

BELPRES CHURCH

I Know You're Busy, But...

1 Corinthians 13:4, Galatians 5:22-23, Matthew 11:28-30

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Good morning. My name's Annie Duncan. I'm the executive pastor here, and it is so great to be with you in worship this morning. I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. The scripture passages, there are three of them today. And they come from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Paul's letter to the Galatians, and then the Gospel of Matthew. So first from Corinthians: love is patient, love is kind. And from Galatians: but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And from Matthew: come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.

Well, in addition to these three passages of scripture that we just read, a lot of inspiration from the sermon comes from the book by John Mark Comer called *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*. There's a picture that's going to be on the slide in a second, but since mid-September I have read this book cover-to-cover twice. I've listened to it three times. There is something compelling about this ruthless elimination to eliminate hurry. And on the first few pages of the book, John Mark Comer tells a story about John Ortberg. And John Ortberg is a pastor and an author, and he was the senior pastor at Menlo Park Church when Scott Dudley was on staff there.

And in Ortberg's earlier days as a pastor, he recalls calling up his mentor Dallas Willard. Ortberg was struggling in the grind of an over-scheduled, very busy life as a pastor. And he called Willard up and asked, what do I need to do to become the me I want to be? And in response to Ortberg's question there was a long silence on the other end of the call, and then Willard finally said, "You must

ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

So Ortberg wrote that down and said, "Okay, what else?" And then there was another long pause. And then Dallas Willard said, "There is nothing else. Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day today. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." And if you're sitting there and you're starting to maybe cringe because you know where this sermon is going, you're right. I am going to tell us all to slow down, myself included, but hang with me because I promise that there is good news in this message that points us to Jesus. That helps us to become more like Jesus.

But the hurried and busy life, it's so well-accepted. I can tell you countless Sundays where I stand there in the lobby with all of you and ask questions like, how are you? And the response is, "I'm good but really busy." And then I say, "Yeah, me too." This is just so well-accepted in our culture, that we can be good and busy simultaneously, and that's okay. As a society we include that as the norm. So what is Dallas Willard getting at then? What's so bad about being busy and living a hurried life that he is telling us that we need to be ruthless about eliminating it from our life? What's so bad about being hurried that Willard calls it the great enemy of spiritual life?

Well, busyness cuts off our connection to God. And when we're busy, we hurry because we don't have enough time to do it all. But when it comes to being like Jesus, we can't hustle our way through that. I know. I know you're busy, especially on the brink of a very busy month like December, but let's not wait to eliminate hurry. Let's not wait on that until January. Let's not say to ourselves, "I've just got to survive the busy holidays."

I know you're busy, but there is an invitation to live another way. A life that's full, a life that isn't hurried, a life that is filled with love and not stress and anxiety. So I know you're busy, but love and hurry cannot coexist. A few weeks ago, you'll never guess where I found myself. I was in a hurry. And I was here at work in a hurry. I had done it to myself. I had over-scheduled my morning. And so I was running from meeting to meeting. And I'm not just using that as a metaphor. I was literally running down the halls from meeting to meeting. And mid-stride, my lovely coworker interrupted my hurried and harried pace and said, "Annie, are you okay? Do you need help?"

To which I said, "No, no, no. I'm fine. I'm fine. I've just overdone it and I've overscheduled myself. I'm fine." But then later on that day I thought about Dallas Willard's words to ruthlessly eliminate hurry from our lives. And I thought, shoot,

I'm doing it wrong. I'm doing it wrong. I had hurried so loudly and dramatically that I wasn't just impacting myself, but I was impacting those around me. And so I went back to some of the staff that had seen me loudly running from thing to thing, and I apologized. That isn't the leader that I want to be. I want to lead with love, not stress and anxiety.

And in his book, *Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer says, "Hurry and love are incompatible." He goes on to say, "All my worst moments as a father, a husband, and a pastor, and even as a human being are when I'm in a hurry. Late for an appointment, behind on my unrealistic to-do list, trying to cram too much into my day. I ooze anger or tension and a critical nagging; the antithesis of love. If you don't believe me, the next time you're trying to get your type B wife and three young, easily distracted children out of the house and you're running late, just pay attention to how you relate to them. Does it look like love? Does it feel like love? Or is it far more in the vein of agitation, anger, a biting comment, and a rough glare?"

When I'm over-scheduled and over-stretched I exude stress and anxiety, not love. But as disciples of Jesus, we are called to be marked by love. And that's really hard to do when you're in a hurry. Love and hurry cannot coexist. And isn't it interesting that the passage in the Bible, the chapter about love that we know so well, it starts by describing love as patient. Love is patient, love is kind.

The Supremes were right. You cannot hurry. Love. Love isn't just patient when we have the time to be patient, but love is patient. And if you want to know what patient love looks like, you don't need to look any farther than just looking at Jesus. Jesus, love incarnate, the author of love. He waited to start His ministry until he was in His 30s. Jesus had patience with His 12 disciples, and for three years he taught them and retaught them and retaught them again.

