

AMOS 8:9-12 AND Luke 10:38-42

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BINOCULARS OFFER A GOOD EXAMPLE OF BEING IN OR OUT OF FOCUS- ADJUSTING THEM FOR YOUR OWN EYE SIGHT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEEING CLEARLY OR NOT.

EYE GLASSES DO SOMETHING SIMILAR FOR MANY PEOPLE. HOWEVER- EVEN BEING IN FOCUS IS OF LITTLE USE WHEN WE ARE LOOKING AT THE WRONG THING.

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I ASKED WHAT THEY SAW. THE BLACK DOT IS WHAT CATCHES OUR ATTENTION MOST CLEARLY. BUT THE DOT IS NOT ALL THERE IS, THE PAPER UPON WHICH THE DOT IS FOUND IS JUST AS IMPORTANT.

LOOKING AT THE OLD TESTAMENT READING WE FIND A TIME WHEN THE LARGE MAJORITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE LIVING IN THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL WERE NOT FOCUSED ON GOD.

IT IS TRUE THAT THEY ENGAGED IN A LOT OF RELIGIOUS MOTIONS, BUT SINCE THEIR HEARTS WERE NOT FOCUSED ON GOD THEIR OBSERVANCES HAD LITTLE POINT.

AND SO, THE LORD CALLED **AMOS**, WHO LIVED IN THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH, TO LEAVE HIS HOME TO BE A PROPHET TO THE NORTH.

HOWEVER, THE RECEPTION HE RECEIVED, AFTER A SERIES OF DIRE WARNINGS FROM GOD THAT THE PEOPLE NEEDED TO REPENT, WAS NOT A VERY GOOD ONE.

IN CHAPTER **SEVEN**, THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES AND THE KING TELL AMOS TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY AND RETURN TO HIS OWN.

AMOS RESPONDS THAT HE'D LOVE TO RETURN HOME AND MIND HIS OWN BUSINESS, HOWEVER GOD SENT HIM TO THEM.

THEN IN CHAPTER **EIGHT**, AMOS GIVES HIS WORST MESSAGE TO DATE, HE TELLS THE AUTHORITIES AND THE WEALTHY MERCHANTS AND FARMERS- GOD HAS HAD ENOUGH.

YOU SEE, THOSE IN POWER HAD FAILED TO BE KIND OR LOVING TO THEIR FELLOW JEWS WHO WERE POOR, BUT INSTEAD TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THEM.

THEY ALSO HAD LITTLE USE FOR THE HARVEST FESTIVALS OR THE SABBATH, SEEING THEM ONLY AS TIMES THEY COULD NOT DO BUSINESS AND MAKE MONEY.

CONSEQUENTLY EVEN WHEN THEY ENGAGED IN RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AND SERVICES THEY WERE NEVER REALLY FOCUSED ON GOD.

SO THE LORD SENT A MESSAGE THROUGH AMOS THAT THE DAY WAS COMING WHEN THE SONGS THEY SANG WOULD TURN TO LAMENTATIONS, AND GOD WOULD ABANDON HIS PEOPLE TO THEIR SIN.

IN SHORT- SINCE THE PEOPLE CHOSE TO IGNORE GOD'S WORD IN THE TORAH, AS WELL AS THROUGH HIS PROPHET, GOD WOULD LEAVE THEM TO THEIR OWN DEVICES.

INDEED HIS JUDGMENT WOULD FLOOD THEM LIKE THE **NILE** RIVER FLOODS THE LAND-AND THE SILENCE OF THE LORD WOULD BECOME DEAFENING.

SADLY, INJUSTICE, CORRUPTION, AND HYPOCRISY HAD TAKEN THE PLACE OF LOVE FOR GOD AND NEIGHBOR, AND SO GOD HAD DECIDED TO PUNISH HIS PEOPLE.

HERE, WE ARE SHOWN HOW FALSE PRIDE AND RELIGIOUS PRETENSE, COUPLED WITH A DESIRE FOR WORLDLY RICHES RATHER THAN A RICH RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, RESULTED IN THE DOWNFALL OF THAT KINGDOM.

