

# BELPRES CHURCH

## **Sermon: The Time of Our Lives**

Dr. Scott Dudley

*Disclaimer: This transcript was computer generated and may contain errors.*

---

So Jesus, that is our prayer and thank you that in this time that is so hard for so many of us. God, we know that you do not waste it. We know that you are making something new. Lord you are bringing new wine out of us. Lord this is unfamiliar territory for all of us. But God we trust you. You are the God who wastes nothing. You are the God who takes everything bad and pulls good out of it. You are the God who restores and redoes and repairs and redeems. You are the God who brings new wine. So God thank you for that and we give you this time now as we turn to your word and ask that you help us understand more, how you are making new wine out of us. We pray this in your name Jesus, amen.

Well, bell press, thank you for joining us. Thank you for letting us be a part of your Sunday. Thank you for worshipping with us. I also want to say just on a personal note, thank you to so many of you who have sent cards and texts and emails expressing your sympathy at the death of my mom. Thank you so much. My family and I, we feel so loved and just one of a long list of reasons why it's awesome to be part of this church. This week I was talking to a guy who said that he and his wife were working on a project and their four year old daughter asked them something and they said, "Just wait a second and we'll get it for you." As daughter then turned and said, "Alexa, set a timer for one second." So she kind of had a pretty literal view of time and that's what we're going to talk about today.

Time. We're doing a sermon series called new normal, how God can use this COVID crisis to bring us to a new normal, make us better people, make us a better church, help us live a better way. And part of that might mean handling our time differently. So let me ask you this question. Back in old normal, how many of you had seasons or even your whole life just felt super busy? When someone said, "How you doing?" Your answer was always busy, busy with work or school, raising kids, volunteering, sports, music, retired people. Some of you retired people are the busiest people I know. And right now some of you are busier than you've ever been trying to do work and homeschool and all of that. And the result of that busyness as we know, is stress, anxiety, our relationships suffer because we don't have time for them, there's tension and stress all around us.

And perhaps most damaging, it pushes God to the margins of our lives rather than the center of our life. And many of the things that used to make us busy are now on hold right now. So how about let's not bring all that busy back into our new normal. How about we let that busy stay back in old normal. So that we can have a less stressful schedule with more time for relationships in God and friends and family.

May 3, 2020

One of the things that this crisis has sort of been showing me is, how precious time is. Like time is life. Every hour spent doing one thing is an hour that you are not spending doing a whole host of other things. And our time in this life is finite. It's limited, which is why my wife and I never took our kids to princesses on ice.

Two hours of my life I would never get back. And part of what I think is painful in this lockdown is we are spending our finite time, AKA our lives, missing some of the things that make life really worth living and most rewarding. To hang out with friends, to celebrate a wedding in community, to hug a grandchild, to go out on a date if you're single. Missing those things and we need to grieve those. Grief is an appropriate emotion to have in the middle of this. Don't always seem to go, you don't know what you got until it's gone. And so many things are gone right now. And it makes me think why was I spending so much time in old normal doing things that were not the most rewarding things in life. Especially since so many of those things that we were striving for disappear so quickly.

Jobs that looked stable in March 1st we're gone by March 30th. Bank accounts looked healthy one week suddenly look anemic the next week. I think Jesus has a better way for us bell press. Jesus has a better way for us to handle our time. And in the process he can make us better people, new people. Because see how you handle time determines a lot about our character. How we deal with time determines a lot about our character. Because our character isn't forged necessarily in these few, huge, big moments. A character is formed minute by minute in the everyday moments of life. Character's like sedimentary rock, it builds up layer after layer over time. And character is the sum total of a million decisions we make every single day about how we handle pressure and how we deal with praise and how we deal with criticism and how we talk to people we don't know.

And we see this in a story in the Bible in Luke 10. And Luke 10 and this is how that story goes. It says, "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. And 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. And 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're upset about many things, but few things are needed. Indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her."