And even when people tried to hurry Jesus along, he was never hurried. His friend was dying in another town but Jesus stayed where he was for two days before going to see his friend. Hundreds of people were hungry and demanding food from Jesus, and Jesus didn't rush off in a hurried pace to the nearest farmer's market. He was never in a hurry. Can you even picture a hurried Jesus? I think Jesus was late a lot.

Jesus was present. He was intentional with His time, and he was always marked by love. And even though he wasn't in a hurry, it's not like he was just kicked back somewhere at a golf and resort spa. His life was full but it wasn't hurried. I've told this story, I think, before, but when my nephew Jack turned 10 years old, I took him to Disney World for a couple days. And on our very last day there,

there were still a number of things that we had planned to do that we hadn't gotten to do yet. And so being the type A auntie that I am, I made a checklist to hit every single thing that we hadn't yet done.

And I mapped out Disney World. And I figured out the most efficient route that we would take. We would get to the park early. We would grab a churro and eat it on our way to Splash Mountain and then hit up Big Thunder because it's right there. You get the idea of my checklist. So when we got to the park and I had my checklist in hand, literally out in hand, Jack kind of sighs to me, and he says so sweetly, "Well, auntie, let's just go where our feet take us." Right? Oh my gosh. Sweet boy. So I put my checklist away. But you have to know, my checklist, it came from a place that was motivated by love.

I wanted him to not go home with FOMO. It was motivated by love, but my posture was hurried and frazzled. And so we did what Jack wanted to do, and we went to where our feet took us. And we had a full day together, but it wasn't hurried because there is a difference between full and hurry. We can have a full schedule but not be hurried. And our full day at Disney World, it looked like spending time savoring the churro instead of just shoving it down our throats, and being present in each moment without having to worry about getting to every single thing on Auntie's checklist.

Similarly, Jesus lived a very full life, often so full that he would have to retreat to quiet places in order just to get some time to spend in prayer with His father. It was full, but it was never hurried. So if love is something that Jesus wants to grow in us as His disciples, then we must learn and relearn this, that love and hurry are incompatible. So I know you're busy, but we are invited to adopt a counter-cultural lifestyle. The fruit of a hurried life, we know it, right? We all know it. The fruit of a hurried life is it produces stress, anxiety, worry, anger, noise.

And a lot of that bad fruit, it causes sin. And again, sin and busyness cut off our connection to God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. So how do we live that way? How do we have time to work all of those things into our life? Do we just think about the fruits of the Spirit and hope that they manifest in our lives somehow? Or do we think really hard about the bad fruits and just think really hard? Oh, don't have stress, don't have hurry, and hope that we somehow produce good fruit?

Or maybe, do we read a book about spiritual fruits and think that maybe that will help produce the fruit in our life? Reading a book on spiritual fruit might help. But let's go back to Jesus. Jesus was filled with the Spirit. Every fruit of the Spirit

that we just read about, Jesus was filled with. He modeled what it looks like to have spiritual fruit. So if we want spiritual fruit in our lives, we look to Jesus. The spiritual fruit that we're after comes from looking at the one that we want to become. Jesus.

How did Jesus respond to hurry? Well, he lived a full life that was marked by love. How did Jesus react to the pressures of His day? He had crystal clear clarity on His identity and His purpose. In John five, when some of the religious rulers were upset with Jesus because he wasn't meeting their expectations, Jesus said, "I can only do what I see the Father doing." Focused. I really like watching documentaries, especially documentaries about musicians. Fade to Black about Jay-Z. May it Last about The Avett Brothers. There's the one about Taylor Swift and Beyonce. I love watching them all because I love learning the behind the scenes stuff. The choices that they made in writing the lyrics that they wrote. It just gives more context to some of the songs that I'm listening to.

Well, like documentaries, the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, their eyewitness accounts about Jesus, the choices he made, the choices he didn't make, the way he lived a full life that wasn't hurried. They aren't just stories. They're behind the scenes accounts that invite us to live a life like Jesus. So if you want to know how to have a spirit-filled life, if you want to truly experience the life of Jesus, you have to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, do we do that? Do we adopt Jesus' lifestyle? Do we want to? Do we read through the gospels with the lens on of thinking, gosh, I want to live like that? I want to be like Jesus. In the 1990s there was a Gatorade commercial that featured Michael Jordan. Some of you might know the commercial that I'm talking about, others of you, if you were born maybe in the 2000s, you could look it up on YouTube later. But there's a line in the commercial, and there's a song. And it goes like this: "I dream I move. I dream I groove like Mike. If I could be like Mike."

Anybody remember that? Three of us. Cool. You guys can all Google it later. But similarly to that song, how do we live our lives today to be like Jesus? What do we reprioritize or restructure in our day because our desire is to be like him? Jesus came to save us from our sin. He is our savior, but he is also our leader and teacher. He came to show us how to live. In John 10 he says, "This is why I've come. I have come so that they might have life and that they might have it abundantly." Jesus offers us a lifestyle that is counter to the world around us. And as disciples, we're apprentices of Jesus. We study His every move. We look at the things that He did, we look at the things that He didn't do, and we say, "That's how I want to live too."

