



Key Texts:

Luke 10:38-42, Isaiah 7:14

Key Challenge:

If “God with us” is the point of the season, shouldn’t we make it a point to spend time with Him?

Series Intro:

Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays. Feliz Navidad. If you think about it, there are really only a few ways we greet each other around Christmas. There is nothing wrong with these, but I think we can find some new ones. For the next few weeks that is what we are going to do. We are going to look at God’s Word to find some “New Season’s Greetings” that we can use this Christmas season.

The Real:

[Leader note: Begin the message with an illustration about the busyness of the Christmas season, and someone’s reaction to it. Below, you’ll see the story what happened when my son saw Christmas decorations going up in October. It is included to spark your creativity as you think about an illustration from your life.]

Christmas is still four weeks away, and I don’t know about you, but I am already feeling overwhelmed. The shopping, the dinners, the school programs, the parties, the traveling, the special services here at church; there is just so much going on around Christmas. As my kids get older, they have more and more Christmas activities and parties to go to, and my oldest is only seven. I have a feeling that this stuff isn’t going to be slowing down any time soon. It seems like every year there is just more stuff to do than there was the year before, and it seems to start sooner and sooner every year too. I have friends in New York that threw their company Christmas party last weekend. That’s right, a Christmas party five days before Thanksgiving, as ridiculous as it sounds, they did it. They had Santa, spiral cut ham, mistletoe and everything on November 19.

My son Landon plays in a little soccer league at his school on Saturday mornings. So he and I have a little bit of built in one on one time, which is rare with four kids, on Saturdays after soccer. We run errands or get a bite to eat, and just try to spend a few hours of just the two of us doing something productive. About 6 weeks ago, we went to Sam's club. As is our custom at Sam's, we got a pretzel and a coke, and then started to make our way around the store. When we left the little cafe area, the employees were setting up their Christmas trees display. I thought he would be excited to see all of the Christmas stuff; so I pushed the cart over there. He wasn't excited. He looked genuinely mad. He saw the trees and declared at an embarrassing volume "This is ridiculous! We haven't even had trick or treat yet." As funny as it was, I felt this sense of dread set in. I was suddenly reminded of all of that I had to get ready and accomplish before Christmas, even though Christmas day was nearly two months away.

The Rub:

The activities surrounding Christmas seem to dominate every aspect of our lives in the days and weeks leading up to Christmas day. There is just so much to do, and we feel guilty if we don't get it all in. After all, it's Christmas. This is the way we celebrate God sending His Son into our world. Keeping all of these obligations and traditions is our way of showing others, and if you think about it, [As sarcastically as possible] showing Jesus himself how important He is in our lives.

But what if it doesn't? What if the pageantry, the schedule, and the celebrating are actually taking attention away from the One that the pageantry, the schedule, and the celebrating are supposed to be about? What if all of the attention that we give to the events around Christmas detracts from the attention we should be giving to the One whose birth we are celebrating? Is it possible that we could be doing so much in service and celebration of Jesus' arrival, that we forget to spend time with Him? I think it is, and I think that we have all been guilty of this.

The Read:

I am certain that Jesus knew that there would always be a great deal of activity surrounding His presence. Even if He weren't omniscient, He would have just known that wherever He went, there would be a lot going on.

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Everywhere He went crowds gathered, there was excitement, and there were festive meals. All throughout the Gospel accounts, we read of Jesus showing up in a new town, and someone insisting that He and His disciples come and have dinner. Sometimes it was who you would expect the Son of God to be having dinner with, and sometimes it was who you would least expect the Son of God to be having dinner with, but it seems like everywhere He went someone was hosting a dinner in his honor.

Luke 10 records the account of one of those meals at the home of Mary, Martha, and probably their brother Lazarus, even though he is not mentioned in the Biblical account. As always, when Jesus arrived there was a lot to be done. He came with a built in crowd of at least twelve, and people gathered around to hear Him teach. Martha was concerned with being the perfect hostess. She was focused on getting everything done that needed to be done. Her sister Mary wasn't. "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said." Luke 10:38-39 (NIV). Instead of giving into the pressures to host, entertain, and accomplish, Mary sat at Jesus' feet. She spent time with Jesus and listened to Him talk about why in fact He had come. If we had time this morning, we would look at the implications of a first century Rabbi allowing a woman to sit at his feet. We don't have the time to get into it, but just know that it was a big deal. Jesus allowed her to sit at His feet and listen. All throughout the gospel of Luke, the idea of listening is tied to the idea of discipleship. Many heard what Jesus said, but few actually listened. Luke went out of his way to convey to his readers what Mary was doing at Jesus' feet. She was listening. She was learning to follow Him more closely. This passage is sandwiched right in between the parable of the "Good Samaritan" and Jesus' teaching of the "Lord's Prayer." So, maybe Mary was listening to Jesus teach about what it truly meant to love your neighbor as yourself. Perhaps she was listening to Him explain everyone's need to commune with the Father through prayer. Whatever it was that she was hearing, she was actively listening in order to follow Jesus more fully.

Meanwhile, Martha was not sitting at Jesus' feet listening. Instead, she was trying to be the perfect hostess. There were a lot of mouths to feed. Sleeping arrangements needed to be made. I can't even imagine the

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