THE FAILURE TO BE FOCUSED ON GOD WHICH RESULTED IN THEM BEING ABANDONED BY THE LORD AND GIVEN INTO THE HANDS OF ENEMIES, IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF UNREPENTANT SIN.

THE NEW TESTAMENT READING HAS A SIMILAR THEME, BUT WITH A BETTER OUT COME.

YOU SEE, IT COULD BE SAID THAT MARTHA'S PROBLEM WAS SHE WAS ONLY FOCUSED ON THE DOT- THAT IS THE MEAL.

CONSEQUENTLY, SHE FORGOT TO ENJOY THE ONE FOR WHOM THE MEAL WAS BEING PREPARED.

MARTHA'S PROBLEM WAS NOT SO MUCH HER CHOICE TO PREPARE AND SERVE A WONDERFUL MEAL FOR JESUS, AS IT WAS THE FACT SHE WAS DISTRESSED AND DISTRACTED.

THOSE EMOTIONS WERE WAS A SIGN SHE WAS NOT ENJOYING HER SERVICE.

THUS HER ATTITUDE, WHEN PREPARING THE MEAL FOR JESUS, WAS NOT ONE OF JOY OR FULFILLMENT BUT ANGER AND DISTRESS.

THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE SHE FUSSED AND FUMED OVER THE MEAL AND HER LACK OF HELP, INSTEAD OF FINDING JOY IN WELCOMING JESUS INTO HER HOME.

TRULY HER PREOCCUPATION OF DOING FOR JESUS PULLED HER AWAY FROM BEING WITH HIM AND LEARNING FROM HIM.

THE KING JAMES BIBLE DESCRIBES HER IN THIS WAY- "MARTHA WAS CUMBERED ABOUT MUCH SERVING...."

THE GREEK WORD TRANSLATED AS CUMBERED OR DISTRACTED LITERALLY MEANS-TO BE PULLED AWAY.

ANYONE WHO HAS EVER BEEN CAUGHT, EVEN BRIEFLY IN A RIP TIDE CURRENT IN THE OCEAN, KNOWS HOW FRUITLESS IT IS TO CONTINUE TO SWIM FORWARD.

MOST TIMES, THE CURRENT PULLS EVEN A STRONG SWIMMER AWAY FROM THE SHORE FASTER THAN HE OR SHE CAN SWIM TO SAFETY.

THE WAY OUT, OF COURSE IS TO SWIM ALONG SIDE THE CURRENT UNTIL YOU ARE PAST IT.

SIMILARLY THE WAY FOR CHRISTIANS WHO ARE CUMBERED OR DISTRACTED WITH MUCH DOING FOR JESUS IS-TO WALK BESIDE HIM.

IN OTHER WORDS THEY NEED TO SIMPLY SPEND TIME BEING WITH HIM FOR AWHILE, UNTIL THEY CAN MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT BEING PULLED AWAY AGAIN.

THE LAYMAN'S COMMENTARY PUTS IT THIS WAY: "SERVICE IN THE NAME OF LOVE MAY DEGENERATE INTO MERE HUMAN ACTIVITY, EMPTY OF ETERNAL VALUE IF-IT IS DIVORCED FROM CONSTANT COMMUNION WITH THE ONE WHO IS THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD."

AND MARTHA, WE SHOULD NOTE, EMBODIED THIS VERY PROBLEM IN THE EXTREME.

WHILE MARY SAT AT JESUS' FEET TO **LEARN** FROM HIM WHAT SHE SHOULD DO, LIKE A DISCIPLE SHOULD-

MARTHA CAME AND STOOD OVER THE SITTING SAVIOR, AND **TOLD** HIM WHAT SHE THOUGHT HE SHOULD DO.

TRULY MARTHA HAD A GOOD HEART, SHE WANTED TO SERVE JESUS AS WAS BEFITTING A HOSTESS AND A WOMAN OF THAT TIME.