We spend time with Jesus. When we do that, we become more like him and we do the things that Jesus did. And in the world we hurry because there's too much to do. But when we look to Jesus, he offers us a different way to live. And is Jesus inviting us? Is he inviting us to hustle or is he inviting us into something more? So I know you're busy, but more time is not the answer. "I'd spend more time reading my Bible if I had more time. I'd spend more time in prayer if I could just get up a little bit earlier in the morning."

But more time isn't the solution. John Ortberg says that, "Hurry is not just a disordered schedule. It's a disordered heart." Because the truth is, if I had more time, I'd probably just fill it up with other things. The solution to a hurried life is staying connected to Jesus. Lockstep with him, committed to living a life in step with him.

And that's the life that Jesus calls us to. He calls us to live a life we cannot live apart from him. Here are all of Jesus' invitations in scripture: He says, "Come and follow me. Remain in me as I also remain in you. Come to me, all you who are weary. Learn from me." Repeatedly Jesus calls us back to him because he knows that, as disciples, we cannot live the life he calls us to apart from him. We need Jesus and we need each other in community to point us back to the One that we want to become. So hear more of Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11. His invitation to the busy, the tired, the over-scheduled: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble and heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

This is the way of life that we're invited into. Jesus doesn't offer us a vacation to take a break from it all. Jesus doesn't offer us to push pause on the life of chaos that maybe we feel like we live in, but Jesus offers us to be with us in it. Emmanuel, God with us. Yoked together. Us remaining attached to Him and learning from Him.

Frederick Dale Bruner is a theologian, and he gives more context to understanding just how radical this is, what Jesus is saying in Matthew 11. I love His words. He says, "A yoke is an instrument. Thus, when Jesus offers a yoke, he offers what we might think tired workers need the least. Tired workers, they need a mattress or a vacation, not a yoke. But Jesus realizes that the most restful gift that he can give the tired is a new way to carry life. A fresh way to bear responsibilities. Realism sees that life is a succession of burdens. We cannot get away from them, thus, instead of offering an escape, Jesus offers equipment. Jesus means that obedience to a sermon on the mount, His yoke, will develop in us a balance and a way of carrying life that will give more rest than the way we have been living."

Doesn't that sound good and enticing? A way of carrying life that will give more rest than the way we have been living. So where do we even start with all of this? Well, when was the last time you learned anything from Jesus? We read about Jesus all the time but when was the last time you were reading about Jesus and you had a thought? Oh man, that thing that Jesus is doing right there. I want to practice that in my life. When was the last time you had a thought like that?

Because, back to my story about hurrying at work: I'm 42 years old. I've had 42 years of hurrying from thing to thing. Just ask my husband. He knows. I pack things in. I live a hurried life. But it's now in this moment in my walk with Jesus that I'm reading Matthew 11 differently. And I'm seeing that there's another way that Jesus is inviting me, us to live. So if you're following along in the Bible reading plan right now, we are in the gospels. And this is a great place to start.

And it's not too late to join in with the Bible reading plan. As you're reading through the gospels, take notes on Jesus. What He did, what He didn't do, how He responded, how He lived a full but not hurried life. And pick one thing to practice. That is the takeaway for the week. Pick a characteristic of Jesus to practice. Start there. Just pick one. And as you're reading through the gospels, you're probably going to take a lot of notes of things that you're seeing about Jesus that you can practice, but just start with one. Just start with one practice because what's the rush? You're not in a hurry, right?

Yeah.

Come on. You saw what I did there. No? Pick one thing to practice that you see in Jesus that you want in your life as well. Receive Jesus' invitation to learn from Him, to follow Him, to abide in Him. There's a song that's called Be Like Him, and I think we're going to sing it at the end here. And it kind of reminds me of the song Be Like Mike, which you all are going to Google later. But this song is all about Jesus. So I'm going to use these words from this song and pray them over us as I close out. So pray with me.

I am called. We are called to follow Jesus at the start of each new day. All my doing for His purpose, all my being in His grace. I just want to be like Him. Holy Spirit mend me. Make me more like Jesus. I just want to be like Him. Take my life and steer it wherever you see fit. I want to be like Him. So Jesus, that is our prayer. We want to be more like you. So nudge us, have your way with us, God, and help our hearts to become more like yours.

Give us eyes to see. Send us out into the world so that we can be your disciples, making more disciples. Jesus, we want to be like you. We want to become more like you. And help us to see that. Encourage us as we pick a practice that we see of your life and start practicing it in our own ways, God. And keep us connected to you, we can't live this life apart from you. It's in your name that we pray. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following (note: we use the same scripture reflection questions each week so that we can practice using the same tools over time as we examine different scriptures):

- What do you feel when you read this scripture (excited, angry, worried, etc....)? Why do you think that is? (Explain in your group and then take that response to Jesus in prayer this week.)
- As you read this scripture, where does it challenge your current cultural context?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- In Matthew 11, why do you think Jesus uses a work metaphor (yoke) when inviting us to rest? What is Jesus inviting us into with the yoke?
- What is one way you can practice "eliminating hurry" as we enter into the Christmas season?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.