

The Little Big Things #1
The Wheelbarrow
June 2, 2024

Give everyone a box with sawdust inside.

Tell the Irish story: Shawn an industrious lad, works for a factory that makes elaborate jeweled boxes. One fine day, Shawn goes up to the guard's gate with a small box in a wheelbarrow.

Patrick the guard asks Shawn what's in the box. Nothing but sawdust. Not believing the lad Patrick opens up the box and sure enough there's only saw dust. "I guess you can go Shawn", but I've got my eye on you.

The next day Shawn rambles up to the guard's gate pushing a wheel barrow with a small box in it. A box he declares, is full of sawdust.

This went on for a month. Finally, Patrick stops Shawn and tells him this: "Look, Shawn me boy, I know you're stealing something. I just can't figure out what it is and it's driving me to drink...I'll tell you what Shawn...you tell me what you're stealing and I'll let you go...no arrests and you can keep what you stole...so my boy what are you stealing?"

Shawn looks at Paddy with an impish smile..."Wheelbarrows" and as he walks out the gate he shouts to Paddy; Paddy, it's the little big things that you need to pay attention to.

The Irish morale of the story is this...you are worried and anxious and focus on the little things, and you miss the big things.

It's the little big things that we must focus on.

This Irish idea is Scriptural. And it's something that we desperately need to be reminded of.

Let me show you...how to see the "little big things".

In that Irish parable, Paddy, became anxious and worried that Shawn had to be stealing something. His worry and anxiety got him focused on that little box. And that little box became so huge, so big, that he missed the little big thing...the wheelbarrow.

Anxiety and worry will ruin your ability to see the "little big things".

Jesus teaches in the final section of Matthew 6 about worry and anxiety. This is a series of structured statements combined to teach one theme. "Do not worry". Our Rabbi's teaching is very simple, almost childlike.

(Read Matthew 6:25-34)

Note here that in all of these verses, Jesus is focusing on unnecessary physical possessions that are stored for selfish reasons. These verses are aimed at the rich and the poor.

Being rich or poor have their specific spiritual problems.

The rich are tempted to trust in their possessions, and the poor are tempted to doubt God's provision.

So here's the weird twist to our nature. The rich are tempted to become self-satisfied and self-sufficient in the false security of their riches.

The poor on the other hand are tempted to worry and fear in the false insecurity of their poverty.

It is said that "whether men are wealthy or poor, or somewhere in between, their attitude toward material possessions is one of the most reliable marks of their spiritual condition." In these verses in Matthew, Jesus will give the command, "Do not be anxious" three times. Anxiety:

: a strong desire sometimes mixed with doubt, fear, or uneasiness: apprehensive uneasiness or nervousness usually over an impending or anticipated ill

As we try to draw near to God there are hindrances that seem to always be before us. Anxiety is a massive barrier.

For many of us our lives seem to be just a series of worries and anxiety, stalking us from one activity to the next. Unrelenting. Even now, they are there aren't they?

Question: What makes you anxious in our world today?

Tight finances, and debt. Rebellious children, last week's sin, last night's sin, guilt loneliness, shame, grief, depression, disease, a Government that has lost its way, and on and on and on.

And as we focus on them, they distract, and agitate, and overwhelm our lives.

They sneak into our hearts and steal away our peace, our strength and our joy. They will put a barrier between us and our God.

Turn with me to **Philippians 4:6-7** so that we can gain a basic understanding about what anxiety is.

(Read)

The word "anxious" in verse 6 comes from the Greek verb "merimnao" meaning "to be divided or distracted." In Latin, the same word is translated "anxius, but with the added meaning of choking or strangling. To put it bluntly in simple English, anxiety, is a painful

uneasiness due to an impending fear. **It is mental, emotional, and spiritual strangulation.**

The reason that Jesus condemns anxiety is clear.

First; anxiety highlights the human viewpoint and strangles out the divine viewpoint, so much so that we can become fearful and hopeless.

Second; anxiety, chokes our ability to distinguish the unimportant things from the essential, so we can become distracted as to what really is important.

Third; it twists so many worries around our hearts that we cannot relax, so we then become tired and unfruitful.

And fourth; it destroys our joy and makes us blind to the blessings around us.

Now with all of that in mind let's turn to **Luke 10:38-42.**

I want us to enter the home and the kitchen that is bustling with preparation. The ladies of the house is preparing a meal for a King. Jesus. And as Jesus reaches the front door, the first to greet Him is a woman called Martha, who is the owner of the house and the older of the two sisters.

(Read vs. 38)

In verse 39, Luke tells us about Mary.

(Read vs. 39)

We find Mary focused on the Lord. She has cleared her mind of all the distractions and has made room for the essentials; Jesus. But her sister Martha is found to be in a totally different mindset.

(vs 40a) "But Martha was distracted with all her preparations;"

The Greek verb for the word "**distracted**" means that "she allowed her attention to wander". And in all her preparations Martha is strangled.

At one point, Martha was trying to listen to Jesus, but found that she could not listen and think about the preparation of food at the same time!