HOWEVER SHE WAS OUT OF FOCUS AND THUS UNBALANCED IN THE WORK SHE WAS DOING FOR JESUS.

BUT MARY, WHILE SEEMING TO BE A SLACKER FOR SITTING AROUND INSTEAD OF DOING, WAS REALLY WORKING AT LEARNING FROM THE LORD.

HERE IS HOW SOMEONE ELSE UNDERSTANDS THE MESSAGE JESUS WAS CONVEYING WHEN HE GENTLY SCOLDED MARTHA.

"JESUS IS TEACHING US, THROUGH MARTHA, THAT OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY MUST BE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

IF ANYTHING DETRACTS US FROM THAT RELATIONSHIP, THE ACTIVITY THAT WE ARE DOING IS NOT FROM GOD."

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, SUCH ACTIVITY IS EITHER NOT DIRECTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

OR NOT BEARING AS WELL AS IT COULD THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

THINK ABOUT MARTHA- SHE CERTAINLY WAS BEARING AND SHARING THE FRUIT OF LOVE, AND GOODNESS, AND FAITHFULNESS, BY HER ACTIVITIES.

HOWEVER SHE WAS LACKING TO MAKE USE OF THE EQUALLY NECESSARY FRUIT OF- JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GENTLENESS, AND SELF CONTROL.

IF THOSE FRUIT HAD ALSO BEEN RIPE WITHIN HER, SURELY MARTHA WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANGRY AT MARY OR JESUS.

BUT INDEED SHE WAS, AND THAT WAS AN INDICATION, IN THAT PARTICULAR MOMENT IN TIME, MARY, AND NOT MARTHA HAD CHOSEN THE BETTER WAY.

HERE IS ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION THAT MAY HELP US SEE MARTHA'S PROBLEM.

WHEN A FAMOUS BOSTON PREACHER NAMED A.J. GORDON ATTENDED THE CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR IN 1933, HE SAW WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS AN AMAZING MAN.

HE FIRST SAW THIS MAN, DRESSED IN ORIENTAL CLOTHING, FROM A DISTANCE AND WAS IMPRESSED BY HIS STRENGTH.

HE WAS IMPRESSED BECAUSE IT APPEARED THAT THE MAN WAS PUMPING VAST AMOUNTS OF WATER USING A HAND CRANK.

BUT THEN WHEN GORDON DREW CLOSER HE REALIZED THE MAN WAS WOODEN RATHER THAN FLESH AND BLOOD.

HE ALSO SAW THAT RATHER THAN THE MAN PUMPING THE WATER, IT WAS THE WATER THAT WAS MOVING THE MAN.

THIS IS LIKE WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO MARTHA, SHE WAS BEING CONTROLLED BY HER BUSYNESS.

WE WOULD BE MISTAKEN HOWEVER IF WE SURMISED THAT MARY, AND NOT MARTHA, IS THE PROPER MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP.

IN TRUTH LEARNING FROM GOD, ALONG WITH WORK ARE EACH PARTS OF THE WHOLE.

AFTER ALL JESUS DID NOT SAY MARTHA WAS WRONG TO PREPARE A MEAL TO HONOR HIM, BUT THAT HER DISTRESS WAS A SIGN SHE WAS BEING PULLED AWAY FROM HIM.

THUS WHEN MARTHA ACCUSED JESUS OF NOT CARING, HIS RESPONSE SUGGESTED THAT HE CARED A GREAT DEAL- AND WANTED HER BE AT PEACE.

TO BETTER SEE THIS, IT WOULD HELP TO LOOK AT THE OPENING VERSES OF THE TENTH CHAPTER OF LUKE.

THEY TELL ABOUT JESUS SENDING FORTH SEVENTY DISCIPLES TO TEACH AND PREACH AND HEAL.

