

Dr. Hugh Hamilton  
Trinity Presbyterian Church – Pensacola, FL  
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**ACTION NEEDED: 2. Stop and Listen**

Luke 10:38-42 Colossians 1:15-22

**FOMO:** Do you know the term “FOMO”? FOMO: F-O-M-O. FOMO is the social media acronym for *Fear of Missing Out*. FOMO is the pervasive anxiety that other people are having more fun than you, living better lives than you, experiencing better things and more success than you. FOMO is the fear that others are having fun somewhere without including you, or that by making a decision or commitment, you excluded yourself from other options that *might have* been better. FOMO is NOT just the sense that you could be doing something better right now, but the all-consuming, pervasive feeling that you are missing out on things fundamentally more important and rewarding that others are experiencing right now. FOMO causes envy, and even a sense of self-doubt or inadequacy compared to others.

The rise of social media over the last twenty years has increased FOMO as Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and other channels make it instantly obvious what friends and others are doing and what you are missing. If you’re feeling bored or lonely or depressed, just checking your cellphone and seeing that others have been whooping it up without you there makes you feel even worse. Seeing others’ posts and tweets and pictures of them at the trendiest restaurant, or at their dream vacation spot, or enjoying their latest greatest adventure and fun party makes you feel that you are missing out. Whereas in years past we were blissfully unaware of what everyone else was doing all day, now the incessant barrage of texts and tweets and bragging and exaggerating makes us aware of what we have are missing – and sometimes leaves us a bit peeved or envious. FOMO increases pressure to do more, to text new and amazing experiences and adventures by which to impress your friends.

FOMO can create a condition known as “decision paralysis.” People become so addicted to their cellphones that they can’t stop checking for posts and tweets and texts lest they miss something, and become so overwhelmed by the options, and so driven by the fear of missing out, that they can’t make a decision and won’t make a commitment to an invitation because if they commit to one party or place or event or option, then they miss out on other, better options.

**HOW DO YOU ALLEVIATE FOMO?** Some people go cold turkey on social media or go for a set period not using electronic devices. This week at the Montreat Youth Conference our teenagers and adults were asked to observe a Sabbath from all electronics from supper Wednesday to lunch Thursday. No cell phones, no tablets, no texting, no social media. Try to be fully present to those around you and to what God is doing in our midst in this holy place. Discover that you could be “missing out” by being glued to that tiny screen in front of you!

The story of Mary and Martha is not about FOMO, though Jesus does address being distracted from THE ONE THING NEEDED, that which is most important.

Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to him while Martha is distracted by preparations for the meal. Now let's be clear about this – it's not wrong to be a Martha. We'd all be in trouble if we didn't have a Martha to make sure things get done. Without Marthas, the necessary work and attention to detail get overlooked. It's not wrong to be an active Martha; it's not wrong to be a quiet and meditative Mary. **Not wrong – just different.** Both serve God well. God needs Marys and God needs Marthas.

Under normal circumstances, Martha's acts would be correct, and Mary's would be wrong. But in this case, the context is different. The guest in their home is not an ordinary visitor but the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The guest has the Word of eternal life. Mary gives Jesus her undivided attention...she is hearing like Jesus desires, and she is not missing the *one thing that is needed*.

#### **WHAT IS THAT ONE THING NEEDED, the "better thing" that shall not be taken from Mary?**

Above all else, I think the one thing needed, the better part, is *intentional...intimacy...with God*. What I take from this story is not that busy people are too busy and should slow down; or that lazy people need to get busy, but rather we cannot effectively live this Christians without intimacy with God. When we make God our priority, the other things begin to fall into place and we are better prepared to love God, love our neighbor, and love ourselves. Our reading from Colossians 1:15-28 speaks of the centrality of Christ, through whom and for whom "*all things were created, and in whom all things hold together.*" In Galatians 2:19-20 Paul says, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.*" That's the essence of who you are and what life you live. To continue strong in your faith, and not lose the hope given us by the gospel, you must spend time developing intimacy with God and listening to God. Until we can learn to quiet ourselves and to stop and listen for God, we will be frazzled servants of Christ.

**Sunset Fatigue:** Lewis Grant coined the term "sunset fatigue" which describes what happens when we put selfish ambitions ahead of our love for God and others. When we chase our own agendas all day long and come home at the end of a day's work, those who need our love the most, those to whom we are most committed, end up getting our leftovers. "'Sunset fatigue' is when we are just too tired, or too drained, or too preoccupied to love the people to whom we have made the deepest promises, and that includes God." (Grant, Lewis, in Duncan, 3) Martha was draining herself rushing to get everything accomplished. If she didn't stop and enjoy Christ's presence and listen to him, then he would get the left overs of her love and attention.

**I must ask you: Do you spend time with Jesus?** Do you listen to him? Do you read and reflect on his Word? Do you take part in a small group, or a Bible study group or a Sunday School class? Do you connect with God in singing or nurture your heart in music? Do you sense God when you serve other people? Are you his guest as much his host?

There is always work to be done, at church, at home, at work, at school, in the yard, at the myriad groups and organizations to which we belong. There is always more to get done than we can get done and more activities in which to be involved. I warn you; don't get so distracted by serving and by obligations and commitments and pressures, that you don't have time with God!

Turn off your cellphones and your TV's, close your computers and your calendars, and go for a walk with Jesus. Or sit in your quiet place and talk with him. Sit quietly and listen as well.

Ask him what hinders your relationship with him.

What interferes with your growth and witness and service to him?

To what do you need to say NO in order to say YES to him?

What commitments do you need to decline and from what do you need resign in order to pursue what Jesus needs you to do?

What can you change in order to give God your devotion and attention?

If you find yourself anxious and troubled, distracted, if you feel a pang of "FOMO", allow those emotions to point to the fact that something needs to be different.

Let the superficial go and grab hold of the eternal.

Be devoted to Christ and not distracted from Christ.

Giving time and attention to the matters of your heart deepens your understanding of God's ways and God's will for your life. The moment Jesus indicated to Mary that he had something to impart to her, she dropped everything else to sit and be absorbed in what he says.

To receive what Jesus wants to show you is better than any busywork.

To close your ears to him, to turn your heart away, is deathly to our spirits.

You shut off the stream of living water that feeds your soul and your faith.

Work is good and it is necessary, but Mary is applauded for her simple act of devotion and love to Christ – pausing to hear what he has to say to her spirit and soul.

*I give you permission to stop your business, your frenetic lifestyle, in order to listen for God and to feed your soul.*

**Your life in Christ must be more than just** checking in with God occasionally at worship.

Life in Christ is day to day to day to day living your life out of who you are in Christ Jesus.

It is living out your relationship with God among the people around you and in this world around you.

Mary and Martha were both good women and both were faithful disciples of Jesus.

Both were needed, both were essential.

They had different temperaments and styles; again, not wrong, just different.

Martha was encumbered, working and worrying nonstop.

Mary was comforted listening at Jesus feet.

Martha was concerned about preparing physical food,  
But Mary was getting fed spiritually.  
Martha was working for the Lord,  
But Mary just wanted to be near him.

You will have to get up and go serve eventually,  
but if you will spend some time at the feet of Jesus,  
you will have the knowledge and insight that you need to do things his way.  
You can go forward and have an impact on others for the good of His Kingdom!  
Instead of just being *active*, you can be *productive*!  
Thanks be to God! Amen!

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