”

“No, this is not the purpose of the experiment,” said the teacher.

Then, after a moment of silence, he added, “The great truth of this experiment is that if we don’t put the big stones into the jar first, everything will not be able to go in. He continued, “In life, the big stones are things that are your foundation. For me it’s my family, my health, my spiritual practice, and my purpose. Gravel symbolizes the things that are of less importance, but are still necessary. For me it’s my job. Sand and water might symbolize the things that you like to do, but aren’t really that important. For me, surfing the internet tops the list. If you fill your life up with sand and water (internet surfing, gossiping, watching television), or even gravel (jobs, shuttling the kids around), you won’t have the space for the things that are of the most value to you.”

He concluded by saying, “Knowing what you value, then determining how to value it, and putting it first in your life will give you the time to do everything, while giving you a much more robust, balanced life.”

Jesus was telling Martha this in a slightly different way. Martha was very busy making her guests comfortable in her home. This is not a bad thing, of course. But Martha was going far above and beyond the call of duty in her attempts to make everything perfect.

We all have been hosted by people who are dashing about trying to make everything “just right” when all we would like is for them to sit down and be with us. Most often we visit someone because we are interested in the person, not because we want to examine the house and its tidiness, the table and its china, or for a gourmet treat. If our motives are these, we are truly shallow folks.

Jesus was visiting because he wanted to help people find the way to God—that was first and foremost in his life. People were always important, never things. As his followers we need to hold the same set of values. He told Martha that just one thing was needed. Most interpret this as meaning, “A simple meal is best, don’t try to make too many things for us so that you miss the point and pleasure of our visit.”

Of course Jesus was pleased by Mary’s great interest in him and his message and he could not be distracted by Martha’s distress. Martha felt no one was helping her. And they were not. The others all realized that the big things in life needed to come first and that they would treasure those bigger things more than all the little things that make life sometimes unnecessarily complex and sometimes, even, confusing.

Erma Bombeck, a beloved, funny woman, summed this all up when she wrote a little piece about the way she would spend her life if she had to do it over again. She wrote this little essay upon being diagnosed with cancer. Many of you have seen this and many of you have sent this to me. I am finally using it. Here are her words: “If I Had My Life to Live Over”

If I had my life to live over, I would have talked less and listened more.

I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained and the sofa faded.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the 'good' living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television - and more while watching life.

I would have shared more of the responsibility carried by my husband.

I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for the day.

I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner."

There would have been more "I love you's".. More "I'm sorrys" ...

But mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute... look at it and really see it ... live it...and never give it back.

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Are you just too busy to do this before it is too late? Are you ready to realize that your life just may be full of many things that do not really count on life's final tote board. Are you too much like Martha? Or, do you understand what life is truly all about? Jesus tried and tries to remind us over and over again to always choose the best part. And that choice is always ours. Amen