

Good morning, friends... My name is John Emery, I'm the worship pastor here, as well as one of the teaching pastors. This summer we're looking at 10 different moments where Jesus was face-to-face with people, just like you and me, and created for them a "Moment of Truth." A moment where the conversation narrows and requires some sort of decision or action... **A fork in the road. A fulcrum in their life;** where everything from that point forward looks entirely different.

Have you ever had a 'moment of truth'? A conversation or situation in your past that's sort of seared into your memory... Where you had a decision to make; one that would shape your future?

- Maybe it was deciding to go to the **smaller college that had more opportunity for you**, vs. the large university that all your friends were going to.
- Maybe it was a moment when **you decided to end an unhealthy relationship**. You had two directions you could go, and you chose the more difficult one, but the right choice.
- Maybe it was a moment where you **finally came clean about something you'd been hiding?** Shining a light on something you'd been keeping in the dark?
- Maybe it was a moment where **a NEW truth came racing into your life...** Something you had never considered before... And you were forced, even if it was gently, to pause for a moment and wonder... *"Will this change everything? Has my life been pointing in the wrong direction all along?"* **An 'A-HA!' moment.**

These are the moments that Jesus orchestrates for us in these 10 biblical accounts... These are moments that we can (and SHOULD) learn from. Jesus was a master teacher... He understood the ego and the baggage and the motives of everyone around Him. He was the complete manifestation of GRACE & TRUTH. (*John 1:17 says that the Law came through Moses, but that **grace and truth** came through Jesus.*) And He wasn't a 50/50 balance of grace and truth, like sometimes you'd get grace and then equally other times you'd get truth. **(that's how WE do things)** There are two ways to balance grace and truth. Either 50/50 meeting in the middle, balanced like a scale. **OR** you can have 100% of both of them, stacked on top of each other. That will still balance the scale, **but it's fully encompassing both**. Here it is in other words...

Jesus understood how to have **high INVITATION / high CHALLENGE** relationships. He would be available, inviting people in, opening His life to them, anything and everything they wanted from Him, they could have. These disciples had relatively uninterrupted access to Jesus for **36 months** straight. That's high INVITATION. *"My life is yours."* Walk with me, sleep next to me on the ground, eat with me, weep with me, travel, learn... Everything. Wide open.

But the closer people got to Jesus, the more of a voice He had to speak into their lives and CHALLENGE them. The closer the disciples got, the more relational capital Jesus had in their lives. The more weight He had to point out their blind spots and challenge them to grow. That's grace and truth. It's *"Come as you are; but don't stay that way."* It's unconditional love and unapologetic coaching. **And it's exactly what we, as humans, NEED to flourish.**

I was told by an early mentor of mine that *"We must earn the right to share the Gospel with someone."* That's exactly this. We build relationship, we get close to people, and then (and only then) can we **encourage** and **correct** and **cheerlead** and **champion** them. (And don't hear me wrong in this: I'm not suggesting we view people as projects... I'm just saying that a balance of INVITATION and CHALLENGE is essential, and that's what we see here in Jesus.)

So we're here in Luke 10 today, and we're looking at a very short story, only covering 5 verses in the Bible. 5 short verses out of the 31,000 verses in the Bible. **(That's all the leadership here trusts me with.)** We've got 5 verses today... Let's see what we can learn together.

At the Home of Martha and Mary – Luke 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 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!"

41 “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one.[a] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

What I want to talk about today, and the ONLY phrase I care about you remembering is this:

- “We are human **beings**, we are not human **doings**.”
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Sometimes I feel like summer is this slippery, elusive thing... We spend ALL YEAR waiting for it, and then when it comes, what do we do? **WE FILL IT TO THE BRIM WITH ACTIVITIES.** Kids are home from school. All of our friends are filling our calendars FOR US with parties and weekend trips and days at the beach. And don't get me wrong, these things are GOOD... I love, love, love how we've spent our summer so far. But if we're not careful, and here we are **half-way** through our summer, we'll fill our summers with **DOING** and spend no time actually **BEING**.

STORY: Last Friday, I was at my daughter's swim class in Westford and this massive, VERY muscular African man walked in. He was taller than me, probably weighed twice what I do, and his entire body looked like an upside-down triangle. His shoulders and chest were monstrous. (**Trust me, this was not a normal guy that was just in good shape. This was like Mr. Universe level body-building where his veins were as big as my arms.**)

So he walks in, very gentle demeanor, with two sweet little girls, probably age 2 and 4, we all walk in together, drop our kids off in the pool with their instructors and sit down outside the pool. And of course, we sit down next to each other. (I just have to reiterate how IMPOSSIBLE it was to ignore this guy.) And my mind is racing all over the place.

