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SERIES: You Do You?
MESSAGE: "Almighty Me"

DATE:

LINK TO SERMON: <https://vimeo.com/757739169>

Bottom Line: The best thing you can do is give Jesus authority over you.

Object Lesson: None

Key Idea: The common mantra of our culture is "be true to you". You do you. What seems like the most authentic thing to do comes with a steep cost. In a story told by Luke, Jesus confronts a close friend, and he didn't suggest she listen to her heart.

CONNECTION – What is our path to happiness?

- A. **INTRODUCTION:** Every moment with Jesus is intriguing. There is an interesting moment in the life of Jesus that we often pass by without too much consideration. In a way, it's probably more of an interesting moment in the life of two women: Mary and her sister Martha. When we read it, we always take a lesson away from it, but perhaps not all the lessons we should take away.

This moment happened 2,000 years ago, but as the saying goes, "the more things change..." I want us to look at this story together, because in this world we find ourselves living in, there's something quite significant in this story that we might should consider ourselves.

- B. **CONTEXT:** The story is about two sisters: Mary and Martha. They have a brother who's going to become quite famous: Lazarus. When Jesus brings you back from the dead, word spreads. But that hasn't happened yet. Jesus is close friends with this entire family. He and his disciples are traveling and they came to the village where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus live.

I'll let Luke tell it from there...

Luke 10:38-40a (NIV)

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

- **Scene is set:** Jesus is in the lazyboy and Mary is sitting on the ground beside Jesus listening. Conspicuously absent is Martha. Martha, isn't sitting and listening to Jesus. Because somebody has to make dinner. We can't all be lazy. We can't all attend storytime.
- **Martha has a guest in her house.** Not just any guest, but Jesus! She knows he is from God. She probably suspects even more of Jesus. She knows he can heal and perform miracles.
- **Hospitality:** It's easy to be hard on Martha. When Jesus is in your house, spend time with him. They'll be plenty of time for cooking later.

We've all had people over and had to prepare. You may have even had someone important over. But we really don't have a culture of hospitality like that which existed in first-century Israel. Martha was doing what was expected. She was doing what, according to custom, should be done. She was doing what she thought was best. And this led to some frustration.

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!"

- Dad, Mary isn't helping!

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you do you, boo, and let's allow Mary to follow her heart, too."

- Martha, you do you! Leave Mary alone. She's doing her.
- Ha, Ha. Okay. That's not what Jesus said. Before we read what Jesus actually said, let's just acknowledge that this is what gets said over and over and over in our western world today.
- In our western world (I say western because much of the world does *not* think this way), we're constantly encouraged to focus on being our full, authentic self.

Our Path to Happiness...

"You do you."

"You be you."

"Be true to yourself."

"Follow your heart."

"Find yourself."

"Look inward."

- We are living in a time where finding happiness through self-discovery is the highest priority.
- Not just the world. Christians are equally pursuing happiness as a primary goal in life, too. Research from Barna that shows the large percentage of churchgoing Christians (66 percent) who say "enjoying yourself is the highest goal of life."

TRANSITION: If you aren't a follower of Jesus, I'm so grateful you're joining us and being curious. I love curiosity. I hope what you hear today is helpful and maybe even gives you a life alternative to consider. If you are a Jesus follower like me, this story Mary and Martha story has something deeply important to say to us that we have all lost in some way, shape, or form.

TENSION – Where does "expressive individualism" lead our culture?

- A. **EXPRESSIVE INDIVIDUALISM:** Before we get back to Jesus, Mary, and Martha, we need to think more about this "you do you" world we're living within.

No doubt, the western world is all about you being your full, authentic self. The official term for this is Expressive Individualism.

Expressive Individualism

Expressive individualism is the be true to yourself mindset that finds self-fulfillment and expression as the highest goal of life.

We see this life concept on full display nearly everywhere in life. Self-help books, television and movies, blogs, and more.

And it makes a lot of sense!

There's a guy named Robert Bellah who wrote a book called *Habits of the Heart*. He talked about this idea, saying:

"As a people, we believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious. Our highest and noblest aspirations, not only for ourselves, but for those we care about, for our society and for the world, are closely linked to our individualism."

- Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*

Just for a second, look at Robert's statement. It's incredible, because it's so true. When I first came across this, my immediate reaction was, "Wait a minute, I believe in dignity. I want to think for myself. Judge for myself. Make my own decisions." Do you know why I tend to think that? Because, like you, I'm living in a time where that quest is the favorable pursuit.

- B. **RELIGIOUS FLARE:** It can even have a religious flare to it. Allowing for internal authority means that we can sin, but *sin* is what we do to ourselves when we choose to not follow ourselves and fulfill ourselves.

If the first and greatest commandment of individualism is to "be yourself," then the unforgivable sin is to be dishonest of self by giving into any external pressure or authority.

Sin is the failure to be true to yourself. Thus, the solution is not repentance, but reassertion.

- C. **WHERE THIS LEADS:** The push for authentic, expressive individualism leads us to a pretty predictable place. As I show you this path, I'd love for you to consider where you might be seeing some of these things around us today. Maybe even *in* you today. Crisis is both an accelerator and a revealer. This past year has revealed much of our own heart. And the hearts of those around us.

LIST INDIVIDUALLY...

1. The highest good is individual freedom, happiness, self-definition, and self-expression.
2. Traditions, religions, received wisdom, regulations, and social ties that restrict individual freedom, happiness, self-definition, and self-expression must be reshaped, deconstructed, or destroyed.
3. The world will inevitably improve as the scope of individual freedom grows.
4. The primary social ethic is tolerance of everyone's self-defined quest for individual freedom and self-expression.

