

## **Busy: Tuning In - *Luke 10:38-42***

Norwalk Christian Church, March 24, 2019, Lent 3 - Non-Lectionary, WDS Series - Busy

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On our back porch we have an old radio. It came with the house. The kind you don't see around anymore, with the knobs. If you want a radio station, you turn the knobs and moves the green line across a bar of radio stations. No digital readout. No scan or seek button. You can't save stations. Just a knob.

You have to know the station number you're looking for. You have to tune it in, just right. Turning past the static. Finding that space in between other stations. Sometimes two stations are so close together, they overlap. You can hear each, cutting in and out. Sometimes you are at the edge of the station...you hear it, but barely. But turn it a little bit more—just a smidge—and you're tuned in.

It's surprising how hard it is to tune in.

There's a lot of static in life. A lot competing for our attention. Some of it is bad. Some of it is just distracting noise. Some of it is good, but it might not be what we need to listen to in the moment.

It's hard to pay attention, to turn the knob past all the distractions, and be present...in the moment. It's hard to tune in.

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Luke's Gospel tells us a story about two women who invite Jesus into their home. It's a meet and greet. We know what this is. It's already caucus season in Iowa, and all over people are hosting meet and greets for the candidate of their choice. In their homes, their business. Inviting their friends to come and hear from the candidate. Shake their hand. Ask them questions. Take a selfie.

That's what Martha and Mary are doing, hosting a meet and greet with Jesus. They're impressed with what they've seen and heard of Jesus. They want their friends to check him out. So they throw a party to expose others to Jesus.

"Come meet Jesus, hosted by Martha and Mary", that's what the invitation said. But that's not how things played out.

Martha was working her tail off. Dishes, food, refilling drinks. Answering the door. Showing people to the restroom. Making sure everyone could listen and hear from Jesus.

And Mary, Mary was no help. Mary was ignoring the dishes. She paid no mind to the people at the door. It's like she didn't even see all the empty glasses!

She was co-hosting this meet and greet, and there she was, acting like one of the guests. Sitting at Jesus' feet as if this party was thrown for her.

Martha is fuming. Can you blame her? She's carrying it all. Doing it all. She tried little passive aggressive looks to Mary, but Mary didn't notice. Finally, when she had enough, she storms out of the kitchen, interrupting Jesus' Q&A, to ask a question of her own:

"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?"

But Martha doesn't wait for Jesus' answer. Obviously he's going to take her side, because she's doing what you're supposed to do and Mary's shirking her responsibilities. "Tell her then to help me," Martha says.

But Jesus has an answer. And it's not what Martha expected: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

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That's the end of the gospel story, so what do we do with it? Is Jesus praising laziness? Is he justified in criticizing Martha, who is just trying to do a good job, trying to do what needed to be done.

Last spring, Marti and I went with our friend Sara down to Table Rock Lake for a few days. And we thought it would be a great idea to go kayaking. And it was...for a while. We went out for about an hour, and almost as if it was planned, when it was time to return the wind picked up. 15 mph wind blowing exactly from the place we were headed. It took us 3 hours to get home. We paddled and paddled. And the worst part was, if you were to stop and take a break, you started drifting backwards. A quick break would cost 10 minutes of paddling. And so we kept on and kept on, for 3 hours, slowing padding against the wind, swearing we'd never go kayaking again.

That's how life feels, sometimes. Like life is a non-stop struggle trying to move forward against the wind. We'd take a break, but if we did, we'd lose too much ground.

Sometimes you have to work hard. There are deadlines to meet. Responsibilities and obligations to tend to. Yeah, it'd be nice to quit it all, slough it off, just sit and listen. But if we did, we'd lose too much ground. There's no time for a break.

We're struggling this Lent with finding only 10 minutes a day for prayer. We're busy, and while we wish things would be different, they're not.

We wish we could be Mary, but if we weren't Martha, it would all fall a part.

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Boeing, the US's major airplane manufacturer, has been in the news lately. Two of its new 737 Max planes have crashed, and in similar ways. The world grounded the plane, suspecting there might be a design flaw, which has called attention to Boeing's design process.

The New York Times reported last week that Boeing was in a race with Airbus to land the largest-ever order from American Airlines. And Boeing entered the race late. They had 6 months to make up, so they expedited everything.

"The timeline was extremely compressed," an engineer who worked on the project said. "It was go, go, go."

"The pace of the work on the 737 Max was frenetic, according to current and former employees....

"Engineers were pushed to submit technical drawings and designs at roughly double the normal pace... Facing tight deadlines and strict budgets, managers quickly pulled workers from other departments when someone left the Max project. Although the project had been hectic, current and former employees said they had finished it feeling confident in the safety of the plane."

But now, the frenetic pace is being heavily questioned. Boeing was able to meet their deadline by keeping as much the same in the new 737s as the old one, preventing regulators from requiring time-consuming pilot training.

One of the new things regulators said didn't need new training was a new background software, which supposedly automatically corrected the nose of the plane from pointing up. Reportedly, they didn't even tell pilots about this feature. And now, this feature is believed to be the reason for these two crashes. A software error, a self-correcting feature, ended up pushing those two planes into an unrecoverable nose-dive.

Would they have missed this potential fatal flaw if they were not in such a rush?

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What do we miss in the midst of all the busyness? We may never know until it's too late. Marti and I have had the opportunity to be with a number of people in their final days and moments of their life. In those moments, all the distractions, all the static goes away, and that person is tuned into what matters most.

And every time, the station they play is always the same: they want to be around the people they love most. They want to hear their favorite song. If they can, eat their favorite food. Listen to stories of their favorite moments. Focus on their faith. In those final moments, they are tuned in with a clarity so rare in life.

Martha, God Bless her. We need Marthas. We need, at times, to be Martha. Things need done. Hospitality needs to be provided.

But we need Mary, too. We need to know when to be Martha, and when to be Mary. When to focus in the many things, and when to focus on the one thing that matters in that moment.

There's something so relaxing about sitting on our porch on a summer evening, turning that old radio dial, and tuning into a station. It takes work finding a station, so you don't feel the temptation to jump from station to station. You just settle in, tuning into whatever music is playing, to the birds chirping, to the sunset, to your life.

"Mary has chosen the better part," Jesus said, "which will not be taken from her." One day, it will all be taken from us, and what we have left will be the things that matter most.

May we have the wisdom to not miss our life, the wisdom to work when we need to work, and stop when we need to stop. To meet deadlines, but not at the cost of our lives and of the people and things that matter most. May we tune in, settle down, sit at Jesus' feet, and hear Jesus speak to us: you are enough. I love you.