

FIVE FORKS BRETHERN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERIES: *On the Road With Jesus*

SCRIPTURE: *Luke 10:38-42, 11:1-13*

SERMON: *The Relationship*

DATE: *August 15th, 2021*

(Acknowledgement to Tim Keller for his series of Sermons on "The Meaning of Jesus.")

Our Scripture text for this morning is found in Luke's gospel, beginning with verse 38 in chapter 10. Just like last week, the first part of this passage is one that is very familiar, but we're looking to Jesus to teach us something we had not really thought about before.

Luke 10:38-42 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her."

Luke 11:1-4, 9-13 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

Our sermon series is called **On the Road with Jesus**, and two weeks ago that’s exactly what we did...we joined Jesus and His disciples on the road to Jerusalem where the Cross awaits. Luke provides us with an account of this journey, and the focus is on Jesus teaching...because all along the way Jesus is teaching His disciples **What it looks like to follow Him.**

It’s important that we listen to what Jesus has to say, not only because of the life that He offers, but also because others are watching us...our children and our friends and our community are watching to see if what we say we believe lines up with how we actually live.

So this series is about **Discipleship**...listening and learning and responding to Jesus’ teaching. So far Jesus has taught about **the cost of discipleship** so that every follower understands the daily commitment that it takes...and He’s also taught that those who follow Him will show **extravagant love** to others, and says this will be *the* way that others will recognize those who are truly His disciples.

This morning’s message is titled **The Relationship**, because **a disciple is one who is called into an extraordinary personal relationship with Jesus.** It’s this relationship, what it looks like, and how to get it, that Jesus will be teaching about this morning.

As usual, we’ll be looking at these 3 things:

What’s Happening

What We Don’t Want To Miss

The Next Step that Jesus is asking each of us to take in light of His teaching?

So let's get started by looking at...

1. WHAT'S HAPPENING

...here today's passage.

Every week we've been making sure we understand as best we can the time and the place that we're at while on the road to Jerusalem.

We know that we're in the third and final year of Jesus' public ministry. We know that He and His disciples have arrived at the home of Martha, and while this passage doesn't say where she lives, we know from other passages that she lives in a small village called **Bethany** which is just outside of Jerusalem.

As Luke describes this event, it's Martha that gets most of the ink...we're told what she's feeling, what she says to Jesus, and what Jesus says to her.

Then Luke gets us back on the road, taking us to what he describes as "**a certain place**" where Jesus is praying. *One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. (11:1)*

When His disciples asked Him to teach *them* how to pray, Jesus tells them, "**Say this**"...and beginning with the word "Father", Luke gives us is what might be described as a condensed version of what we call The Lord's Prayer. *He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father..."*

Jesus also taught them to pray boldly, and He said why:

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Finally, we see that Jesus turns to those who are fathers, and says “In spite of your nature, in spite of your sin, you still know how to give good gifts to your children”...before adding:

Luke 11:13b “...how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

So today’s Scripture text covers two different events in two different locations, but on both occasions Jesus has something He wants to teach us about this unique, personal relationship that He looks to have with those who are His disciples.

And so let’s take a few minutes and go back and look at...

2. WHAT WE DON’T WANT TO MISS

Let’s go back to Bethany, to Martha’s house. You know, a lot of teaching has been done addressing what is at the core of Martha’s heart, in fact, what lies at the core in all of our hearts...that in order to please Jesus we have to do something, we must take action, we must be active. And it lines up nicely for Martha, because there are “preparations” to be made and “work” to be done. Here’s her chance to serve Jesus.

But she’s on overload, and instead of finding joy with this opportunity to serve Jesus, she ends up worried and upset over what Jesus calls “many things.” And as I said, while Martha’s frustration and all that she is experiencing gets most of the ink here...what gets less ink are the...

A. Three Things that Mary Does

It’s Jesus who tells us what Mary does to get the whole thing started, saying...“**Mary has chosen what is better...**” (10:42b)

Mary made a choice...and what was that choice?

Martha reveals the second thing that Mary does...“**Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?” (10:40b)**

It appears that Mary was also actively involved in the preparations that needed to be made and the work that needed to be done. But there came a time when she chose to leave the work behind, because what lies at the core of Mary’s heart – what lies at the core of a disciple’s heart - is not activity, but relationship.

And so Luke reveals the third thing Mary does. She **sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what He said.** (10:39)

Mary made a choice to leave behind the activity, the work, and sit and listen to Jesus. And in the end, Jesus says “*This is better, This what I want...relationship more than activity.*”

Remember what I said a few minutes ago? **A disciple is one who is called into an extraordinary personal relationship with Jesus.** And an often overlooked aspect of this relationship involves *listening*.

When we pray, we want our words to be meaningful...words of praise, words of confession, words of intercession. But I wonder how many of us have really learned how to listen to Jesus?