So this is just an ordinary event. There's no big miracle. There's nothing dramatic here. The kind of ordinary thing that happens every day about two sisters named Mary and Martha Stewart, and they have Jesus over for dinner. Okay, the drummer got that. Okay, thank you. They have Jesus over for dinner and Mary's thinking, "You know what, grilled cheese is good enough," but Martha's thinking, "We need a five course meal." So she says to Jesus, "Make her help me." A woman once told me that she found this story very liberating because here's someone trying to push a woman back into the kitchen and Jesus says no. My wife however, hates this story, hates it, because she thinks Mary should get up off her blessed assurance and help her sister in the kitchen. And I agree. I think she's right. Someone's got to do the work, right? But the problem is, Martha thinks that more needs to be done than Jesus thinks needs to be done.

She's exchanging precious moments of her life for something of less value. And the result is stress, anxiety, it's straining off the relationship with her sister, it's eroding her character because how she behaves in this moment is shaping her into a stressed out person. See, how we do little things is how we

May 3, 2020

do everything. How we handle these moments determines our character. And we are making our new normal right now by how we respond to every minute and every day. We are making our new normal by how we deal with the Zoom meeting and how we talk to our kids and how we talk to our parents. How we do all of that, minute by minute, will determine who we are going to be when we come out of this crisis.

And I think this story shows us how we can start living our new normal right now. And the first is, let's have less fuss in our life. Let's fasten our life. Someone just said amen. Thank you. Yes. Amen. Martha is doing a good thing; hospitality, one of the highest values in their culture. And Jesus loves Martha. So he says to her, "Martha, Martha..." Because in that culture, doubling up the name was a way of signifying intense love. And he says, you are distracted by many things, good things, but too many of them, when only one thing is necessary." So here's what you need to know. In that culture, in order to provide hospitality, you only needed one dish. That was it. One dish. That was all you needed to show hospitality. And so Jesus is saying, "Martha, you're distracted by many things." Not one thing, many things. Plural. In other words, don't make a five course meal when grilled cheese will do just fine.

See, Martha is fussy. Fussy is when we spend valuable time trying to make something just bright, just perfect. But we miss the bigger picture. So I remember once when my kids were little, I remember once taking them to Chuck E. Cheese, AKA hell on earth and watching a mom just lose it at this birthday party. Right? She had all these games. She wanted the kids to play, but they weren't playing. She had ordered the perfect cake, but they delivered the wrong one. So she was just yelling at the kids, just super stressed out. Now, her desire was a good thing, right, give her daughter a great birthday. But she got fixated. She was fussy, she got fixated on everything, I mean, just perfect and she missed the bigger issue, the bigger picture, which was relationship with her daughter.

But I don't want to be too hard on her because the reason I was there at Chuck E. Cheese was for my daughter's birthday party and I was getting stressed out and when I looked at that mom, it was as if Jesus said to me, "Oh Dudley, Dudley, you are anxious about many things, but you are missing the main point here. The main point here is giving your daughter a good memory." And suddenly, it was kind of a privilege to be at Chuck E. Cheese. I actually kind of enjoyed being at Chuck E. Cheese because it wasn't for me. It was for my daughter who I love. Relationship is more important than your to-do list. So whenever you find yourself being fussy, just say, "Demon of fuss, be gone." Just like exercise it out of your life. And for that to happen, in order for us to really have less fuss in our lives, we really need to get good at discerning need to do, nice to do and never to be done.

See, Martha was doing good things, but too many of them, too many pots in the kitchen. They all needed to be stirred and baked and broiled and all that stuff. Right? Too much going on. Prior to this COVID thing, one of the things our elders and our staff were kind of starting to wrestle with is that we've realized as a church, we are contributing to making people too busy because we got all kinds of stuff going on here, right? We got all kinds of programs here, program there, program everywhere, program, program. And they're all good, right? They're all great stuff. We stopped doing our evil things long ago, but there's too many of them. Too much stuff. Right? And they can confuse y'all and there's no clear pathway for spiritual growth. And so we're working on fixing that so we don't as a church just emulate our hyper busy culture.

