

Warning - Distraction

Text Luke 10:38-41

At the Home of Martha and Mary

³⁸ *As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

⁴¹ *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one, Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

I don't know about you, but this story of Mary & Martha in Luke 10 hits home every time I read it and I think it is probably a lesson we all have to learn again and again in our own lives i.e. how many times are we distracted away from the important thing? - '*worried and upset, by many things*' and know in our hearts, we are not where we should really be and '*only one thing is needed*'?

I think one of the greatest challenges for the Church today and for us as individuals is **distractions**. And the truth is; the things we are distracted by are; **heart revealers**. Somebody said this, and I think it is very true. "Our attention often runs to what's important to us. So distractions can reveal what we really love."

Jesus said this "*Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks*" I think it is really interesting and revealing to listen to what Christians are talking about, their conversations, a good test of what's really going on in your heart is what comes out of your mouth, the words we speak to one another.

But clearly there is no doubt, the days we live in give us **unprecedented distractions**, the age of technology; mobile phones, face book and social media bring multiple opportunities to grab our attention.

Consider the vast amount of information our brains have to process today, the endless stream of media that relentlessly bombards our modern society. It was interesting for me to discover that nearly 70% of an average person's day includes some form of media usage.

Years ago you used to only know the things that went on in your local community, but today you can hear about, or even see, in graphic detail, every minute detail of some tragedy, some despicable crime that's happened in any corner of the world.

Distractions can be dangerous also. People may be surprised to learn that **61** percent of **fatal crashes in a study** from 2012-2016 involved a driver that was **daydreaming** or distracted at the wheel at time of the accident. What were these distractions?

- 23.6% of drivers were texting.
- 52.5% of drivers were eating while driving.
- 11.7% of drivers were taking pictures.
- 6.5% of drivers were applying makeup.
- 3.4% were drinking alcohol while driving.

So we can see distractions have serious consequences.

But it's not just **external** distractions that are our problem! - Internal daydreaming, wandering thoughts, stress, boredom, personal problems, and worry all distract our mind.

We know as well today that many people are afflicted with conditions like ADHD 'Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder'; they say certain foods we eat can upset our ability to concentrate on any one thing.

But I think also for Christian's distractions can come from the enemy of our soul, the devil, because he knows **he can't** rob you of being a child of God. So he tries to keep you from enjoying and sharing the great truths of the gospel - his main goal is; often through tempting us into distractions, is to then make us ineffective in our witness for God.

And where did it all start? Well like so many of our problems, in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve 'fell' because they were distracted away from the original plan and purpose God had for them.

So it's ingrained in our very DNA, a distracted heart, a mind that wanders, and a life that gets distracted into all sorts of things it shouldn't be doing!

And this word 'distraction' used in our story of Mary and Martha means, in the original language; *'to be drawn away' – 'an object that directs one's attention away from something else'* it means *'shifting our attention from something of greater importance to something of lesser importance'*

So to begin with let's look at a couple of warnings & commands to us as **individuals** and **to the church**, regarding *'shifting our attention from something of greater importance to something of lesser importance'* and what can we learn from the story of Mary & Martha;-

Well firstly for us a Christians there should be one thing of prime importance

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
Matthew 6:33

Everything else has to take 2nd place in our lives to seeking His Kingdom & His righteousness. The truth is you can't live an effective Christian life with a divided mind, a distracted mind, sharing your commitment to God on an equal footing with anything else is a compromise too far.

James says *'a double minded man is unstable in all he does'*

It says *'Mary has chosen what is better'*, and becoming a Christian gives us that freedom to choose God, to choose His way and not be bound by distractions that dilute our faith.

' Hebrews 12:2 *'fixing **our attention** on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of the faith'*,

I would say to you this morning is 'His kingdom and his righteousness' your no.1 priority in life. Or do you see things in your life that get in the way of that? - then make a choice from this day forward to choose Him – to make that critical choice - scripture says

"Choose this day whom you serve – as for me and my house we will serve the Lord" Joshua 24:15 - if that's you please ask for prayer this morning.

Secondly the church (capital C) seems to be disturbingly, distracted away from Her main purpose. Which is to preach the gospel of the Good news of Jesus Christ.

Today we hear so much about the environment, save the planet, or social justice, now these subjects may be 'honourable' in themselves but not the message preached from the pulpit, were in the business of saving souls, not trees or the planet. They are of secondary importance - **Anything less is a mere distraction** I would say the apostle Paul goes further regarding a 'different gospel' in (2 Corinthians 11:3-5)

*"But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough". **A few verses on he say's about these people:-***

"For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve".