For myself, personally, I’ve never in my life heard an audible voice. The Scriptures give examples of times when God spoke and His voice was audible, just like yours and mine. I’ve just never experienced that.

But I listen to Jesus, and believe that He speaks to me. It wasn’t always this way, the way I used to listen was simply to stop talking and just wait for something to come. Hearing nothing, I either start talking again or move on to something else.

But a while back I started bringing up specific things that were part of my life, a decision that needed to be made, something I might be struggling with...I would say something like

this to Jesus: “Knowing what I know about You, here’s why you might say this, or why you might say that.”

And what I would experience would be my heart opening up to Jesus and gaining some insight that I had never thought about before. Yes, there were times when you could say that I simply came up with this on my own, but there have been many times when the insight I gained seemed beyond something I would expect to come up with on my own.

I’m not talking insight that will change the world, I’m just talking about the common, ordinary things that we all deal with...relationships, decisions, insecurity, overconfidence.

When we take the time to listen to Jesus, I believe we can hear from Him, because of the personal aspect of the relationship we have with Him.

For Mary, she made **1) a choice to 2) leave the work behind and 3) sit at Jesus feet listening to what He had to say.**

It led to Jesus teaching Martha something very important, that He desires relationship over activity. It’s a lesson we want to hear and respond to as well.

Something else we don’t want to miss, and that would be...

B. Our Family Status

So right after we read about Mary and one aspect of the relationship that exists between Jesus and His disciples, Luke takes us into a passage on prayer. We look at Mary’s desire to sit and listen to Jesus and say, “I’d like to have that.” In the same way, the disciples look at Jesus and the relationship He has with His father, and they say, “I’d like to have that.”

So...**“Lord, teach us to pray... (11:1b)**

And Jesus says, *“You want a prayer life like I have?”*

“When you pray, say: ‘Father,..’ (11:2a)

That first word is a key word...in fact it's the main thing through the rest of our passage. Jesus starts here with the word “Father” and ends with an illustration of fathers knowing how to give good gifts to their children.

And by telling His disciples to begin their prayers by saying “Father”...he wants them to understand and embrace their family status. If *you* want a close, personal relationship, you have to settle in your mind your family status...that you are a child of God, and this is how He sees you.

Yes, we are His sheep and He is our Shepherd, and that's a nice image...but Jesus tells us we need to envision something even more personal than that...you are a child and He is your Father, and the basis of a father and child relationship - a mother and child relationship for that matter - is one of unconditional love.

In this world we have dog people and cat people. I love dogs, I tolerate cats. When Karen and I got married, I didn't just get her, her long haired white cat named KiKi also came along as part of the package.

Kiki and I got along fine for the most part...the thing was, Kiki had this knack, this ability to crawl up on my chest in the middle of the night and lie there without waking me. Now, eventually I would wake up, I'd open my eyes only to see this cat just inches away from my face, his eyes wide open, just staring at me. I always wondered, what's he been thinking? And those were the good nights, because there were those nights when I'd wake up and he'd be there on my chest facing the other way.

If you wonder how this cat became a part of my life, it was because years earlier, while Karen was still in school and living at home, she decided she wanted a cat. So she went to

her father, who didn't feel a cat was necessary, but she kept at it and kept at it, and finally got her way by resorting to that classic line, "But Daddy, remember, I'm your little girl."

You dads out there, you love your children, right. Moms out there, unconditional love for your children, right? It doesn't mean that our children get everything they ask for. What it does mean is that our love for them is without conditions.

We will love them regardless of whatever they do. They will please us at times, make us proud at times, frustrate us at times, break our hearts at times...and we will love them all the time, no matter what. That's the status our children have in our families.

You have to settle in your mind that this is the kind of family status that you have as a child of God. There are times when God is pleased with how you are trusting and obeying Him. There are times when He is grieved over choices you make. But either way, His love for you is that of a father who loves His child *unconditionally*.

In order to experience the personal relationship that Jesus has with His disciples, you have to settle your family status and know that you are a beloved child of God.

Last thing we don't want to miss...

C. The Gift the Father Gives

Okay, so after teaching His disciples how to begin their prayers and what else to say, Jesus really begins building us up. **"Ask and it will be given to you" (11:9b)** Jesus says.

John Newton, who lived back in the 1700's picked up on what Jesus is saying, and penned these words...

***“Thou art coming to a king,
Large petitions with thee bring,
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.”***

Pastor Tim Keller points out that this is what Jesus seems to be saying, come with your petitions, ask away, ask for the moon, ask for the stars, go all the way, ask for...the Holy Spirit.

Wait...what?

The Holy Spirit is *not* what a lot of people have in mind when we're told to pray boldly for whatever we want.

And yet Jesus, after talking again about fathers and how, in spite of their brokenness know how to give good gifts to their children...

Luke 11:13b “...how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

Some people get deceived by the prosperity gospel, and ask for wealth. We ask for a good job and for good health and we ask for God to protect and watch over our family and friends...but we don't think about praying for the Holy Spirit. Some of you might say, well, we already have Him. And others in here have no idea at all what I'm talking about.