Because see, if you have more to do in a day than can reasonably be done, you are doing something God has not asked you to do. If you have more to do in a day than can reasonably be done, you are

May 3, 2020

doing something God has not asked you to do. And yes, there are weeks and yes there are months and yes there are even whole seasons where we will be super busy. But if that's always, if that's the norm, well then we need a new normal. And what Jesus is saying here's, Martha, your problem is you've decided you need all these things to be happy. They're emotional non-negotiables for you. You got to have the perfect meal to feel good about yourself and maybe get some compliments as a host. You got to get straight As and get into an Ivy League school and volunteer in five different places and be on three different committees and get a promotion every other year and buy a bigger house. And instead of making you happy, it's made you an anxious, angry, miserable, white, hot mess.

And I didn't ask you to do all those things. Is this familiar with any of us? Like for me, this can be my life, right? And the result is, Martha gets suspicious of God. And she says, "Lord, don't you care, don't you care that she's not helping me?" And I don't know about you, but when I don't get something I want sometimes I'm tempted to say that to God, "Where are you? Don't you care?" And God says, "Dudley, Dudley, you think you need so many things to be happy and you're killing yourself trying to get them, but you don't need any of them." One thing is necessary. I can give you durable joy that's not dependent on your circumstances. And since we never have a hard time choosing between a good thing and a bad thing, right, that's never a tough choice, it's only when we have two good things we need to get some filters such as good, better, best.

It may be a good thing, but is it the best thing that I could be doing right now? Good, better, best. Or need to do, nice to do, never to be done. A five course meal is a nice to do, not a need to do. And if what it costs you is time with Jesus, then it turns it into a never to be done. When and how do we know the difference? How do we know the difference between good, better, best? Well, that brings us to Mary, the other sister in this story. And what does Mary do? The text says she sits at Jesus' feet and in that culture to sit at someone's feet was to put yourself under their authority. So athletes sit at their coaches feet and learn from them and do what the coach tells them to do so that they can improve their game.

We have to make time to sit at Jesus' feet, to read scripture and be formed by his word. And don't just read over, read a passage and think about it and ask questions like, "What does this tell me about me? What does this tell me about God?" Pray and leave space for those thoughts that maybe on our thoughts they come from God. And then do what God says to do. Say yes to what God tells you to say yes to and say no to what God tells you to say no to. And yes, I know, it doesn't always seem that clear what he wants us to say yes and no to. I know it isn't always crystal clear. But here's what I've learned. It's more clear than I think. When I really spend time reading scripture and when I really spend time in prayer and listening for those thoughts that are from God, it's a lot more clear than sometimes I think it is.

And sometimes what I have discovered is, sometimes what I call not clear is actually a synonym for oh, wait, it's crystal clear, but I don't want to do it or I don't want to stop doing it, so I'm going to fuzz it up in my brain so I don't have to respond. We need to sit at Jesus' feet to discern our priorities and say yes to what he says to say yes to and no to what he tells us to say no to. So that we have less fuss, clear need to do, nice to do, never to be done, sitting at Jesus' feet, which brings me to my last point. Finally, so that we can leave, God's priorities. And we can see what those priorities are by the context of this story. Never read a text without the context. And the context reveals God's priorities and they should sound familiar to you, but we always need to be reminded and the context has priority number one is time with God. Connection to God.

May 3, 2020

Immediately after this story, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray and he teaches them the Lord's prayer. And it is a direct response to Martha because see, Martha connected with her to do this, Mary connected with Jesus. And prayer is one of the ways we connect with Jesus. And the Lord's prayer, which he teaches in the very next story teaches us to pray for our daily bread, not our monthly cake, our daily bread. Bread, it's what you need. So part of what it means to pray for our daily bread is to pray, "Jesus, heal my perspective at things I need, things that I don't really need." That's what it means to pray for daily bread. "Lord, show me what's bread, what I need and show me what's cake, that I don't actually need."

