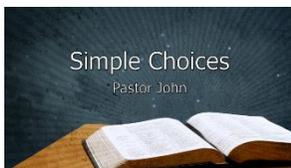


## Simple Choices

July 17, 2016

### Luke 10: 38-42:

*<sup>38</sup> The Lord and his disciples were traveling along and came to a village. When they got there, a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat down in front of the Lord and was listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> Martha was worried about all that had to be done. Finally, she went to Jesus and said, “Lord, doesn’t it bother you that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!” <sup>41</sup> The Lord answered, “Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things, <sup>42</sup> but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her.”*



Two weeks ago we began the “Simple” series looking at the simple power we find through our faith in Jesus Christ. This simple power is revealed in the ways we demonstrate trust in God’s power in our lives. Last week we continued the series by reflecting on the simple witness we are called to give for our faith. It may be as simple as visiting someone and spending some time with them or it may be as complex as developing a relationship that requires long-term care and attention. This week we continue in the series as we look at the simple choices that our faith calls us to.

By a show of hands, who do you relate to better, Mary or Martha? If you are a type A personality or if you are a lion or if you are vanilla, maybe you relate better to Martha.



If you are a type B personality or if you are a golden retriever or if you are chocolate, maybe you relate to Mary. Our personalities are simply who we tend to be most of the time. Mary is not always the Mary we see in the story and Martha is sometimes fun and easy going. But not today.

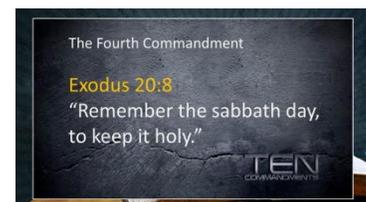


Jesus has stopped by to visit good friends Mary and Martha at their home. As was His custom, Jesus entered the house, sat down, and began to teach. Probably as soon as Martha heard that Jesus was headed their way, the preparations began. Sweep the house, make up the spare bed, get rid of all the clutter, begin to prepare the food. You know the routine. But apparently Martha was not quite done when Jesus arrived. Maybe you can picture the inner struggle she must have gone through – stop and sit at Jesus’ feet or continue to prepare the meal? Although Martha knew what the ‘right’ choice was, she still struggled with the choice. Aren’t we often just like Martha?



Perhaps you can relate to this image. Perhaps you too feel like life is one big balancing act. Maybe your busyness revolves around work. Maybe it revolves around school or the kids or sports or ... The list can go on and on and on. We can relate to Martha. We struggle a bit more at times to relate to the choice Mary made. Yes, we know that choosing to spend some quality time with Jesus is the right choice. Yes, we know that making this choice will benefit our faith and our lives in general. Deep down inside we know that living life in busy mode all the time is not what God calls us to. Yet if we know all of this, how come it is so hard to make the choice Mary made?

God knew that slowing down and stepping away from the busyness of life would be a challenge for us. He created us and knew that we were hard-wired to be doers, to accomplish, to succeed, to work hard. That’s why He wrote #4: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” God knew mankind’s proclivity to be busy. He knew that it was important to set aside some time to do what Mary did, to re-connect to God so that we could refresh our hearts and souls.

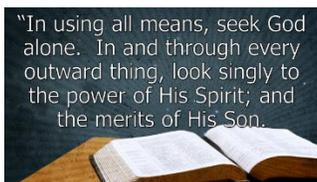




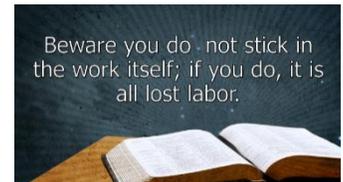
It is easy to identify the things that keep us so busy. It is a whole other matter to be able to carve out space for sitting at Jesus' feet on a regular basis. Obviously, for us gathered here this morning, we were able to set aside an hour to worship, to be in His presence. Many of you will do so again next week and the week after that. But for each of us gathered here this morning, there are dozens out there who are not here or in any other place of worship. But for you, there was a choice made to be here. I am grateful for that and recognize your commitment. Thank you.