God the Father, we don't see Him, but we envision Him and picture His role. Jesus, the Son, we don't see Him, but we have an image in our mind when we picture Him, and we are aware of His role.

God, the Spirit? No image. And a lot of people unsure of the Spirit's exact role. You should know that the Holy Spirit plays a key role in bringing about this close, personal relationship with Jesus that we've been talking about this morning.

Hours before Jesus was arrested and crucified, He told His disciples that He would be going away, which troubled them, but Jesus explained that it was for the best because His departure would lead to the arrival of the **Holy Spirit**, that is, **God's personal presence**.

And this is good news on several levels, because while Jesus is fully God He was also fully man and could only be at one place at a time. But the Holy Spirit can be Jesus' personal presence at any place and at any time.

Here in this room, right here, right now, Jesus' presence is with us through God's Spirit. And yet at the very same time, Jesus' presence is with everybody who's watching out there online. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, if you are a disciple of Jesus, His presence is always with you, through the Holy Spirit.

In short, when God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit, it is all we could ever ask for, because the Spirit makes Jesus real to us. We find ourselves in the midst of a close and personal relationship with the One who created all things, died in our place, rose on the third day, and is with us every moment of every day.

This is definitely one thing in today's passage that we don't want to miss.

Okay, let's each of us think about how Jesus might be looking for us to apply some of what He has taught us here this morning. In other words, what is...

3. THE NEXT STEP

..that Jesus is asking you to take?

I always want to start by letting anyone in here or out there know, that if you've never taken **the initial step of following Jesus**, I hope you would feel comfortable reaching out to me and giving us a chance to talk about any questions you have, any reservations, anything you're not sure about.

I just want you to recognize that Jesus invitation to you is the same as it was to His first disciples: “Come, follow me”. As we saw two weeks ago, He would want you to first count the cost of discipleship, but He would also want you to know that cost – which is letting go of your way of doing life and embracing His way of doing life. What happens is that you just become better at life.

The next step for some of you may be **learning to listen to Jesus**. You pray, but perhaps you do most of the talking, and have never really given Jesus an opportunity to speak...or maybe He’s been speaking and you haven’t learned to recognize His voice.

The times I have heard Him clearest is when I take my early morning prayer walk. For me, I like getting together with Jesus early, I like getting with Him outside. But I know that what works for one person may not work for another. And so maybe in the morning is not the best time for you. And maybe outside taking a walk is not the best place for you.

Find your time and place...early, late, inside, outside...all I know is that whenever it is or wherever it is, you may need to – like Mary did – leave behind something that you were involved in, in order to have time to listen for Jesus.

When I made the choice that I was going to do a better job of listening to Jesus, I left behind about 20 minutes of sleep that I normally would have gotten. It’s been an excellent trade.

And some of you have that a similar choice in front of you...you can remain busy with “many things”, including things related to Jesus. Or you can leave some of those things behind in order to enter into the personal relationship that Jesus desires with His disciples.

Lay whatever is on your mind before Him, and begin talking to Him about what you think He would say...then don’t be surprised if He sends you some insight, something you had never considered... but something totally consistent with who He is and what He’s about.

Then go do it, put it into practice, and you'll see that He can be trusted, and that He is for you...and it will only strengthen the relationship that already exists between you and Jesus.

The next step for some of you is to **settle your family status**. One of my favorite verses in all of Scripture is found in Zephaniah 3:17 where it talks about how God rejoices over us with singing. *He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. Zephaniah 3:17*

But some of us have a hard time accepting this. Have you ever had one of those days when you get with God and your heart is a bit heavy because you're not happy about something you did or something you said or something you thought, and if *you're* not happy about it, you figure *He's* not happy about it.

When you're having one of those days, you need to remember your family status. Rather than envisioning God standing over you with arms crossed, looking cross, envision Him rejoicing over you with singing, with affection.

As hard as it was for me to accept, I have come to see that whether it is on one of my best days or one of my worst, that God is rejoicing over me, because I am His child, and He couldn't love me any less than what He does, and He couldn't possibly love me any more than what He does, or He would do so.

Finally, the next step for every disciple should be to **be aware of God's Gift to you**...His personal presence which we experience through the Holy Spirit.

This week the Holy Spirit will help you recall some of what Jesus has taught you here this morning. And so this week ask the Holy Spirit to help you listen well and recognize the voice of Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to assure you of your family status and the fact that God rejoices over you with singing. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to experience a personal relationship with Jesus that grows deeper and more meaningful over time...the type of relationship that He desires with all of His disciples, and I hope that you are one of them.

Okay, we've been on the road 3 weeks now...next week we'll gather together again and get back on the road, that road to Jerusalem...and continue to listen to Jesus as He teaches us what it looks like to follow Him.

PRAYER