Because see, so much of our joy depends on what we actually focus on. There was a survey of college students done a couple of years ago and it asked only two questions of these college students. How do you feel about your life? And then question number two, how many dates have you gone on in the last year? And if they asked the questions in that order, life satisfaction scores were actually pretty high. But if they reversed the order and asked, how many dates have you gone on, and then asked, how do you feel about your life, life satisfaction scores plummeted. See, what we focus on determines our level of joy. And if we focus on all the many things we don't have and all the things our culture tells us we're supposed to have, but we don't, we're going to be miserable. And that's what Jesus means when he says Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.

In other words, if we experience Jesus, it helps us have more joy that lasts because it's grounded in the things that never go away. And I have discovered in this, what I have discovered over time is that God actually knows what I really want deep down, better than I know what I want. God knows my desires better than I do. And I have living proof of that every single day of my life because I am here. Because after years of asking God to make me a university professor, he made me be the one thing I spent years asking him never to make me be, which is a pastor. And I discovered in that that God knows what I want even more than I know what I want because I love being your pastor. God knows our desires better than we do. Connect with him. It's our number one priority.

Second of God's priorities is meaningful mission in the world. And again, the context shows us this. At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus sends his followers out to heal the sick and tell people about the good news of Jesus. In other words, sends them on mission and it says they returned with joy. They didn't return miserable. They returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." They experienced meaningful mission and that gave them joy, the thrill of knowing that God used them to make a difference in the world. That is a thrilling experience. And then the story that immediately precedes Mary-Martha is The Good Samaritan, which is also about meaningful mission in the world. This is one of God's top priorities.

And bell press, you guys, this is yet again another reason why you are such an awesome church. You guys get this. We act because we believe. We are an active church. You guys want to help. Between what we have set aside, what we've reallocated from our operating budget and what you all have given to the COVID relief fund, so far we've been able to give away \$500,000 to people in our church, people in our community, people in the world who are suffering because of this COVID crisis. Thank you. You make that possible and we're going to continue to do that. 219 of you have signed up to bring groceries to families in need. Thank you. Thank you. We are meeting real needs because of you and we want to say thank you. And so many of you keep asking, "How can we help? I want to help. How can

May 3, 2020

we help?" So we're just going to keep letting you know of the opportunities there are to help and to make a difference.

For instance, right now we need about 50 more people to sign up to provide groceries for needy families and we need about 50 people this week, new people to sign up and we need about 65 people to sign up to help restock the pantry. And we're just going to keep providing opportunities for you to help. And we're going to ask you to pray about them. And sometimes God will nudge you to say yes. And sometimes God will nudge you to say, no, not this one. Now, if it's only no, that's a problem because we're missing out on one of God's priorities for how we spend our time. But likewise, if it's always yes, that's going to be a problem too, because you're going to be too busy. Connection to God, meaningful mission, and then finally, God's third priority is always relationship.

Martha risks relationship with her sister because of her stress. And Jesus says, "Martha, your relationship with Mary is way more important than getting some perfect meal made." Connection with God, meaningful mission in the world, relationship. Those are God's three top priorities. They turn out coincidentally to be the same three things that every study ever done shows brings lasting joy. And yes, there's going to be consequences. There's going to be costs to living this way. We're going to have to say no to things and that's hard to do sometimes, right? And many of you are living this, many of you, you work hard at your job, you give your job, it's due, but you have put boundaries around how much you work so that you can spend time with friends, family, and God. And you do that knowing it may mean you don't rise as quickly up the corporate ladder, but you do it anyways because you know that connecting to God and meaningful mission and relationships with the people you love are more important than your job.

And bell press, right now, we are creating new normal. So how can we begin? How can you? How can I? How can we begin to live a better new normal now by how we handle our time? What steps can you take this week to begin to live more into God's priorities? To begin to connect more with God, to begin to figure out that need to do, nice to do and never to be done list? So that we can do the things that truly matter? Oh, Bellevue, Bellevue, ho Redmond, Redmond, [inaudible 00:00:21:15], we are anxious about many things, but only one thing is necessary.

