

Christ at the Crossroads: Priorities

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[0:00] This morning I would like to look at Luke chapter 10, a passage from Luke chapter 10.

! We'll also look at Luke 9 a little bit, but Christ at the crossroads. How do we set our priorities?! Today as Americans, most of us feel like we have limitless possibilities. With a click or two, we and our families can fill our lives and schedules with fantastic experiences. With a click or two, we have access to education and information on topics and events we never knew existed and we can't wait to find somebody to share it with, right? Until our eyes glaze over. With a click or two, we can fill our houses, our garages, our closets, our pantries with delightful things from around the globe. What an incredible time to be alive. But we cannot do it all. We cannot learn it all. And even though you may have a plastic card, we cannot buy it all. So how do we decide? How do we discern what is good, better, best? What will make our priority list? After coffee, what is the rest of your top 10 on your priority list for this week? As a teen, I had the privilege of God bringing a youth pastor into my life who helped me take significant steps of growth as a follower of Jesus. A tool I was introduced to was a priority list. The priorities and their order have changed over the years. Obviously, God and Jesus topped the list. First thing in the morning, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, reading the word, meditating on it, praying. But then missionaries would come. And they would come to speak and stress, you really need to get up at five in the morning to spend an hour or more. And oh, as a young person, the guilt, the feelings of failure that would flood my mind. Lord, I love you. I want to grow in you.

I wanted to make it my aim to please you. But I struggle to prove it. By spending 60 to 90 minutes every morning, Lord, there must be a better approach. And Jesus shows us that. And I believe in this passage. Come to the end of chapter 10. In Luke chapter 10, he shows us this in his interaction with Martha and Mary. Now, as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary who sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary, and Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken from her.

[3:43] Before you harass all the Marthas in your life, yes, in this passage, Martha seems to earn a bad name. But Martha has a glorious reputation in Scripture. Before we dive into this, let's just glance at the context. In Luke chapter 9, Jesus sends the 12 out two by two to proclaim the kingdom of God.

As simply, take nothing with you, just go simply and proclaim the kingdom of God. He feeds 5,000 men, women, and children. 5,000 with just loaves and fishes. He foretells his approaching death, that death is coming. God allows, God the Father allows him to reveal his glory to Peter, James, and John. And then he announces his approaching death again. Then he gives the priority of humility, that the least of you will be the greatest. And the priority of counting the cost to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Then he has 72 willing to go. In chapter 10, verses 1 and 2, after this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two into every town and place where he was about himself about to go. And he said to them, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. If you were here in the first hour, you saw on those graphics, the harvest is plentiful, and the laborers are few. Pastor S., who is the host pastor of our main teaching site, has an alarm set on his phone for 10.02 every day. And at 10.02, the alarm goes off to remind him to pray Luke 10.2.

Lord, please raise up laborers to go into the harvest. I don't know if that would impact your service time, but if you want to set an alarm right now for 10.02, just to remind you to pray that God, please

raise up laborers. And may that be me. Pastor S. spent a week this spring in an isolated community of 80,000 practicing this, going in simply, not knowing anybody, and seeking people that might respond to the gospel. He did it also in a community of 160,000 of no-known believers, and seeking to proclaim the good news, and saw four come to faith. The message of the gospel that he gives to the disciples here is very simple. Heal the sick in it, and say to them, the kingdom of God has come near you. Jesus sends the 72 out into towns, two by two, living simply, and announcing that God is initiating his rule on earth, beginning in the hearts of men and women, and also announcing that he can bring healing, and he can bring wholeness to our broken lives.

[7:01] In these contexts, a life that is transformed by coming to faith in Jesus Christ becomes visibly different. And it is so exciting to see the healing that has begun in their lives as they submit to Jesus Christ. But we must receive this. As John would later record, believe in Jesus, trust him, receive him, trust him that Jesus is who God says he is, that Jesus accomplished what God said he did by raising him from the dead. And at that moment, you are made alive, you are born of God, you are a child of God. Jesus tells them as he's sending them out, the one who hears you, hears me. The one who rejects you, rejects me. And the one who rejects me, rejects him who sent me. The 72 returned with joy saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. When you are involved in sharing the good news, it's not about you. If they reject you, don't take it personally. They're rejecting him.

They're rejecting the good news of the living God and what he has done through Jesus Christ. But you want to encourage them to receive it. Because at that moment, nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Hmm. The moment you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, that he died in your place for your sins, and that you believe and trust that God raised him from the dead to say that is sufficient.

