

How are we? Listen, I missed you. The last ten days for me have been absolutely brutal. I was at a leadership practicum in Hawaii for ten days. Thank you for your prayers. It was brutal. If you have your Bibles, let's go to Luke 10. If you've been here the last couple of weeks, I know you might be going, "Luke 10? I thought we were skipping about seven chapters there, pastor." But I want to jump forward to something, and then I'll come back. I want to jump forward to something because I believe, and this is just personal belief, that we have entered into the most insane two months in our culture's history. Something happens, in fact I think it's getting earlier and earlier but something happens from November to January where normally sane people absolutely lose their minds. Now let me try to tell you what I'm talking about. In 2006, Americans spent \$454 billion on Christmas. \$454 BILLION! Now let me try to get in your head the difference between a million and a billion. One million seconds is eleven days. One billion seconds is 32 years. \$454 billion! Now can we agree that that's a little crazy? That breaks down to about \$903 per family unit in the U.S. And I know that probably in this area, we drive that average up a little bit. I saw a couple of you go, "Where do you get a pony for \$900?" You can't. So I'm guessing that here in our area, we probably drive that up a little bit. So it's just a little crazy. I flew back in on Thanksgiving morning, took the red-eye overnight, landed at 8:00 in the morning...from Hawaii. I don't know if I mentioned that I was there, but I was there for ten days. And I got back and I woke up a little jet lagged at about 4:00 in the morning and turned on the television and they were showing the malls at 4:00 in the morning. And they were already packed and people were waiting at the door. And I was like, "Here we are again. We've lost our minds." That means if you're there by four, you set the alarm for three something. And if you had people at your house, you had to clean up didn't go to bed til midnight. You got 3 1/2 hours sleep to save \$4.00 on a toy. You've gone crazy. You've lost your mind. Congratulations, you have a big screen TV now, but you're crazy. Because about an hour after that, at about 5:15, there was a 30 minute segment on the elevated stress levels of this time of the year and how all the rates and all the stress indicators shoot through the roof at this time of the year because we're having to deal with people we don't like to normally deal with, that we're with family we're not normally around. And if you're going right now, "Our family unit's perfect..." No, you're the guy. You're the one that everyone's like, "We hate that guy." So you're just deceived. Remember the prayer of Mary. You've been set loose in the imagination of the heart. And then they talked about the fact that most Americans don't budget and don't have a savings account. So in the end, we're spending money we don't really possess in the hopes to pay it off in January and February. And so this elevates stress even more. It's like we lose our minds. It's like we go crazy, man. And so I want to talk about it. And I don't just want to talk about it, but I really want to talk about all of life and this text is going to lead us into all of life. But I think it's particularly necessary this time of the year when everything just goes insane for a couple of months, and for whatever reason, it's okay to go crazy these couple of months. As long as Santa is bowing before a manger scene, in your front yard or when you spell Christmas on your roof, Christ is spelled with a different color light than -mas, it's okay for us to lose our minds also. But in the end, I want to point out something in Luke 10, and then when we come back next week, we'll go back to where we normally are.

So look at this with me. Luke 10, we'll pick it up in verse 38. "Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. 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." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha..." Now, you know Martha's lost her mind because Jesus had to say her name twice. And you know she's lost her mind because she's angry at her sister Mary but didn't talk to Mary at all. She didn't go, "Mary, help me." She's like, "Jesus, talk to my sister." Look at what Jesus says to her. "...you are anxious and troubled about many things." Now I just

want to stop there and say that I love Martha. I get her. If what we're going to have is a little contrast here in this story, if I'm one of these people, I'm Martha. I get work. I get it. I get the anxiety that comes along with work. I get the weight that comes along with work. In fact, work in our country is a national fetish. We work 160 hours per year more today than we did 35 years ago. The Technological Revolution did very little to ease how much time we work. In fact, we work more than we've ever worked before. In the western world, what's often called the civilized world, we work more than any other country on earth. We love work, and we get the anxiety and the trouble that comes from service and work. And how do I know that? All you have to do is study the sleeping patterns of most Americans. We stay up late, we have trouble sleeping, we get up early, a lot of us have ulcers. We get it. I get Martha. I get what it's like to feel the weight of much to do and good things to do. I mean, she's not doing anything wicked here. She's making sure everyone has something to drink, she's making sure the house is in order, she making sure everyone has something to eat. This isn't a wicked woman. She's not wicked at all. She got caught up in things that need to be done. I get her. I think we can all resonate with Martha. We all work like crazy. Well, most of us do. I'll address that more in a second.