One of the things I've thought about in this last week since my mom died is how heartbroken her 10 grandchildren are at her death, just as they were when my dad died 18 months ago. And I think part of why they're so heartbroken is because my parents grandparented very, very intentionally. Each grandkid got a special trip with them called an elder hostel that's designed for grandparents and their grandchildren, and each trip was tailored to the personality and the interest of the particular kid that was going on that particular trip. They did that for all of their grandkids. My dad sent them all certificates that said, "Attaboy or attagirl." He made these little certificates and email them, "Way to go attagirl, attaboy, for the tiniest possible achievements, right?"

Like you blew your nose, "Yay. Here's her certificate." And he sent them promise verses from scripture constantly sending them Bible verses and prayers over them. And he sent them notes to encourage them all the time. When we visited them in the Tri-Cities, he took them on countless bike rides along the river, played endless rounds of cribbage with my son and other games with other grandkids. He and my mom were constantly over here for everything, right? They came over all the time for a dance recital or a track meet or a swim meet. My mom sent Easter baskets, cards, care packages, took them shopping. She made

May 3, 2020

them shaped cakes for their birthday. Right? And she said... And this was hard for her. This wasn't actually in her wheelhouse. She said, "The reason that she did it was because she loved them." Right? And she struggled with it. She said, by her own admission, artistic skill wasn't in her wheelhouse. She did it anyway because she loved them.

And the cakes were never perfect, but she never was fussy about that. She was more concerned about making memories than making cakes. And with my parents, there was no one size fits all grandparenting because they knew that each kid was different and they knew how to meet each kid right where they were at. They had the key that could open each one up and make them feel adored. They played a giant role in their grandkids lives. And the only problem with that is when they're gone, it leaves a big hole. And my parents started doing all of this when they both were still working, they both had jobs. My dad was also coaching on top of his job. They were super busy and yet they chose, still chose to lavish vast, generous amounts of their time, energy, and love on their grandkids.

Their priorities were about relationship and passing their faith on to their 10 grandchildren, which they succeeded at. And all 10 are exceedingly grateful. Because see, grandkids don't care how much money you make or what degrees you have or how many accolades you act up, they just know that you love them. So last week after my mom died, my nephew, who is the oldest grandkid, he posted these pictures on Instagram. And this is what he wrote in the caption.

He wrote, "Last Friday, my grandma, Rita, passed away. And although I'm very sad that she's gone and that we never got a chance to introduce her to our great granddaughter, I'm very thankful for all the time." He used that word time, "... for all the time that I got to spend with her. And that's because of her and my grandpa's great intentionality to see their 10 grandkids as much as possible. Elder hostels, birthdays, sports, summer vacations to Cannon Beach and so much more. There are so many great lessons I can learn from her and from my grandpa as I begin to raise my own family, for which I am very grateful. I will miss her very much, but I am glad she is now with her savior in peace with a clear and sharp mind. Once again, grandma, rest in peace."

When someone can say that about you when you have died, that is the mark of a life exceedingly well-led. My parents spent their finite time on timeless things for eternal rewards for them and for all of us who are part of their family. And bell press, I know you. I know your heart. I know you want to live this way, and I know Jesus is leading us through this crisis to a better new normal where we major in the major things of life and where Jesus guides us when to say yes and when to say no, his better way, where we live the eternal kind of life now by investing in the things that never die.

So Jesus, thank you so much that you are leading the way on this. And Lord, thank you that you, Lord, you call us what to say yes to and what to say no to. And Jesus, as we listen to you, as we discern, Lord, we know that you will give us a new normal that will be more rewarding for us and that will point to you and we'll give you glory and praise. Lord, thank you that you love us. Thank you that you guide us. Thank you that you are always with us. We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

**Discussion Questions: Read Mark 2**

---

1. Read all of Mark 2. What common themes do you see emerging from all these stories?
2. Why did Jesus tell the paralytic, "your sins are forgiven"? What exactly is the miracle here?
3. Why do you think the religious leaders were so upset with Jesus?
4. In your own words, what do you think Jesus means in verses 21-22? What are practical ways to do what Jesus suggests here in your life? In a church?