At that moment, your names are written in heaven. And Luke would later record, there is joy before the angels of heaven of God over one sinner who repents. You could make heaven shout today. You could make the angels of heaven shout today by simply coming to trusting faith in Jesus Christ. Do you take joy in that? Priority, rejoice in whose you are rather than what you can do for him.

[9:30] Rejoice in whose you are rather than what you can do for him. Could you imagine the disciples, especially the 12, they'd already been arguing over who had been least or who had been greatest, and now they come back. Could you imagine them comparing stories? Well, wow, you should have seen this.

You should have seen, well, I just said this. Wow, this happened. And they were trying to maybe even outdo each other of whose story was bigger. And Jesus said, okay, enough. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the Spirit is subject to you. Take your joy that your names are written in heaven, in the Lamb's book of the living forever.

Lord willing, Lord willing, they will graduate from our program. And in teams, they will move into these communities and begin house churches. Jesus continues in verse 23.

Then turning to his disciples, he said privately, blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it. Jesus gives them the priority. Rejoice in the blessings of seeing and hearing God's promised rescue through the Messiah, his son. We get to see and hear what Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Isaiah, they just hoped to see it. They didn't see it. We get to see it. And some of us have 15, 20 copies of it in our house in all different languages. We have apps on our phone. We can access it anytime.

But do we? And when we access it, do we take it in as informational, academic information? Or do we take it in as life-giving word from heaven above that we are blessed of God to see and to hear his active rescue through Jesus? Jesus continues on with a story. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said, Jesus said, what is written in the law? How do you read it? The lawyer answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

[12:32] Religious people around the world cry out the same question. What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

What shall I do to be right with God? Just please tell me what to do, and I will try to do it. But Jesus has this man say those priorities. Love God completely, and love your neighbors as yourself. Jesus first illustrates the priority of loving your neighbor as yourself. A Jewish man was beat and left for

dead. The priest and the temple worker, they had other priorities, schedule, religious purity, safety. Whatever it was, they just kept walking.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where this man was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, and pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal, and brought him to an end, and took care of him. And the next day, he took out two denarii, and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, take care of him, and whatever more you need or spend, I will repay you when I come back. A Samaritan set aside his other priorities to show love, compassion, mercy to a Jew who likely would not have done the same for him. To love your neighbor as himself.

Who is your neighbor? Who is your co-worker? Your friend? Your contact? Your schoolmate? Your acquaintance?

That needs a touch of Jesus' love? My daughter had modeled this so well for us. She uses horses to help young ladies begin to talk and to heal. She looks for those that others would shun.

[14 : 35] But on the field, we see it through Pastor Z. Pastor Z and his family had to move out of their apartments three times in 18 months, whenever the landlords found out that he was a pastor.

Last fall, God gave them a place of their own, and their priority is to use their home to be able to serve believers, but also to extend Jesus' love to their neighbors who currently despise them. Every time he leaves the building, someone yells from the window, infidel! And that's where he lives, but he seeks to gently, kindly love them. In January, we were able to re-begin teaching in his city, and this is where Pastor Andrew will join me, Lord willing, in September. And what a group. The young couples have left the comforts of city life in a second world population to serve a desperate region.

They are daily setting the priority of loving women and children that others would despise and have neglected. If we're going to use a priority list, we see that God might want to have us reorder it. Love God completely. Rejoice in whose you are more than what you can do for him. Rejoice in seeing and hearing God's rescue through his son. Humility. Genuine humility.

[16 : 15] Love your neighbor from the heart. Count the cost. It can get expensive to your reputation, to you personally, to proclaim the good news. Count the cost and trust him. And then proclaim the good news. You have somewhat limitless opportunities. Are these on your priority list?

Do they make it? But since missionaries are good at making you feel guilty, I want to introduce you to a tool that has helped me more than lists.

During our internship, I was introduced to a more helpful approach. Think of priorities and responsibilities of life as a circle.

With seeking God and his rule, his kingdom, his righteousness as the center. That God desires to have expanding influence on every area of our lives.

God wants us to come to him to sit at his feet, to sit at the feet of Jesus for wisdom and insights for every area of our life. This is so much more than 15 minutes, 60 minutes in the morning.

[17 : 57] This is every moment throughout your day. God, what would you have me to do? God, in this moment, I want to react in this way. How would you please rule over and guard and guide my reactions?

