

STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, January 18, 2009

Resolutions that Matter (Week 2 of 4)

TIME

Luke 10:38-42

Now while they were on their way, it occurred that Jesus entered a certain village, and a woman named Martha received and welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord's feet and was listening to His teaching.

But Martha [overly occupied and too busy] was distracted with much serving; and she came up to Him and said, Lord, is it nothing to You that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me (to lend a hand and do her part along with me)!

But the Lord replied to her by saying, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; There is need of only one or but a few things. Mary has chosen the good portion (that which is to her advantage), which shall not be taken away from her."

The Word from the Bible, the Amplified Bible

The True Service

From the Interpreter's Bible Dictionary

Luke 10:38-42 — Having illustrated the command to love one's neighbor Luke describes the meaning of the commandment to love God. The story is taken from Luke. In contrast to the Samaritans, who have rejected Jesus, Martha receives him as a guest in her house. This home, according to John 11:1 is located in Bethany, but Luke does not imagine Jesus to be so near Jerusalem at this time. While Martha is distracted with much serving, her sister Mary sits at the Lord's feet and listens to his teachings. She acknowledges him as her Lord.

10:40-41 — The amount of distraction may indicate that Martha has a crowd of guests to serve, and according to custom serving honored guests is an important duty. Little wonder that she complains to Jesus about Mary's inefficiency. His response is a mild rebuke; Martha is anxious and troubled about any things.

10:42 — The rest of Jesus' answer varies in the different manuscripts. Some read one thing is needful, while others say "few things are needful, or only one." It is also not clear whether the one which is needed refers simply to the number of dishes of the meal or has some spiritual significance. Probably both are true. The dishes of food represent devotion to the Lord. Not many things are needed, but only one dish. Mary has chosen the good portion, for her "dish" is to hear and obey the word of God.

Offering Time to What's Really Important

In Psalm 90, we are reminded to treasure time as a valuable commodity. We measure our years by the number of birthdays, but every day is precious.

To realize the value of ONE YEAR, ask a student who failed a grade.

To realize the value of ONE MONTH, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby.

How valuable is ONE HOUR? Ask the businessman whose flight was delayed an hour and he missed an important business deal.

How valuable is ONE MINUTE? Ask the man who had the heart attack and a nearby EMT immediately gives him CPR to save life.

How valuable is ONE SECOND? Ask the person who barely missed an oncoming car.

How valuable is ONE MILLISECOND? Ask the Olympic swimmer who missed qualifying by six-tenths. Time is valuable.

Treasure every moment that you have! In Luke's narrative about Mary and Martha, Martha missed a moment with Jesus because of the details of preparing a meal.

Have you ever heard the expression, "time is money?" It's not true. Time is much more valuable than money. It may be hard to make more money, but it can be done. But it is totally impossible to make more time. TIME is more valuable than money.

A.W. Tozer writes, "Time is a resource that is nonrenewable and nontransferable. You cannot store it, slow it up, hold it up, divide it up or give it up. You can't hoard it up or save it for a rainy day — when it's lost, it's unrecoverable. When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection."

First Things First by Stephen Covey

In his book *First Things First*, Stephen Covey introduces his strategy for time management. Most corporate managers have been to his seminar, as well as other similar time management techniques. Covey recommends first setting priorities on what is important in life. With this in mind, he recommends putting things in this order: important and urgent, important and not urgent, not important and urgent, and not important and not urgent.

Important and Urgent - DO NOW - Subject to confirming the importance and the urgency of these tasks, do these tasks now. Prioritize according to their relative urgency.

Important and not urgent - PLAN TO DO - Critical to success: planning, deciding direction and aims - plan time-slots and personal space for these tasks.

Not Important but urgent - REJECT AND EXPLAIN - Scrutinize and probe demands. Help originators to re-assess. Wherever possible reject and avoid these tasks sensitively and immediately.

Not important and not urgent - RESIST AND CEASE – These are the habitual 'comforters', bad habits, and non-productive task - minimize or cease altogether.

Helpful suggestions

1. Recognize your strengths and limitations

- When are you at your strongest or weakest? If a morning person, use this time for prayer.
- What part of the week, year is strongest? Reflect on your rhythm, stresses, etc.
- Is there a better time to do certain tasks?
- When are you most emotionally in tune? Use that for date or family time.

2. Identify the non-negotiable — What is most important?

- The most important things are not always the most urgent.
- Can you ignore them and nothing bad happens?

3. God is first priority.

- With God first, how can we fail

4. Family is more important than job.

- Hold yourself accountable – those who love us are forgiving.

5. Have a workable criterion for ordering your time.

- Identify what is important and allocate time for it.
- Identify what is not important and avoid it.

Daily Readings

Please note: We begin the year by focusing our attention on the gospel of Mark. For the next several weeks we will move carefully through Mark's gospel following the message and story of Jesus the Christ. This is week two of our reading from Mark.

Monday, January 19 — Read Mark 3:1-19. In these passages Mark is setting up the ministry of Jesus. He heals, challenges the religious leaders, and calls the disciples. The most interesting passage here is the instruction now to tell anyone who he is. This is the first time Mark quotes Jesus in manner. We can assume in these passages that Jesus did not want to be followed for the miracles he was performing, but rather for the new kingdom that he brings. What kingdom holds your loyalty?

Tuesday, January 20 — Read Mark 3:20-35. Here Jesus answers the question of being possessed and his loyalty to his family. Together these passages remind us that Jesus is the Son of God. His power is over all creation and his loyalty is to all humankind. Examine your life to day – how you spend your time, your language, your relationships, and your work. Could you be call a brother or sister of Christ?

Wednesday, January 21 — Read Mark 4:1-20. Jesus tells the parable of the sower. In his explanation, he refers to three kinds of soil – the hard soil of the path, the shallow rocky soil, and fertile soil. First, Jesus is referring to those who hear the word but their heart is so stubborn and hard, they neither understand nor respond. Second, he is referring to those who are open to the way of Christ, but are so concerned and distracted by other things they quickly move on to something else. Third, he refers to the disciples that discipline their lives and over time they receive the blessing of spiritual strength and confidence. How would you describe your life and how you are receiving Christ?

Thursday, January 22 — Read Mark 4:21-34. Mark quickly shares with us three images of faith. In each case Jesus makes a point about our relationship to the Kingdom of God. In the parable of the lamp stand, we are not to hide what Christ has done for us. In the parable of the seed, we are not to take credit for the Kingdom's harvest – we are the workers. In the parable of the mustard seed we are reminded that the Kingdom of God starts small but always grows to glorious proportions. Can you see yourself in these parables?

Friday, January 23 — Read Mark 4:35-41. This short passage includes a message about Jesus authority and our human limits. In Mark's gospel Jesus has shown authority over illness, demons, and now nature. The limits of human understanding cause the disciple to fear Jesus. Jesus challenges their faith with the words, ***“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*** Only in faith we understand the things of God. As you go through your day, can you see and understand the things of God?