I want to talk a little history and tell you how we got here. Between 1980 and 1999, the annual income in constant U.S. dollars grew from \$16,000 to \$22,000 in 1999. So in a two decade span, American's average income grew by 35%. It's the largest jump in U.S. history. At the same time, the rise of discount stores like Wal-Mart and Target the cost of living was driven down. And so with an elevated income and a decline in the cost of living, for the first time in U.S. history, the majority of Americans had what was deemed a "disposable income." And what that means is that we were no longer just living from paycheck to paycheck. What we did is, after we paid our house note if we had a house note, after we bought food and after we bought clothing, we had cash left over. And that's always been the case in America. I'm not trying to say that before 1980, nobody had a disposable income. But the number of Americans with a disposable income greatly increased in that two decades. And so, those men and women with entrepreneurial spirits decided that we needed something to spend that money on. And so what they did is brilliant. I'm not dogging this. I am blown away that this works so well. Because this large middle class was never historically able to afford much luxury. So they took base items, tweaked them a little bit to make them luxurious, quadrupled the price and we bought in. Let me give you an example. No one in their right mind would spend \$23 on liquid hand soap, no one. You'd be a fool. But we will spend \$23 on Vanilla Bean Hand Sanitizer. Luxurious. From Bath & Body, yes we will. Every male teenager in America will buy something for their mother at Bath & Body this coming month. And husbands are like, "What do you mean teenagers?" It's an easy win, smelly lotion for \$15. No one who is sane is going to spend \$13 on a head of lettuce, but we will spend \$13 on a head of organic Arugula, yes we will. And you would have to be out of your mind to spend \$4.25 on 6 ounces of coffee mixed with 6 ounces of milk, but it's perfectly sane to spend \$4.25 on a grande Café Misto. Mmm. Sounds luxurious, doesn't it? It's just coffee and milk. I mean, how brilliant is that? What did that use to cost, a nickel? Couldn't you buy a whole thing of Folgers just a few years ago for like \$2? You could buy coffee for two years for \$15. And now, it's \$4.25 for 6 ounces mixed with 6 ounces of milk. Let's call it something prettier and we'll eat it up. Because honestly most of us don't have any roots in the Bourgeoisie. We just don't have those roots, so we like to buy into the little luxurious items that have been made available for the first time to this very, very, very large middle class. So what's happened is these things have become base necessities for life. I mean, we've got to have the thing. We can't just get hand soap at the dollar store. We can't do that. No, we want Vanilla Bean Hand Sanitizer. We can't just have our hands being clean, they need to smell like fruit. And whether you love Starbucks, think they're the anti-Christ or the sign of the apocalypse or addictive, you can't take away from the brilliance of what they do. I mean, they've taken a product that's a very cheap, easy commodity, they've quadrupled the price and we flock in droves there. Like crazy we go there. And I'm not dogging them. I got an Americano on the way here this morning. I'm saying this is the world we live in. And so what's happened is most of us have sought out and work more and more and more and more to participate in a consumer universe of unnecessary stuff. And things that were not a necessity 20 years ago are now viewed as a necessity. And I know we talked about this at length when we were doing the Ecclesiastes series. That's why we do really crazy things like, when our car needs \$800 worth of repair, we go buy a new one. Because, "Oh, I'm starting to pour money into it.

I had to spend \$800 into my car. I'm not going to pour money into that when I can go spend \$42 grand on a new one." I mean, what kind of idiot spends \$800 to fix their car when they can get a brand new one they won't have to touch for three years for \$42 G's? I mean, come on. Add it up, people. I mean, six months from now, you might have to spend another \$300 on that car. This is the madness. This is where we are. This is the world we're operating in. This is where we're looking around going, "We don't have any space in our house. We've got three kids now. 3000 square feet isn't enough. We're going to have to move." And it's really just a little bit of madness.