And on this score excuse me if I might be distracted a little to something I have noticed recently.

It appears a new doctrine that has entered the church! And I think it comes on the back of the legitimate doctrine of **eschatology** which is the doctrine of 'end times' and it is the 'doctrine

of immunisation - vaccinations'! I.e. should we be vaccinated or not' there is so much hype about this in the church, and so much fear around.

I don't want to feed that fear, but it's my belief it's just a big distraction, Covid & the vaccinations have become a big distraction for the Church and its people, and I don't want to minimise its effect on mental health issues or lives lost - but we seem so obsessed with it, we talk about it more than anything else, it has become an object that has taken us away from the central gospel message and who we are in Christ.

It's my view (and only my view) but I believe I don't think it's that important to God whether you're vaccinated or not! – **He will be with you whatever you do.** – *“It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”(Deut 31:18)*

But can I say it's **not the 'mark of the beast'**

Who knows It may possibly be a forerunner to these things, but that is further down the line, but that will be a clear choice to follow Christ or the anti Christ, not **to be vaccinated or not.**

According to scripture there is much more has to happen before that clear choice is before us, i.e. many more prophecies have to yet to be fulfilled like 1) The rise and appearance of 'anti Christ' 2) The King of the North to take Jerusalem etc, and I would encourage us not to get 'hot under the collar' or 'all steamed up' regarding the time we are in right now, or to get caught up in all these conspiracies. I think it's a big 'red herring' that can take up our time & energy.

I think rather we should consider these scriptures:

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience”.

I see a lot in scripture about 'submitting to the authorities' of 'having respect' for them, but there is nothing in the scriptures about rebelling or finding fault and denouncing our

political leaders. They have come in for a lot of criticism recently, and for us as Christians it can be a distraction from what we are told to do and that's **'pray for them'**.

We have to be constantly on our guard against a cynical spirit, it's not the spirit of Christ, which is one of humility and submission.

It's the government job to warn you about Covid they would be negligent if they didn't.

Listen I'm not saying we shouldn't be on our guard and observant of the times we live in – I'm just saying this isn't the 'final battle' that were fighting here, that many are making out it to be.

The other scripture that comes to mind on this subject is: 1 Corinthians 10:23

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others".

It seems the principle for us as Christians is putting the others first.

(Not telling anyone what to do, that should be between you and God) but I must admit I hear a lot regarding the vaccinations, of what I should do what's best for **me** but perhaps the more important thing is **other people**. I think the biggest distraction of all for us all **is the one that focuses on the big I, me, me, me** and not the other person.

Scripture says *'think of others of greater importance to yourself'*

No more of this subject, I've had my say, you may not agree, but we have to keep a balanced view, it's a trick of the devil to make these things out to be more important than they are, and to **lose our focus** from the main event which is to make sure **were ready** to meet Him face to face and to be busy about the masters business when He returns.

So what is the antidote to distraction? 4 things come to mind:

Firstly if you feel you are being distracted, go to God & 'acknowledge Him in all your ways' - go to Jesus first & tell Him of your struggle, be honest ,tell Him where your heart is, ask him that those things your distracted by will lose their hold over you, they would become less important to you .

God is a jealous God and He will answer your prayer because He won't share you with anyone else.

Secondly if you feel you are being distracted by things that take up your time unwisely then cut them out, get rid of them, seek discernment of course, but we usually know, it's often immediately obvious to us what we need to get rid of - but we have to make the choice, like *Mary in our reading who Jesus said had 'chosen what is better'* it's our choice. Colossians 3:1-2 says

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things".

And when you do get rid of them, put as much distance between you and these things as you can !, don't be like the cartoon character 'Cathy' who wanted to avoid chocolate but purposely walked past the sweet shop every day!!

Thirdly fill those distractions, those things that you have got rid of with good things, holy things, things that will take you deeper with God, we don't live in a vacuum, you have to replace what has gone, the negative with something new, the positive, the biblical concept throughout the NT is to replace something bad with something good. Ephesians 4:22-24 says

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness".

Fourthly and finally be content be thankful with what you have, if you have faith and the Lord, you have everything you need.

I do think many of our distractions are due to fleshy desires with us, like covetousness, greed, the want for more and more, entertainment, information etc. It is good if we can learn to be content with what we have. Paul says in Philippians 4.

"For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength".

I will leave it there.... but just say...

If there is any area God has pinpointed in your life this morning regarding the many distractions all around us please ask for prayer.

Amen

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