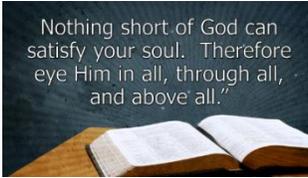


John Wesley was the founding father of Methodism. John preached both social holiness and personal holiness. Social holiness was what we are doing here this morning. It is attending worship. It is attending a class or Bible study or confirmation. It is the sacraments of baptism and communion. Social holiness is the means of grace in which we grow together in our faith. He also preached personal holiness. These means of grace include fasting, tithing, personal prayer and Bible study. John Wesley was a man who practiced what he preached. He practiced many means of grace so that he could stay connected to God. Wesley fasted twice a week as a means to connect to God. He tithed on a regular basis to show his trust in God. He prayed and studied his Bible for an hour early in the morning and late at night every day. When life got especially busy, Wesley was known to pray for two hours in the morning. He said that when the day ahead seemed especially busy he knew that he would need extra prayer! In short, for Wesley, God must be the priority, the center of one's life. For Wesley, all of the means of grace had but one purpose: *In using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing, look*



*singly to the power of his Spirit; and the merits of his Son. Beware you do not stick in the*





*work itself; if you do, it is all lost labor. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore, eye him in all, through all, and above all.*

It is easy to say we are focused on Jesus, that all of our choices revolve around Him and His will for our lives. We can slap on a WWJD bracelet and wear our Jesus t-shirts.



But we still have to make the choice to follow Jesus, to make Him our priority. It is a challenge because there are so many choices and so many things pulling at us. So occasionally we fail.

Sometimes we make mistakes. Now and then we sin. When we think back into our past, we find a boatload of mistakes and sin. In my past I can recall things I did and said that I wish I never did or said. Perhaps you can as well. But our mistakes, our sins, are not the end of the story. Please turn your attention to the screens for a video that addresses the choices we make and God's response to our sins. [Play video.]



In Colossians 1, Paul writes of the past and the future we have once we choose to live our lives according to God's will and purposes. In verses 21 and 22 we read, "<sup>21</sup> *You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things.* <sup>22</sup> *But his Son became a human and died. So God made peace with you, and now he lets you stand in his presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent.*"

We make choices every day. Choices are made all the time. Thanks be to God that no matter how poor our choices are He still loves us. He forgives us. He welcomes us back into a right relationship with Him. He restores us to holy and faultless and innocent.

In some ways I am a lot like John Wesley. For me it takes a daily commitment to be connected to God and to seek His will for my life. It begins every morning. It is a simple choice. The time in prayer, the devotionals I read and reflect on, the time spent writing out my thoughts on the scripture I read that morning – all are essential to start my day right, to start it with God. I could sleep in late and rush over to the church right at 9:00. The day would probably go okay but to me it would not feel the same. Even on the mission trip, when the days were long and hard, I got up at least an hour early and found a quiet corner to read, reflect, write, and pray. This simple choice is an essential part of my daily routine. It is my hope and prayer that you too have a time with Jesus each day. If not, I encourage you to consider it, to try it for a month. Make the simple choice to be like Mary and sit at Jesus' feet.

Paul goes on in Colossians to write of this connection we must make to God and to our faith. In verses 23 and 28 he writes, *“<sup>23</sup> But you must stay deeply rooted and firm in your faith. You must not give up the hope you received when you heard the good news. It was preached to everyone on earth, and I myself have become a servant of this message... And the mystery is that Christ lives in you, and he is your hope of sharing in God's glory. <sup>28</sup> We announce the message about Christ, and we use all our wisdom to warn and teach everyone, so that all of Christ's followers will grow and become mature.”*

It is a simple choice to remain deeply rooted and firm in our faith. But it is a choice that takes commitment and discipline. The mystery of Christ does indeed live in each of us. The Holy Spirit dwells in each of us, guiding and leading us, reminding us of God's call on our lives. Christ is our hope of sharing in God's glory, of one day gaining the prize of eternal life. May it be our simple choice this week, to spend time daily at Jesus' feet, growing and maturing in our faith, with our focus on God – in all, through all, and above all. May God be our all in all. Amen.