The more she thought about the things that she had to do, her anxiety grew, and as her anxiety grew, the farther she moved from the presence of Christ. So much so that she finally ended up in her kitchen.

Somewhere in that kitchen, Martha lost sight of whom the meal was for. You see, Jesus had come to her house to see her and her family.

Maybe it wasn't so much about His need to have a meal as much as it was her need to prepare one.

You need to know that Martha is the dutiful sister.

Duty can also destroy joy. Whatever joy we may derive from our duties is related to a performance, not a person.

If our performance is the source of our joy, it will also be the source of our pride, which in the end will be our undoing.

Perhaps that is also drives so much of our own activity.

I want you to understand that the point isn't that activity and intimacy are mutually exclusive. The point is that our activity for Christ and others should grow out of our intimacy with them.

Back in the kitchen we find Martha's temper finally boils over and she stomps out of the kitchen, red faced and irate, notice that she doesn't even call Mary by name.

(Read vs. 40b)

Luke doesn't say it here but you can almost see Martha glaring at Mary the whole time that she's chewing out Jesus. She's has become a perfect example as to why anxiety strangles us.

She's become focused on herself, and has become confused as to what is incidental and what's essential. She has lost her joy, and has become angry and judgmental. She accuses Jesus, the Savior bound for the cross, of lacking concern and not caring about her.

Only Jesus speaks after her outburst. For only Jesus understands the problem. The problem is not the large crowd. The problem is not Mary's choice to sit and listen. And, for the benefit of anyone who is concerned, in the Greek the account does indicate that Mary had already been out in the kitchen and had done her part, had prepared a simple little meal that was perfectly adequate. The problem is not Martha's choice to host. The problem is Martha's heart, she is overwhelmed and filled with inner anxiety and agitation.

(Read vs. 41)

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things."

Her heart, Jesus said, was worried. And as a result, she turned from a happy servant into a beast of burden. What makes this whole account strange is that Martha is worried about doing something good. She's having Jesus over for dinner. She is literally serving God. Her aim was to please Jesus.

But she made a common, yet dangerous mistake. As she began to work for him, her work became more important than her Lord. What began, as a way to serve Jesus, slowly and subtly became a way to serve self.

I know exactly how Martha feels. You see I've been in Martha's kitchen. Better yet I've been in my office.

I know what it's like to set out to serve God and end up serving myself.

It's easy to forget who the servant is and who is to be served. The tool of distortion is one of Satan's best.

Notice that Satan didn't take Martha out of the kitchen; he distorted her purpose in the kitchen.

In looking at Martha's distraction, I actually found my own. I, too, can be drawn away from what is important, and I find myself convinced that doing things for Jesus was more important than "being" with Jesus. That mind-set makes me, as it made Martha, anxious and troubled about many things.

She went from joyously serving-to-serving self. And when your focus is on yourself, you do what Martha did...you become anxious...and surly.

The story of Martha parallels the story of the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son. The younger son, squandered his life in the distant country, while the older son squandered his life at home, serving his father not as a son but as a servant.

"All these years I've worked like a slave for you." Lk. 15:29

Sometimes our relationship to God is similar to that of the older brother. It is task oriented, based on obligations to attend, to give and to be involved in some program.

Religion will always exalt the institution and make the individual subservient to it.

When our devotion to God becomes task oriented, it will become a burdensome obligation.

Here is Jesus' remedy for refocusing on "the little big things".

In verse 42, Jesus puts Martha back in focus.

(Read vs. 42)

Notice how Jesus brings His point gently home.

"Fellowship with Him is a matter of priorities. And a matter of choice."

It's the better part of the meal life has to offer. It is in fact, the main course. Jesus states something extraordinary about what Mary did, and it would become a permanent part of her life; it would count for eternity. That's quite a promise.

And what did Mary do? All she did was prepare a little meal and sit. And it is where she sat that made the difference.

Later you will find Mary again at Jesus' feet...anointing them with costly perfume...preparing Him for His death with a tribute of tears...

Mary understood her choices....clatter around in the kitchen far from intimacy...or prepare a little charcutery board and come in and sit in the presence of a King...

Jesus said that "Only one thing was important. And Mary has chosen it." What had Mary chosen? She had chosen to sit at the feet of Christ.

If you look up Mary's name in a concordance, you will find that Martha's sister is mentioned only three times in the Bible. (Lk. 10:39, Jn. 11:32, Jn. 12:3). Each of those times she is found at the Saviors feet, which reveals something about her and about her relationship with Jesus as well. Her physical posture reflects the posture of her heart. You see to put yourself at another's feet is an act of humility...

Personal relationships are sustained by mutual revelation. The more intimate the relationship, the more intimate the revelation.

Our Rabbi is telling us, as well as Martha, that we need to simplify our lives, and focus on the one thing that matters. **Know this: He's not mad at Martha...He wants Martha to be there with Him...to hear her voice and her laughter...**

He is telling us that we can get distracted from Him even in the midst of serving Him. Like Martha we can take our eyes off of the One we are serving and onto all of our preparations, whether it's a meal or a sermon. We will lose sight of the "good part". We will miss "the little big thing".

Selah.