

Episode 5: Sitting, serving, scheming

The disciples are traveling to Bethany when Joanna sends them a package of valuable items they can sell to support Jesus' ministry. Along the way, Roman soldiers stop them and, under Roman law, require the disciples to carry the soldiers' belongings for one mile. Read the following verse and circle the numbers stated in this verse.

- **Matthew 5:41 (ESV)** - *And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.*

Carrying the Roman soldiers' gear was humiliating for the disciples. The soldiers not only forced them to carry their belongings, but also mocked them and made inappropriate jokes. The disciples were frustrated about having to carry the gear for one mile, but when the mile was over, Jesus kept walking. He showed them that they would carry the Romans' belongings not just one mile, but two.

How did you feel about this scene? What did you notice about the demeanor of the Roman soldiers?

The Romans are surprised by the disciples' willingness to keep walking and stop mocking them. As they continue toward the second mile marker, the disciples and Romans help one another along the way. We may not be asked to carry someone's belongings for a mile, but we do encounter difficult people we are called to help. Sometimes that person may be at work, and helping them is part of our responsibility. Other times, we are not required to help, and it can be tempting to choose not to. Jesus is not simply telling us to do what is required; he is calling us to show kindness, grace, and patience beyond what is expected.

Write the name of a difficult person you interact with: _____

Are you required to help this person? Circle your answer: Yes or No

Are you willing to do more for that person because Jesus calls you to? Circle your answer: Yes or No

What can you do to go the extra mile for that person? _____

Ask God to help you with the answers you noted. Write a short prayer asking for guidance, patience and kindness as you go the extra mile.

The disciples finally reach Bethany after all of that walking, including the extra miles they journeyed. Mary comes joyfully running to meet them! Let's read scripture about the disciples' visit with Mary and Martha. In the passage below circle where Mary was and underline what Mary was doing.

- **Luke 10:38-39 (ESV)** - ³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

Now circle what Martha was distracted with in the following verse.

- **Luke 10:40 (ESV)** - 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."

Was serving the disciples a bad thing? No, hospitality is good and serving is something that Jesus calls us to do. But she was distracted. Her focus was not on Jesus; her focus was on busyness. How many times per day do you find yourself distracted? How many times do you find yourself so busy, you put off God? If we are honest with ourselves, it is probably every single day, multiple times per day. Reflect below on your answers to these questions above.

Circle the two words that described Martha in the verse below.

- **Luke 10:41 (ESV)** - ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Do you struggle with feeling anxious, troubled, or worried about many things? When we are anxious or worried, our attention shifts away from Jesus and keeps us from being fully present. Write what you are anxious or worried about below.

In the book of 1 Peter, we are told not to worry or be anxious. **1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)** – Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Give your worries and your anxiety to God. Use the space below to write a prayer to God, releasing your cares to him. Then really do it! Trust in the Lord and give him your worries so you can be present in every situation.

As Jesus is in Mary and Martha's house, he tells the disciples a parable about the workers in the vineyard. Underline each hour of the day that is mentioned. Circle the amount of money he paid each person.

- **Matthew 20:1-16 (ESV)** - ¹ "For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for this vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' ⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' ⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each one of them also received a denarius..... ¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?' ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last."

This passage can be difficult to understand, especially if you have ever worked hard for an entire day. But no matter when each worker began laboring for the master, they all received the same reward. What reason did the owner give for paying everyone the same amount? Does this seem fair to you?

Luckily, for us sinners, God's grace isn't fair. It is so unfair, that it saves us from having to worry about how we don't measure up, how we haven't put in enough "work" to earn our salvation. We can't earn our salvation because nothing that we do will ever be good enough. That is why we need God's grace. It is not fair that Jesus had to die on the cross for us, but he did it. It is not fair that we have sinned and God forgives us, but he does. His grace, mercy and forgiveness is given to everyone when they believe, no matter when they choose to believe. They could choose to believe at the beginning of their life or at the end, they are still saved through God's grace. Reflect on God's grace that he has given to you. Thank him that he doesn't apply fairness to our salvation, he gives grace, mercy and forgiveness freely.