I'm not trying to tell you what size of a house to live in or what kind of car to drive or even what kind of coffee to drink. My purpose here is not to really dog where we are as much as just point out this is where we are. And this is why you have more than just a middle class, you have a harried or exhausted leisure class, where we're working and working and working and working to buy luxury items so that we might feel Bourgeoisie and rested. And despite the fact that it's a catastrophic failure, we'll keep pressing. And this sermon isn't changing that at all. I'm not a fool. I'm not going, "This is the one that's going to turn it around." Everybody in this room's going to go "Yeah!" and then go get a \$5 cup of coffee and some Vanilla Bean Hand Sanitizer. So I get it, but I just want to point out this is the world that we live in. And I think most of us are really exhausted from it. And listen, I'm in no way trying to attack hard work. Honestly, I wished more people struggled with hard work than struggled with laziness. I'd rather everybody have to watch their lives in terms of how much they work rather than try to motivate themselves to do anything. I'd much rather men and women have that line where they have to back off and force themselves to take Sabbath than be those frail souls who begin to whine and quit as soon as the wind blows. I'd much rather the issue in all of our lives be we work too much. There's something good and right about callouses and sweat and blood, even if that's just finger callouses from the keyboard and mouse clicks. Did you know there is actually Blackberry Thumb Disorder now? People's thumbs are getting all messed up from checking the Blackberry. I'm not lying, that's a legitimate disorder...little corporate medics running around putting morphine in the thumb joint.

Let's keep looking at this. "But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but..." I just want to stop there. I commend hard work, I really do. I commend it, require it of the men and women who work here. We constantly tell them, "You're not on staff because you love Jesus. That's a prerequisite of being on staff, but you're not here to love Jesus. You have a job to do here." And I commend your hard work here, but here's the quiet "but" I want to interject into this whole thing. I commend hard work, labor, work, building companies and working hard, but is that all? Is that life? Is that what immortal men were created for? Is that our end, to pursue wealth just to have wealth so that when we die it could be said of us, "Man, they were worth millions...They left hundreds of thousands... They left millions to their children or to their grandchildren?" Is this the end? Is this the chief end of man, that we would accumulate stuff? I'm just trying to, in a very, very busy season, interject this quiet little "but" into the middle of your world. I mean, can we legitimately, with all the trinkets and all the toys and all that life has brought us, look at ourselves in the mirror and honestly feel like we're fulfilling the purpose of why we exist? Or does it still feel elusive, like trying to grab oil? Look at what happens next. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary." I love the non-complexity of this. One thing, there's just one thing. Now I don't know about you, but I feel like there are seven Matt Chandlers. I've got the Matt Chandler whose job it is to lead this place, to cast vision, to hear from the Lord, to take us in directions, there's that Matt Chandler. There's Matt Chandler the teacher and preacher who goes outside of this place and does some of that. There's Matt Chandler who's the husband of Lauren Chandler. There's Matt Chandler who is the father of Audrey and Reid Chandler. And I could go on and on here, but I feel like there are several of me. Does anybody else resonate with that at all? Now I think if I could just do one of those things and not have to do anything else, I would rule at it. Like if all I had to do, the only thing I had to do was be with Lauren, hang out with Lauren, walk with Lauren, talk with Lauren...actually she'd divorce me. Let's use another one. She likes her space. Let's use another one. If all I had to do was teach, that was it, I had no other role, no other duty, didn't have a wife, didn't have

children, didn't have to worry about anything, literally my entire day all I had to do was study the text, break it down, pray and preach, I just can't imagine that. Or just pick one area. Even if you're the most uncoordinated human being alive, if you can't breathe and chew gum without endangering yourself, if you still worked at something, one thing long enough, if you only had to do that one thing, think of how good you might be. And that's the beauty of this text here. He's going, "Okay, you've got all those things you're working on, all those things you're after, all those things, but there's just this one thing." And then He throws out this next line which I think is going to require us to do some thinking here. It says that there's one thing that's necessary. And necessary is different than just wanting. There's one thing, only one thing that's necessary, needful, you've got to have it above and beyond everything else, you've got to have this one thing.

