

The 'One Necessary Thing' That Remains Amid Losses of COVID-19

"But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:41-42, ESV).

We are hearing words these days like "essential travel," "essential workers," "essential businesses." This is right. Identifying what is essential for society to function is important in a moment when you are working together to stop the spread of a novel virus.

In the midst of the search for essentials, I can sense the Holy Spirit searching the church, helping us identify what is essential for our existence and function as the body of Christ. This is a season where the Spirit of the Lord is sifting through our ministries, families and our personal lives, separating what is essential and what is additional; what is primary and what is secondary. I believe that God is using this current global pandemic to help us slow down, pause and identify what is necessary. We have become so addicted to activity here in the West. Bigger, better, faster and more have become the modern mandates.

But when everything is taken away, what remains?

This is a wake-up call.

In Luke 10, Martha was busied with activity while Jesus was visiting her house. The Bible says she was "distracted with much serving" (Luke 10:40). What was she distracted from? Jesus Himself. Not only that, she was pressuring others into the same frenzied rhythm of life, accusing them of "not

caring," accusing them of being unhelpful.

"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'" (Luke 10:40).

Jesus stops her dead in her tracks. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41b).

It is possible to do a lot for Jesus and not be with Jesus. Activity in the name of Jesus is different than intimacy with Jesus. Could it be that Jesus is not looking for more activity from us but more connectivity? Wasn't it Jesus Himself who told us clearly, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5)? Could it be that this one necessary thing has been crowded out by the many things in our lives?

Jesus warns Martha that all the busyness of her work and preparations had the potential to be taken away. If her life did not consist of something more, she would suffer much loss. All that we manufacture in our lives comes with great liability. It can be taken away. Someone else can stop it, steal it, slow it down. A season will change, a crisis will come, the market will fluctuate, the pressures of life will weigh down on us, fueled by external circumstances.

There is only one thing that can never be taken away; one thing that we can build our lives on that will remain unshakable. What is this one thing? Sitting, looking and listening to Jesus.

"Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His teaching" (Luke 10:39b, MEV).

What she saw, heard and experienced in His presence could never be taken away from her. She would keep it forever. What

is gained internally can never be taken by anything externally. It is your life in God in secret. It is the source of our lives, and a billion dollars can't buy it.

Jesus saw in Mary of Bethany the same heart He saw in King David: "Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock" (Ps. 27:3-5, ESV).

No matter what external pressures and circumstances came David's way, his confidence came from one thing. His one request before God was to dwell (sit), gaze (look) and inquire (listen) in the Lord's presence. David, like Mary, had many other responsibilities, but when everything was stripped away, this was the one primary, essential and necessary thing. Everything in his governing and leadership was an overflow of this one thing. When crisis came, he was at rest and without fear. A heart at rest in the presence of Jesus is a heart that is confident.

His words to us and His presence with us are the anchor of our souls.

The caution flag is waving.

This is the time to ask ourselves these painful but necessary questions. If not, I fear that we will be quick to return to "life as it was before"; to get back to doing, serving, building ... busy. But beloved, what if life as it was before wasn't as fruitful as we thought it was? What if God is gifting us something in this season that we didn't know we desperately needed? What if God is helping us shed, rearrange and reprioritize our lives so that as we slowly reopen our

churches, businesses, homes and schools, we do so with a newfound stillness in our souls and secret place with the Father? We have the chance to reset and diligently guard the one thing from getting pushed out by the many things again.

I am pleading for us to come out of this season with fresh bread from heaven. With the words and presence of Jesus alive in our souls. What a waste it would be to emerge from the other side of this quarantine and all to show for it is a few Netflix series finished and some more household chores done.

Beloved of God, Jesus is hotly pursuing us right now.

Sit. Look. Listen.

Listen to our podcast to hear more from R.A. Martinez, and share this article today with someone who needs to read it.
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