But in this opportunity to invest our time and resources and our interest in so many different things, a book that is extremely helpful in evaluating what we hold as the essential center is Tim Keller's book, Counterfeit Gods.

He writes, The human heart is an idol factory. What is an idol? It's anything more important to you than God.

Anything that absorbs your heart and your imagination more than God. Anything you seek to give you what only God can give.

Idols are not usually bad things. But good things turned into ultimate things. Things that constitute our most fundamental significance and security.

[19 : 12] And so they function as gods in our lives. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passions and energy, your emotional and financial resources on it without even a second thought.

It can be a family. It can be family and children or career and making money or achievement and critical acclaim. Maybe even saving face and your social standing.

It can be a romantic relationship. It can be peer approval. It can be competence and skill.

Maybe secure and comfortable circumstances. It can be your beauty for some of you. Maybe for some of you it's your brains.

Maybe it's a great political cause or a social cause. Your morality or your virtue and even for some of us success in Christian ministry can begin to have an idol effect in our hearts and minds.

[20:24] It's whatever you look at and think if I had that then I feel my life has meaning. Then I'll know I have value.

Then I'll feel significant significant and secure. What brings your life meaning? What makes you feel significant?

Makes you feel secure? What is at the center of your circle? Or what segments of your circle are out of balance?

What segments of your circle are out of touch to God? Hey that's okay you get my Sunday morning. Okay I'll give you a little bit more but you can't have that.

What segments of your life do you say God don't touch that one? Matthew 6 therefore do not be anxious saying what shall we eat?

[21:24] What shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things and your heavenly Father he knows that you need them all but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

This verse is in the middle of Jesus' longest recorded sermon the Sermon on the Mount sometimes referred to as the Constitution of God's kingdom. If we are going to be good citizens of his kingdom we must allow him to rule from the center of our lives.

What does he value? What is most important to him? How can I please him? Let's come back to our passage at the end of Luke 10. Now as Jesus and his disciples went on their way Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

So before we go on Martha is commendable okay? She invited them into her home. Middle Eastern hospitality is such that when you welcome Jesus and his 12 smelly friends into her home she was then going to provide them the comforts to be able to cleanse themselves to be comfortable but also to do whatever they needed to be fed to be cared for.

Even today if you were invited into somebody's home and they said would you like to come in for tea? it's not just a cup they fill the table and then they continue and here in America when we set an appointment for coffee 45 minutes an hour yeah I'm busy I gotta go I mean that's just about as long as we can tolerate people right?

[23:17] Not so not so much in the Middle Eastern world when they invite you for a cup of coffee it's gonna be a day it's gonna be an experience and so here Martha she didn't invite them in for an hour she invited them into her home until they needed to go so Martha is should be commended she would have fed them sought to feed them the best that she had but she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening in Luke chapter 8 we are introduced Luke does a great job in the Gospels but also through the book of Acts of seeing how Christ and his people elevated the standing of women in Luke 8 women were following Jesus they were participating they were learning they were sharing resources so here also

Mary countercultural women did not sit at the feet of a rabbi they didn't even sit anywhere near the rabbi they waited until the man in their life told them what to believe and to think Mary sat at his feet in a personal intimate way sitting at his feet learning seeking to take all that she could to take in and to listen from him but Martha was distracted with much serving she went up to him and said Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone tell her then to help me is serving a bad thing no serving is commanded it's commended we must serve but here Martha has misordered priorities with misordered priorities we become distracted with much serving we become busy busy busy but we haven't spent time sitting and learning at

Jesus feet with misordered priorities we begin to question the character of God do you not care I'm serving in Iwana all alone do you not care and when we begin to question the character of God it affects our relationship with God with misordered priorities we begin telling Jesus how he should meet our priorities tell her then to help me could you imagine what the disciples must have been thinking Martha chill I mean just a few days ago he took bread and fish and fed 5000 plus don't you think he could take care of us can you imagine Peter James and John they had seen the revealed glory of Jesus you think they might have been just shaking a little bit Martha do you know who you're talking to how often we forget who we're talking to when we have misordered priorities telling him our plan and expecting him to carry it out but the