Now, I'll be really honest with you. Nobody ever told me this; you just kind of figure it out as you get older. The older you get, your toys are much cooler. And I find much of what's out there to be very alluring. I mean, it is amazing stuff to look at and to want and to want to own it. And here's the difference between someone like my two year old's desire for toys and my desire for toys. My two year old can't justify the need. My two year old is not going to walk up to me and go, "Dad, swing set. Let's talk. Do you know that by purchasing this swing set, you can cut down the time you have to actively engage with me by 20% therefore increasing productivity? In fact, you could put the swing set in a certain spot in the backyard and you would not even have to come into the backyard, you could sit in your chair, read your book, your Bible, whatever you're doing, glance out, watch me play and therefore increase your time in the word. And who doesn't want that, father? Here is a brochure. I like A and C. Three easy payments." My son's not going to do that. In fact, they don't even comprehend exactly what wanting is. Here's an example. I was in Hawaii for ten days and Lauren was with me for five of those and then she had to fly home and I got to work. Lauren had just gotten home and I called home and Audrey was like, "How come you didn't want to come home with mom?" And I was like, "Baby, it's not a matter of want. I needed to stay here and work." "But you're the daddy. Whatever you want, you do." And I'm like, "Well, kind of." But they don't even see the difference between need and want. Everything's want. You can do whatever want. I mean, the kids can't comprehend that. But we can look at things, we can justify things, but in the end we're just gathering trinkets and toys around us. We just really are. And it's alluring and fascinating and it almost feels needful. I can remember being a little kid watching the State Farm agent come to our house and sit down with my parents and talk about life insurance and all that stuff. And I can remember, you just look at it and you're like, "Whoa!" And then you get older and you start looking at that kind of stuff if you have children. You start planning retirement, you start doing those kind of things, and those start feeling needful, necessary. And please hear me. I'm not trying to say those things are bad or wrong. They're not. They're just not the one necessary thing.

And so what He just said in this moment is, "Hey, Mary your sister, she's chosen the one necessary thing, Me. She's chosen the one thing that the soul has to have. In fact, look at His next line here; it's really telling. "Mary has chosen the good portion." He's talking about what fills her soul. "You're doing things that in the end are not going to fulfill, are not going to satisfy, are not going to sustain the soul. She has chosen the good portion, what fills her. And it will never be taken from her. I will not take that from her." I have to wonder sometimes if Jesus doesn't watch all our religious business. And listen, lest you think I'm just talking about people outside of the kingdom. I am much more surprised by people who passionately love Jesus after 25 years in church than I've ever been at anyone coming to love Jesus. Coming to love Jesus is this really mysterious thing. I mean, it happens and it's just a weird thing. It's weird and strange and you can't really put a bead on it, but it's not uncommon for somebody to be able to walk for 25 years with all the "do this, don't do that, do that, don't do that, go here, watch this, go here and don't do that," and we can get up and do all the right things and avoid all the wrong things and somehow in the middle of that lose Christ altogether. I mean, this is very much an issue where we can get so busy doing what's right, so busy being Christian that we're no longer submitting our lives to Him, no longer aware of His presence, no longer bowing before Him. And listen, on this one thing that's necessary, I get the beckoning call of life. I get it. No one's asking us to be monks. I get that the spreadsheet requires some work and the spreadsheet ain't taking care of itself because I'm praying. "Father, I pray when I get up from this place that

the '08 budget is done. Amen. Dang it! Father, once again, this is due in a couple of hours." Alright? So I'm not trying to turn anybody into a monk, neither is Scripture. I get that the spreadsheet calls. I get that the PDA pings and tells us that we have to be somewhere. I get that the theater screams to us, "It's Christmas time. Good movies are out." I get that sporting events are saying "Please watch me. Watch me. Your team's playing despite the fact that you don't play, you're not on the team. You should not be emotionally destroyed or elated when something like that happens. It's weird." I get it, it beckons. And here's the thing. All those things are good and fine, just don't get entangled in them. And that's the warning of Hebrews 12. "Hey, let's run this race with endurance and don't get entangled." When you get all entangled in all these things, it means you can't walk away when it's time to walk away. And that's why in the end, you've got to be really careful that work doesn't work you. And you've got to be really careful that life doesn't live you. And you've got to be really careful that you don't lose your mind over a football team or that you don't forsake what is right and good for a three-hour epic or that you don't get entangled in these things. They're good, but they're not worth losing your soul over. There's one thing that's necessary, to sit at the feet of Jesus, to commune with Him, to walk with Him to know Him. And listen, here's the great thing about that. You don't have to be a certain way to come and get there. You don't have to have this elated sense of emotion to come to the feet of Christ. You don't have to be all clean and perfect. If that was the case, nobody gets to come.

