

Devotional #2

TRUE REST IN THE GOD WHO IS MERCIFUL

Read: Luke 10:38-42

I was raised in a culture where women were expected to be helpful and hospitable. If I am hosting an event, I must make sure that the house is spotless, the table covered in food, and the pantry stocked with reserves. A 'good' hostess must be on their feet to serve, feed and clean up after their guests. On the other hand, if I am invited to someone's house, I must make myself useful. A 'good' guest will bring a gift and help with preparations and cleaning. So, whether I am a host or a guest, being perceived as busy or useful is worthy of praise.

For those who have been raised to be helpful and hospitable, the story of Mary and Martha can be confusing. In this story, we are introduced to two sisters who hosted Jesus in different ways. Jesus visits their home for a meal, and Productive Martha immediately springs into action to tackle her to-do list as efficiently as possible. Her sense of accomplishment welled with each completed task, but it also made her resentful of Wasteful Mary who was distracted by Jesus' teachings! *How lazy!* Instead of being on her feet serving food, she had the audacity to rest at Jesus' feet! *How unhelpful and unproductive!*

In a 'busy' culture that values productivity, you would expect Jesus to echo Martha's sentiments, but instead of praising Martha, Jesus helps her to see that she is in fact the 'distracted' one. Her disciplined commitment to be a good host had led her to trade a devoted heart with a distracted one—one that was 'too busy' to even spend time with a divine guest!

And isn't this our temptation? While Christ invites us to rest in his saving work, we still often feel the need to earn our salvation. Like an overwhelmed host, we put misplaced value on our good works and busy schedules, hoping that our performance will be noticed and praised. The only problem is that busyness makes for a terrible saviour because its demands are endless. The sense of accomplishment never lasts. It may even tempt us to proudly compare our results with others, while at the same time, wondering if we've ever done enough.

Instead of praising Martha for her many efforts, Jesus praises the woman who is still and humble—the one who prioritises 'wasting time' listening to the One she loves.

"...Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." - Luke 10:42

Jesus shows us that spiritual 'success' is not measured by external performance or tangible outcomes. Entry into his kingdom is not a competition for the competent. Jesus measures our success by our heart's devotion to Him, and for many, this is a divine mercy that invites true rest. It's mercy for the sick and bed bound. It's mercy for the forgetful child and the deteriorating senior. It's mercy for the anxious and depressed. It's mercy for the needy and vulnerable. It's mercy for the weary who are prone to wander. It's mercy for sinners.

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There will be seasons where we won't feel useful or helpful, and an hour when our mind and body will no longer be capable of productivity. In that hour when flesh fails, we only need to 'be still' at our Saviour's feet, and to follow the voice that has promised to bring us home. In that hour, will his voice be familiar because you 'wasted time' to hear him speak, or will it be foreign because you spent your life distracted by many things?

Jesus is quick to receive a humble and devoted heart, and the hours we spend in awe and devotion is never a waste—it will be received and remembered. Regardless of what our culture pitches as productive or helpful, know that your love and stillness before the Lord is never a waste. *You have chosen what is better.*

Verses for Meditation

- Psalm 46:10
- 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Matthew 11:28-30

Reflection Questions

- How does Mary's example of 'wasteful' worship inspire you?
- How does Jesus' correction of Martha challenge you?
- How does this story change your perspective of productivity?
- What spiritual disciplines can you put in place to ensure that you're making time to hear from Jesus and his word?

Prayer

Praise God that human value and worth is not dependent on personal performance. Confess the ways in which you have been too busy or distracted to hear from God's word. Confess the times you have judged other people for their lack of productivity. Ask God to help you redefine productivity and that like Mary, you will choose to prioritise what is 'better'.