WHO IS THIS GUY?

Why is he so monstrous?

Where did he come from?

What does he do for a living?

How quickly could he snap me in half?

SO... I broke the ice somehow. I don't even remember. I think I said something like, “So... You're enormous. Will you be my friend?” He had a thick accent and I asked him where he was from. He said he came over from Uganda 15 years ago. We talked some more, just small talk, you know.. About **ALL THE THINGS WE HAVE IN COMMON.**

But my primary question lingering through it all was, “What do you DO? What do you DO for a living? What do you DO to get this muscular?” So I asked. And of course, he said, “I'm a competitive body-builder. That's how I came over from Uganda. I was #2 in the country there and came to the US to compete, and I've been here since, coaching and competing.” **It was the least surprising answer I could imagine.** “Of course he's a body-builder!” And I was disappointed. I was hoping he'd say, “I'm actually a super-hero, and these muscles help me lift cars and carry children out of burning buildings.”

When we meet someone new, WHY IS OUR FIRST QUESTION ALWAYS, “What do you **DO**?”

- Is it because we REALLY want to know what they do for work? Because, if we're honest, most times that's an incredibly BORING answer.
- Is it because we're wanting to size people up? To see if they're smarter or richer or more powerful than us?
- Or is it because we actually want to KNOW people, but our gut-instinct is to stay shallow?

I think when we ask people **WHAT THEY DO**, we're actually wanting to know **WHO THEY ARE**. Instead of saying, “What do you do?” We're really wanting to say, “What do you think about when you're laying in bed at night?” But because that's not socially acceptable, and it would seriously freak people out, we focus on the **DOING** part of our identity.

We were designed by God to CRAVE CONNECTION. That's what social media IS. That's it. **It's a casino for our connection cravings.** We're constantly looking for fellow-travelers that we can identify with, commiserate with, learn alongside... But in all our searching, we live on the surface. **That's why social media is so popular.** We're can CURATE what others can see. We manage other people's perceptions. So, 9 times out of 10, we post photos and status updates about WHAT WE'RE DOING, vs. WHO WE ARE. We post a photo saying, "At the beach with friends!" but we leave out the part where we spent the entire time comparing ourselves to other people's beach bodies and we went home feeling like crap about ourselves. BEING is too vulnerable. It's too dangerous. We share our DOING.

In America today, we are OBSESSED with the **doing** part of our identity. In fact, for most people that never break out of this. It's a sort of spiritual infancy, where our **doing** IS our entire identity. We are **doctors** or **teachers** or **pastors** or **salesmen** or **engineers** or **managers**. **We are defined by our DOING.** Our current political candidates, very big focus on WHAT THEY'VE DONE IN THE PAST for achievements, not a whole lot of focus on **HOW** THEY DID IT... who they climbed over or lied to or whatever.

THINK ABOUT IT: When you become a doctor, your NAME changes. All of a sudden there's an MD at the end of it. The way you sign your name changes, "*John Hamilton Emery, MD.*" (**Yes, that's my middle name, and no, I'm not a doctor**). Yes, it helps IDENTIFY you.. but only a very small part of you. The part of you that has been trained to understand and administer healthcare. The part of you that sat through a dozen years of medical school and residencies.

- But what about the part of you that loves **fishing**?
- Or the part of you that wants to travel the world?
- What about the part of you that LOVES children?
- Or the feeling you get from a powerful time of worship with your church family?

Where is the suffix for your doctorate in JOY?!! I think we should start signing our names with suffixes that actually speak to who we are. Like "*Elyse Emery, KD (kind) PT (patient), JY (joyful)*".

We're going to dive deep for a minute... Is that ok? I've referenced some of this in the past but I've done a lot of learning over the past few years from Desert Fathers & Mothers, early Christians that secluded themselves in the Egyptian desert around 200 AD. These were early monks. They practiced contemplative prayer, non-dual thinking, memorizing scripture, stillness... They were massively influential in modern-day Christianity and I bet many of us have never even heard of them. Something that has been birthed out of them is this understanding that each of us have two selves within us. The EGO and the SOUL.