No, we just have to come. We just have to sit. We just have to quiet ourselves down. We just have to remember that He's here. We just can't get caught up in all of this stuff. We can't let it entangle us. And I'm not talking about "Jesus is the reason for the season." I'm trying to plead with you this morning for a return to a devotional life, for quiet moments of remembering, of reflecting and praying. Just take three minutes in the morning to read a Scripture and to think on it and dwell on it and ask Christ to make you aware of His presence that day. Take a moment sitting at the feet of Christ lest our souls get lost in all of this. Because honestly, it doesn't go away after Christmas. The very air we breathe is a little bit toxic to the soul. There's one thing that's necessary.

So here's how I want to end. Only a fool would exchange bottles of water for gold in the desert. You'd be crazy. Nobody gives away a sandwich for cash when they're starving. There's one thing necessary. And here's what we can do. This is a really simple exercise this morning. Are you neglecting the one thing that's necessary for a billion things that aren't? You can answer it. Don't answer it out loud. This is church; we are not a place for open honesty, all right? I mean, you can answer it sitting there, in your mind. Are you neglecting the one necessary thing for a laundry list of unnecessary things? Scroll through your day. Scroll through where you're time's going. Scroll through what's happening in your life. Think through how long it's been since you've communed with God. Are you exchanging the one necessary thing for a laundry list of things that are not necessary when all is said and done? And then if we could take it a step further and we could really engage ourselves here, not our wives, not our children, if we could engage ourselves here, we always have to ask ourselves: How is that working for us? Are we walking in the fullness of truth? Can we look at ourselves in the mirror and say "Okay, yes I am walking according to the word, finding fulfillment. I am walking in my destiny." Can we honestly look and answer those questions? And I'm not trying to make anybody feel guilty; my hope is that we would find some life. Are you? You'll have to answer it. I can't answer it for you. I can't answer: Are you neglecting the one needful thing for a thousand unnecessary things? Only you can answer it. And if you honestly answer, "I am absolutely neglecting the one needful thing," then here's the great news. There doesn't need to be any penance. You don't need to whip your back, you don't need to punish yourself, you don't have to make these massive, sweeping promises. You know, the "I'll never watch football again." I mean, that's great if the Holy Spirit's leading you that way, then go ahead. It sounds a little crazy to me. No, we just need to get back to His feet. We just need to get back there and ask for forgiveness. Did you hear how gentle Jesus is talking to Martha? He's not going, "Martha, you idiot. You've lost your mind. You're a psychopath. Get out of My face. You should be more like your sister. She's great." He doesn't say any of that. He just says, "Hey, you're troubled and your anxious about a great many things. Why? Mary's chosen the good portion. I'm not going to take that from her." There's just such gentility in the rebuke. So it is for us this morning, Jesus whispering our names, some of us twice.

"You're anxious and you're troubled about a great many things. Won't you come give those things to Me. You weren't designed to carry them to begin with. Won't you come bring them to Me, give them to Me? Sit and eat the good portion. Quit trading water for gold in the desert. Come. The one thing that's necessary.

Let's pray. "Father, we thank You for the rain. We thank You for the colder weather. There's something about pulling out sweaters and jackets that's just nice. Holy Spirit, I just ask You to stir Your people's hearts towards You. I just thing You sometimes scream from the heavens, 'Who asked you to do all of this?' Would You help us to slow down a little bit? Would You stir in us a renewed passion for quiet moments with You, moments in the word, moments to just sit and listen, quieter times to pray. I pray that You would help us and keep us from getting caught up in this storm. We love You. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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