

JULY 18, 2010

ATTENTION DEFICIT REORDER

LUKE 10:38-42

LET ME START OFF BY SAYING THAT THE SERMON TITLE IS IN NO WAY MAKING LIGHT OF ATTENTION-DEFICIT DISORDER OR ADHD AS IT IS SOMETIMES CALLED. THERE ARE A LEGITIMATE SET OF SYMPTOMS, MOSTLY FOUND IN CHILDREN, THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED. SYMPTOMS LIKE THE INABILITY TO FOCUS, INSOMNIA, QUICKLY BECOMING BORED WITH A TASK, PERHAPS, OFTEN MISPLACING NEEDED ITEMS OR DIFFICULTY FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS. THESE SYMPTOMS MAY LEAD TO ANGER AND DEPRESSION, BUT WITH MEDICATIONS AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES, THOSE WITH THESE AILMENTS CAN BE RELIEVED. IN SHOPRT, GET HELP IF SOMONE YOU KNOW HAS SUCH SYMPTOMS.

WHAT I AM ADDRESSING IS THE INABILITY OF THE POPULATION AT LARGE TO FOCUS THESE DAYS. WE ARE ALL STRESSED AND OVERWHELMED WITH THE INCESSANT INFLUX OF INFORMATION, MEDIA, ETC. WE ARE FORCED BY THE ASTRUCTURE OF COMPUTERS AND TV TO JUMP FROM ONE THING TO ANOHTER AND OUR EMOTIONS ARE OFTEN DRUG ALONG. MANY OF US ARE CLAIMING TO BE EXHAUSTED A LOT OF THE TIME. WE SAY WE ARE SO BUSY THAT WE HAVE LITTLE TIME TO DO THE THINGS WE WANY=T OR LIKE.

NOW WAIT A MINUTE! THINK ABOUT OUR RECENT FOREBEARS. SOME OF YOU REMEMBER THE PHYSIACL LABOR OUYR GRANDOPARENTS AND GREAT GRANDPARENTS HAD ENDURE HJUST FOR THE BASICS. I REMMEBR MY GRANDMA WASHING CLOTHES BY HAND IN THE BQATHTUB AND THEN HANGING THE WASH. I REMMEBR EACH DAY SUPPER STARTED FROM SCRATCH. I REMEMBER MY GRANDMA HAVING TO PLUCK THE CHICKEN, BUTHCHER THE CHISKEN, AND PREPARE AND COOK IT! AND THIS WAS NOT ON A FAMR, BUT IN A NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT. YES, IT WAS WEIRD TO ME AS WELL, WHEN I WAS A BOY.

THOSE PEOPLE TOILED FOR HOURS EVERYDAY. THEY WROKEWD HARD. EVERYTHING TOOK MORE TIME TO DO. YET, THEY HAD TIME TO GO TO CHURCH, HAVE FAMILY GATHERINGS, HAVE QULAITY TIME WITH THE CHILDREN, AND TAKE TH TIME TO READ TO US, TEACH US ABOUT JESUS, AND , THEY REALLY SEEMED HAPPIER WITH THEIR LIVES.

WE, ON THE OTHER HAND, SPEND A LOT OF OURSELVES IN QUALITY-LESS TIMES. DID YOU EVER ADD UP THE TIME SPENT IN FRONT OF THE TV, THE COMPUTER, THE SPORTS EVENTS, THE REPETITIVE COMMERCIALS? IT EXHAUSTS US AND THEN WE CLAIM, WE HAVE NO TIME TO DO QUALITY TIME THINGS. WE HAVE LOST CONTROL OF OUR TIME USAGE AND THIS HELPS US LOSE CONTROL OF OUR LIVES.

WE NEED AN ATTENTION DEFICIT REORDER. THAT IS, WE NEED TO RESTORE TO OURSELVES MORE TIME TO BE WITH GOD, MORE ACTUALLY SHARING TIME WITH OUR SPOUSES, CHILDREN, AND OTHERS CLOSE TO US, AND DOING PRODUCTIVE THINGS THAT MAKE US FEEL WE ARE HELPING OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR WORLD.

THIS APPEARED THIS SUMMER IN THE *AMERICAN SCHOLAR* MAGAZINE. "CHRISTIAN WIMAN AND HIS FRIENDS WERE TALKING AT A DINNER ABOUT HOW THEIR LIVES WERE RIDDLED WITH ANXIETY. IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO THEM UNTIL THE NEXT DAY THAT GOD WAS NEVER ONCE MENTIONED IN THEIR CONVERSATION. NO ONE AT THE PARTY WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT CHRISTIANITY AS THE ANSWER TO THEIR ANXIETY. 'CHRIST IS NOT AN ANSWER TO EXISTENCE BUT A MEANS OF EXISTING,' SAYS WIMAN. AND YET 'IT IS STRANGE HOW SOMETIMES MERELY TO TALK HONESTLY OF GOD, EVEN IF IT ONLY TO ARTICULATE OUR FEELINGS OF SEPARATION AND CONFUSION, CAN BRING PEACE TO OUR SPIRITS,' SAYS WIMAN. 'YOU CANNOT WORK ON THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR LIFE IF THE GROUND OF YOUR BEING IS UNSURE.'"

IN THE STORY OF MARTHA AND MARY, THE LESSON IS JUST THIS. THERE COMES A TIME IN LIFE WHEN WE NEED TO REFLECT ON GOD'S WORD IN ORDER TO REORDER, ADJUST, REDIRECT OUR LIVES.

THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN LAST WEEK AND THIS STORY FORM A PAIR IN LUKE. BOTH CONTAIN SHOCKING ELEMENTS, THAT IS, JESUS CHANGING THE RELIGIOUS RULES AS HE GOES TO HIS DESTINY IN JERUSALEM. THE MAN, THE LAWYER, IS TOLD THAT THE SAMARITAN HE DESPISED IS ACTUALLY THE COMPASSIONATE NEIGHBOR, THE TRUE GODLY PERSON. JESUS TELLS HIM "GO AND DO, LIKEWISE". YES GO AND DO.

IN THE SECOND STORY, MARTHA IS GOING STRONG AND DOING A LOT. BUT WHAT SHE NEEDS IN THAT TIME OF HER LIFE IS TO STOP FOR AWHILE AND TAKE TO SIT AT JESUS FEET AND LISTEN AND LEARN LIKE MARY. THE

SHOCK OF THE STORY IS THAT JESUS ALLOWED MARY 'TO SIT AT HIS FEET'. WHICH ACTUALLY MEANT TO BE IN TRAINING TO BECOME A RABBI. THIS WAS NOT A CAREER PATH FOR WOMEN IN THOSE DAYS. JESUS ALLOWED MARY TO BREAK DOWN THE STRICT GENDER ROLES OF THE TIME. NO IT WASN'T THE SAME THING AS A WOMAN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT AS IN OUR TIME, BUT IT WAS DECLARING THAT IN JESUS' KINGDOM, NO MATTER WHO YOU WERE, YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND LEADERSHIP ABILITY COUNTED.

TRADITION HAS USED THESE COUNTERPOINT STORIES TO TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE'S BALANCED LIFE. WE NEED TO LISTEN TO OUR INNER VOICE AND DISCERN WHEN WE NEED TO BE ACTIVE AND SERVING, AND WHEN WE NEED TO TAKE THE TIME TO SPEND WITH GOD IN PRAYER OR LISTENING TO JESUS WITHIN GOD'S WORD. ACTIVITY NOT GROUNDED IN OUR FAITH OFTEN SPINS US INTO , MEANINGLESSNESS. SPENDING TIME ONLY IN PRAYER AND PRAISE WITHOUT CARING FOR OUR NEEDS OR THOSE OF OTHERS, LEADS US TO A SELF-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY. WE NEED BOTH.

I SAY THIS BECAUSE JESUS WAS NOT ANGRY WITH MARTHA, NOR WOULD HE HAVE CRITICIZED HER. A FEW PASSAGES BEFORE, HE TOLD THE 70 DISCIPLES THIS. WHEN YOU ENTER A HOUSE AND YOU ARE SHOWN HOSPITALITY, STAY THERE A WHILE, AND SHARE THE GOOD NEWS, AND BLESS THAT HOUSE WITH PEACE. JESUS WAS NOT CRITICIZING MARTHA AND HE WOULD NOT HAVE EMBARRASSED HER BECAUSE SHE HAD PROVIDED FOR THE GUEST.

JESUS IS DISTURBED BY THE IMBALANCE IN MARTHA'S LIFE. SHE BELIEVES THE RIGHT THINGS. SHE IS DOING THE RIGHT THINGS. BUT IT IS NOT ROBING HER INNER PEACE OR THE ABILITY TO NOT BE FRUSTRATED. WAS SHE ANGRY AT HER SISTER? WAS SHE JEALOUS THAT HER SISTER HAD THE GUTS TO CROSS INTO THE MANDRIN AND TAKE HER PLACE AS A SPIRITUAL LEARNER? WHATEVER THE SOURCE OF HER FRUSTRATION, AT THAT MOMENT, JESUS FELT, SHE NEEDED TO STOP WHAT SHE WAS DOING AND TAKE HER PLACE IN CIRCLE OF LEARNING AND LOVE.

MARTHA NEEDED AN ATTENTION DEFICIT REORDER. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE DESPERATELY NEED TO FOCUS ON THE LORD IN ORDER TO CENTER OUR SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL LIVES. SOMETIMES, THE DISHES TIME FOR HOMEMADE, AS LONG AS WE TAKE THAT TIME TO FOCUS ON JESUS, SO WE CAN REORDER OUR DISORDER.

THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER. THE WORLD DOESN'T CARE HOW MUCH IT OVERBURDENS US WITH INFO AND PRODUCTS. IT IS A NEVER ENDING COMMERCIAL MACHINE WITH MILLIONS OF PEOPLE TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO GET OUR ATTENTION OR SELL US SOMETHING. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. WE ALL NEED TO MAKE A LIVING. BUT, WE NEED TO GET THE VOICE OF JESUS IN THERE SOMEWHERE. ALL THAT OTHER STUFF HAS SILENCED GOD'S INFLUENCE ON OUR INNER SOULS. WE ARE NOT BETTER OFF FOR IT.

TO SUMMARIZE, "YOU CANNOT WORK ON THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR LIFE IF THE GROUND OF YOUR BEING IS UNSURE." IF YOU CONSTANTLY "GO AND DO" WITHOUT REGARD FOR WHETHER IT IS GOOD FOR YOU AND THE WORLD AND GOD, OUR ACTIVITIES WILL SPIN INTO MEANINGLESSNESS. IF WE CONSTANTLY SIT IDLY, LEARNING AND GROWING SPIRITUALLY, BUT, IN THE END, DO NOTHING ACTIVELY GOOD FOR THE WORLD, WE ARE NOT FOLLOWING CHRIST.

LUKE WISELY PUT THESE STORIES TOGETHER. A BALANCED DISCIPLE WILL DISCERN WHEN TO PERFORM DIVINELY-INSPIRED WORK AND WHEN TO TAKE TIME TO "SIT AT JESUS FEET" TO LEARN AND GROW SPIRITUALLY. AMEN.