Lord answered her Martha Martha you were anxious and troubled about many things with misordered priorities we can easily become anxious we can be troubled about many things and I wonder if Jesus was thinking Martha Martha in just a few weeks you're going to have something to really be anxious and troubled about your brother Lazarus is going to get sick and die when we have misordered priorities little things become ultimate things and we deny ourselves from the resources that God wants to invest in our lives in a daily personal way but one thing is necessary one thing is crucial and

Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken from her yes we should set time to regularly sit at Jesus feet in his word reflecting on it and many followers of Jesus have found mornings helpful to be able to have something to meditate on all day but we should have a continuous posture of humility we should desire his presence his word to rule every moment every facet of our life Mary was a living illustration of David's cry one thing I have I asked of the Lord that I will seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord to inquire in his temple is that the one thing that is on your mind is that the one thing that you wake up and about

[29:01] Lord I want to see you I want to know that you're here I want to be working at your work I want to dwell with you Lord please show me what you would have for me today or Isaiah's proclamation all these things my hand has made so all these things came to be declares the Lord but this is the one to whom I will look who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word Mary was God's priority type of person she was humble she was contrite she wanted to know more do you have that thirst that longing to not just know about his word but to know him in and through his word and to be motivated out of a proper reverence and fear for him

Mary may have even heard Jesus say just a few weeks earlier come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden!

is light! As a young person we sometimes we're cautious about trusting God because he might send us to Africa if I trust God and commit to following his will and his kingdom what might he do? Yeah what might he do? His yoke is easy his burden is light are you Martha this morning?

Are you anxious? Are you troubled? Are you distracted even with good things with much serving? Come regularly to the feet of Jesus lay your burdens at his feet and take up what he values learn from him find rest for your weary soul and allow him to impact every facet every moment every decision of your life obviously touched the wrong slide there you go so it's recorded in acts of the disciples and there is salvation in no other there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved now when they saw the boldness of Peter and

[31:56] John and perceived that they were uneducated common men they were astonished and they recognized that they had been with Jesus only by receiving Jesus trusting his perfect sacrifice can we be saved and made right with God and to be able to come alongside these believers in cultures where when you are right with God and you know it and the joy explodes through all of your life it's visibly different do the lost around you know can they tell that you have been with Jesus can they have tell you have been sitting at his feet can they tell that you were filled with joy to have him ruling at the center of your life do you rejoice that you are a child of God right with God and that you have access to see his purposes and plans recorded throughout history and even into the future in 2021

I was in Kyiv and the Ukrainian pastor he scheduled an Uber for us it was going to be an hour and a half ride through stop and go traffic and we hopped in the Uber and there was a young Iranian Persian driver and we were the pastor and I were speaking English to each other he was the pastor was speaking Russian to the Iranian driver and eventually the driver said you know can I speak English with you because I'm better at English than Russian sure and I was seated here and I could see in the rearview mirror I could see his eyes and his eyes were just exploding joy I was like do you know Jesus and in stop and go traffic he reaches over into the glove box and he pulls out a New Testament and he says oh yes and I hand these out every chance I get in a Farsi Persian New Testament so much so that now the Iranian embassy has blacklisted me and if

I ever go back to Iran I will be arrested but he had just such extreme joy and I said you know I was here in 2003 and one of our students one of Byron's students was Persian and he hoped to begin Persian churches here in Kiev I don't know if you know him his name is Ali Ali he's my spiritual father 20 years later and the joy of of Ali had spread to Hamed and now joy Hamed has the joy he's

now in Germany with his wife and not sure Germany wants to send him back to Iran but his life has been marked by the joy of knowing that he is a child of God and that he spends time at his feet in his word learning from him so much so he's willing!

to risk his life to distribute the good news He's counted the cost to hand out the good news wherever whenever if you don't know Jesus there are many here that would love to take the time to explain to you clearly how you could know for certain that your sins are forgiven and you could be right with God through simple trusting faith that he died in your place and that God raised him from the dead come talk to me pastor Andrew pastor David many others that you could know for certain the joy and you could make angels sing and rejoice in heaven but you could also know the joy of sitting innocently at his feet that he wants to be the Lord of every moment of your life and with him he could make our moments meaningful and eternal and eternally glorious to him dearly father I thank you so much for this church family thank you for their commitment to you and to each other thank you for their commitment to spreading the good news in Columbus and around the world Lord please bless them Lord help each of us sit quietly at your feet that you may speak into our lives in all the busyness and all the things that call for our attention our affections may you firmly have the throne of our heart may we allow you access to every moment to every facet in Jesus name we pray amen