THE EGO & THE SOUL:

Ego gets a bad rap in spiritual circles. And sometimes that's very helpful for people. Sometimes it's necessary to tear the ego down... When it's getting in the way. When it's way too big. But **ego** is essentially this part of yourself that gets things done today. It's the part of you that wakes up in the morning and says, "*I'm going to put clothes on, I'm going to get in my car, and pick the dry-cleaning today, then I'm going to go to work and MAKE MONEY! And I'll come home and start writing a song, or meet a friend for coffee.*"

Ego is **drive, motivation**, even our **personalities**. If you go to a party, your ego is involved. Ego is the MD at the end of our name if we're a doctor. It's the "pastor" part of me being Pastor John. It's identifying, but it's not comprehensive.

Because here's the problem: The ego doesn't know what's important.

The ego doesn't know what's valuable.

The ego doesn't know what it should do in the GRAND scheme of things...

It just wants to DO things.

The problem is that most of us ONLY hang out in that world. So we think, “*Ok, I need to DO something, I need to be doing something and it needs to be the RIGHT thing to do!*” So we need to have this job or THIS job, or this relationship or THIS relationship or live in this town or THIS town...” **because the ego doesn’t know what’s ultimately important...** but the SOUL knows.

The soul is the part of us that we were given by God before we were born. Richard Rohr calls it our “immortal diamond.” **It’s our true self.** It’s the part of us that is formed in God’s image. It’s the part of us that we can’t explain simply with words. And yet, we can sense when our soul is coming alive, when we have a “gut instinct” or something wakes up inside of us and we say, “*No, I’m not doing that.*” or “*YES! Yes.. this is what I’m supposed to do right now.*” We can’t explain it. We just know. It’s part of Jeff that said, “It’s time for a new adventure.” It’s the part of us that loves and creates and dreams, and I think it’s the part of us that God most easily communicates with. But it’s very bad at “DOING.” **It’s the lover. It’s the creator. It’s the dreamer. But it’s a terrible “do-er.”**

THIS IS WHY THE EGO AND SOUL MUST FALL IN LOVE. Because our soul can begin drawing towards something or unearthing a magnificent idea... But the soul can’t get it done. The soul falls in love with the ego because the ego CAN get it done. The ego says, “*Hey, don’t worry about it guys! We’re a DOCTOR!!! We’re good. We can hustle, we can learn, and we can make this happen.*” And the soul is enraptured by it. The ego, for the first time, is doing something that is God-Honoring because it’s taking its’ direction from the soul, instead of running on its own desperate search for identity, meaning, approval.

THE HEAD AND THE HEART UNIFIED: The ego and the soul must fall in love and work together. Otherwise, we have all this resonance and truth but no way to enact any of it, or we have all this action and busyness, worry, stress, anxiety, climbing, achieving, but not in the service of anything greater. You’re in the corner-office making a ton of money but you’re bored of your mind and completely unfulfilled.

Why am I talking about all of this? Because this is exactly what we see in Mary & Martha.

39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

And I’m massively over-simplifying these complex women, but **Mary is SOUL, Martha is EGO.** Mary is a human **BEING**, Martha is a human **DOING**. Mary has decided to sit and listen and soak in everything Jesus says. Martha is concerned (very deeply concerned) about the dinner that she’s preparing. Martha is worried about her PRESENTATION, all Mary cares about is PRESENCE.

Martha is letting her **EGO** drive, Mary is only listening to her **SOUL**.

Now, a lot of biblical scholars beat up on Martha for being such a busy-body and missing this opportunity with Jesus, but let’s be honest. If we had someone of significant social standing... Insert whatever celebrity you’d like: **Paul McCartney, Kim Kardashian, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Joey Chestnut, world-record hotdog eating champion...** You’d be thinking the entire time, “*Ok, I have someone famous in my house, sitting on my couch, there are tumble-weeds of dog fur over there, there’s no food prepared, I should probably offer them a drink... Oh my gosh!*” **Overwhelming to think about.**

When we open our home to someone, or more importantly: When we think about our relationship with Jesus... Are we trying to give Him our **PRESENCE**, or are we focused on giving Him **PRESENTS**? **Are we spending actual time with Him**, allowing Him to speak and encourage and breathe life into us, or **are we more interested in racing around trying to impress Him** by giving Him gifts; doing things for Him.

HOSEA 6:6

*I want you to show love,
not offer sacrifices.*

*I want you to know me
more than I want burnt offerings.*

God wants our **PRESENCE**, not our **PRESENTS**. Mary was giving that, Martha was not.