THEY RETURN IN GREAT EXCITEMENT AND JOY OVER THEIR SUCCESS- ESPECIALLY THAT THE DEMONS SUBMITTED TO THEIR AUTHORITY AND WERE CAST OUT BY THEM.

JESUS HOWEVER TELLS THEM THEY SHOULD REJOICE INSTEAD THAT THEIR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.

THUS HE REFOCUSES THEIR PRIORITIES AWAY FROM WHAT THEY DO TO WHAT GOD DOES CONCERNING THEIR SALVATION.

OF COURSE DOING FOR GOD IS IMPORTANT. IT IS ONE WAY WE RESPOND TO WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR US.

THIS IS TAUGHT IN LUKE TEN IN THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

IN IT, CHRISTIANS ARE REMINDED THAT JESUS IS THE TRUE GOOD SAMARITAN WHO WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO SAVE US.

IN RESPONSE TO HIS LOVE WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE, AND TOLD BY HIM TO: "GO AND **DO** LIKEWISE".

IN OTHER WORDS DISCIPLESHIP MEANS SERVICE THAT SHARES THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN PRACTICAL WAYS, BY HELPING OTHERS.

BUT TODAY'S READING CONCLUDES THE CHAPTER WITH A REMINDER THAT WE NEED TO STAY CONNECTED TO THE LORD IN ORDER TO DO HIS WORK.

THUS THE ENTIRE CHAPTER REMINDS US ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF WHERE TO FOCUS.

OF COURSE THE WHERE, IS ALSO CONNECTED TO THE WHEN, IN THE SENSE THAT THERE IS A TIME TO FOCUS MORE ON BEING WITH JESUS AND A TIME TO FOCUS MORE ON DOING FOR HIM.

ECCLESIASTES 3:1 SAYS IT THIS WAY- "FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON, AND A TIME FOR EVERY MATTER UNDER HEAVEN."

YES, WORKING FOR CHRIST IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD, ARE THE WAYS WE DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR GOD AND FOR OTHERS.

BUT ABOUT THIS-IT COULD ALSO BE SAID OUR SERVICE IS WITHOUT DIRECTION WHEN WE FAIL TO SPEND TIME AT JESUS' FEET.

AND YET IF ALL WE DO IS SIT AND LEARN OUR EFFORTS ARE WITHOUT PURPOSE.

TRULY, THERE ARE TIMES IN OUR LIVES THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH THERE IS THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE-SPENDING TIME WITH JESUS MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER OUR OTHER DEMANDS.

DOING SO IS NEEDED THAT WE MAY BE REFRESHED, INSPIRED, AND DIRECTED IN OUR DOING.

AND THIS PRINCIPLE APPLIES AS MUCH TO OUR ORDINARY LIVING AS IT DOES TO OUR CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

AFTER ALL BOTH ARE PART OF WHO WE ARE AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WHO LIVE IN THE WORLD, EVEN THROUGH WE ARE NOT TRULY A PART OF THE WORLD.

FOR SOME OF US IT IS EASIER TO DO ONE, THAN IT IS TO DO THE OTHER.

BUT GOD NEEDS BOTH THE ATTENTION OF MARY AND THE EFFORTS OF MARTHA.

THERE IS A BALANCE OF BOTH NEEDED IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, SINCE WORSHIP AND WORK, SABBATH AND SERVICE ARE CREATED BY GOD TO PRODUCE A BEAUTIFUL HARMONY.

LET US PRAY:

LORD WE ASK YOU WILL DIRECT AND BLESS BOTH OUR BEING WITH JESUS, AND DOING FOR JESUS.

MAKE THE MUSIC OF OUR LIVES- OUR WORLDLY TASKS AND SACRED SERVICE, OUR RELAXATION, AND CHRISTIAN REFLECTION HARMONIZE WITH EACH OTHER.

KEEP OUR FOCUS, WE PRAY ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN YOUR EYES SO THAT WE MAY BE BLESSED AND BE A BLESSING, AND YOU WILL BE GLORIFIED. AMEN

Luke 10:38-42 -SUMMARY

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