Here's another thing we overlook on Martha's behalf:

Martha is the one that actually invites Jesus in. She's the one that initiates things. So after she invites him, she jumps into the kitchen to make sure it's an enjoyable stay for Jesus... **To make sure she's a gracious host.** You can identify with, now, how she probably feels when she's in the kitchen running around and her little sister is sitting with the guest, soaking up the experience. Martha's intentions were pure; she was being generous; she was opening her home; she was serving the Lord.

But she let out the leash on her EGO a bit... And it began to spin out of control. As she was preparing dinner, instead of thinking about the Guest she was hosting, she began thinking about herself. Her EXTERNAL BEHAVIOR appeared to be servanthood, but when she spoke, her INTERNAL thought-life was revealed. She was **DOING** the right thing, while **BEING** in the wrong mindset. We've all done it. As soon as we start doing the dishes, we become hyper-aware that **everyone else in the house is NOT doing the dishes.** And for Martha, instead of keeping it internal and addressing it later with Mary one-on-one, she lets it boil over. In a very self-righteous tone, with the hopes of embarrassing Mary in front of Jesus, she says:

"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Listen to that... "Lord, **don't you care?**" Probably one of the most preposterous questions that anyone ever asked Jesus in Scripture. "Don't you care?" It's ridiculous. I bet, as Martha was saying all of this, she was like, *"WHAAAAT am I even talking about?!"*

I'm a verbal processor. Sometimes I say things that I don't mean... Or that I **DO** mean, but that I'd like to **craft and couch** in a softer way, so I totally identify with Martha here. Thought-life boils a bit and then you open your mouth, thinking *"Ok, I'll very politely ask Mary to help me in the kitchen."* and it comes out like *"Jesus, DO YOU EVEN CARE ABOUT ME?!"*

Jesus responds with a gentle correction. A reality-check. A soft but stern word from God directly to Martha's soul.

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed..."

"You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed..." I wonder how many of us needed to hear that this morning. **"You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed..."**

FEW THINGS ARE NEEDED: How much of our days are spent wishing, hoping, striving for some intangible "future-based" thing? Some dream number in your retirement account, or a zip-code you long to live in, or your boss's office that you daydream about being yours someday?

How many of our prayers, if we're COMPLETELY honest, are completely selfish? My wife and I own a small creative agency for startup companies and I find myself praying for our clients all the time... Typically, *"Lord, bring more of them."* I have to keep that in check. I feel like God, more days than not, is wanting to say, **"John, you are worried and upset about many thing, but FEW THINGS ARE NEEDED."**

Jesus goes on:

42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Few things are needed... Indeed, only one. And Mary has chosen what is better: **PRESENCE.** Sitting with the Son. This gift, this portion, this *"better choice won't be taken from her."* **Jesus is protecting Mary from feeling pressured to stand up and start working.**

The story ends there. End of chapter. We must assume that Martha responded well, seeing that they all remained friends.

- Maybe Martha took off her apron sat down next to Mary.
- Maybe she let the lamb burn in the oven.
- Maybe when dinner came it was "all hands on deck" in the kitchen and they enjoyed making a meal together.

Martha had her priorities out of check. But Jesus corrected her. And, most likely, she received it well and changed her attitude.

There's this great quote from Miles Davis that says, *"It's not the note you play that's the wrong note – it's the note you play afterwards that makes it right or wrong."* If you're playing in the key of A and you play an A#, it could sound wrong, but if you correct it with the following notes, it makes sense. It's jazz. I love that picture of **adjustment on the fly**. Play a wrong note? Oops, let's make it make sense. **That's how we should be living our lives. Make a mistake?** Adjust on the fly. Have your next few notes be the right ones.

Here's my final point: Depending on how you're wired, you're either going to identify more closely with Martha or with Mary. And that's ok. But I want to remind us that we ALL have capacity for both of these postures. **Sometimes we're so wrapped up in activity that we lose all possibility of PRESENCE... And sometimes we're so lost in dream-land that we forget to get anything done.** We are fully integrated human BEINGS of both body and spirit, EGO & SOUL. And we function best when they both acknowledge each other, fall in love, and work together for the Kingdom of God.

How differently would our lives play out if we stopped letting our EGOs steer the ship?

How beautiful would this community be if we allowed our SOULS to breathe and dream and find connection with Jesus again?

Jesus doesn't want your **presents**, He wants your **presence**.

For the rest of this summer, or maybe even this week, or maybe just TODAY... Let's focus on PRESENCE... **Sitting** with the Lord. **Hearing** from Jesus. And not letting ourselves get *"worried and upset about many things, because few things are needed... Indeed only one."*

Let's pray...