5. Humans are inherently good.
6. Large-scale structures and institutions are suspicious at best and evil at worst.
7. Forms of external authority are rejected and personal authenticity is lauded.

D. **SOUND FAMILIAR?** Sound like anything you've seen of late? Sound like anything you've pursued or questioned of late?

None of us are above this thinking. It's so pervasive in our western culture. Again, if you're not a church or Jesus following person, you might be looking at this list and wondering "what's the problem?" I get that. I completely get that.

As Jesus followers, this path leads us to places that are problematic. At least they are problematic if we want to follow Jesus.

E. **TODAY...:** That last step on the path is a problematic destination:

Forms of external authority are rejected and personal authenticity is lauded.

- Let's be honest – we don't like authority. We don't particularly like being told what to do.
- As an individual, we're fine with "internal" authority. We don't mind challenging ourselves and holding ourselves to a version of accountability, mostly because challenging ourselves leads to us discovering more personal authenticity and fulfillment.

F. **WE'RE ALL GUILTY:** It's almost human nature, isn't it? Think about it: The very first act of external authority rebellion was a choice by man to reject the authority of God in the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden rebellion was resistance against any external authority – God.

TRANSITION: To say this has been an ongoing issue in every single facet of our life is an understatement! Now Mary and Martha are facing it in a kitchen and living room with Jesus.

FOUNDATION – Liking Jesus isn't the same as following Jesus.

A. **BACK TO MARY AND MARTHA'S HOME:** We didn't finish it earlier, so let's go back for a minute.

As a reminder, Martha is upset that Mary isn't helping. She's just sitting with Jesus. Martha asks Jesus to intervene, and here's how Jesus responded:

Luke 10:40b-42 (NIV)

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!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

- The primary point of this story is probably to not allow the things of the world to distract us from the person of Jesus. That's an important point. But I think there is a secondary point we shouldn't miss in our world today.
- This is so easily missed yet so important for us as followers of Jesus. According to Jesus, not every choice we make is "best." It seems, at least according to Jesus, that: "You doing you" isn't what we should do.

At least according to Jesus, "you do you" isn't always the best thing to do.

- **Buckle Up:** That's an interesting story, but there is meaning for us. I'm going to ask you to put on your individualism seatbelt for a minute, because I want us to really press down on the actual issue at hand.

There is an important question that we must answer. A question worth wrestling to the ground. Jesus says "Mary chose best." It's worth considering: Who is Jesus to decide what is "best"? Shouldn't Mary and Martha each in their own identity decide what's "best" for them.

Who made Jesus the boss of Mary and Martha?

- Who put him in charge of others? He can do whatever he wants, but should he be telling *other* people what they can and can't do? Should he be telling others what choices are good, better, and best?

B. **LORD OR LIFE COACH:** Maybe we should rephrase the question in the language Mary and Martha used:

Who made Jesus the Lord of Mary and Martha?

If we look back at this story being told by Luke, that word "Lord" is used to describe Jesus.

Luke 10:40b (NIV)

She came to him and asked, "Lord..."

When we read about Jesus, we see him with authority, but the real question is do we see him as *our* authority?

That's what the word "Lord" means. A Lord is someone with power, authority, and influence over another.

Martha called Jesus Lord. Lots of people who experienced Jesus recognized him as Lord. And you should know that we, as followers of Jesus, are called to follow suit.

Liking Jesus makes him our life coach, but following Jesus makes him our Lord.

We don't want a "Lord." We want just enough of Jesus to get us through, get us by, and give us what we need. When life is tough, we want all Jesus has to offer. When we're on that business trip or vacation, not so much Jesus, please.

But Jesus will not serve as your helper or therapist. He's not an example to follow. He's the authority.

TRANSITION: We've been led to believe that following to Jesus means surrendering your true self. The opposite is actually true.

APPLICATION – Give Jesus authority over your life.

A. **WHY WE RESIST JESUS' AUTHORITY:** But we need to think about it this way:

We resist authority to
experience autonomy.

We believe we are the expert on us. We believe that autonomy allows us to do what we want, with who we want, when we want, which leads to happiness.

But autonomy is not goal of a Jesus follower. Autonomy is at odds with authority of God. Following Jesus doesn't mean you "lose yourself."

Think of it this way:

Who knows you better than the one who
made you,
knows you,
unconditionally loves you
saved you, and now
dwells inside?

- This is why we use the phrase, "asking Jesus into our heart." It's our way of saying, "Jesus is now indwelling our life, giving us his Spirit, and guiding us to the fullness of life."
- You are "in Christ." Your life is hidden with him.
- When it comes to experiencing your absolute best life:

The best thing you can do
is give Jesus authority over you.

Maximum freedom is found under authority.

TRANSITION: This is actually the Good News. This is the Gospel. But let's not forget: The Good News has a hard truth.

INSPIRATION – Looking upward is always better than looking inward.

B. **THE HARD TRUTH OF THE GOOD NEWS:**

- The Good News of from God is simply this: You are a sinner in need of a savior.
- You've sinned against God, not yourself or your personal journey to self-discovery.
- But God loves you so much he was NOT willing to leave for your sin to keep you separated from him.
- In your place, God offered his Son, Jesus, as a sacrificial Savior.
- The Good News is that salvation is free gift. The Hard News is that you can't save yourself.

Expressive individualism would have us look deep into our hearts to discover our inner essence and express that to the world.

The world says we should look inward,
but the gospel says to look upward.

By looking upward, we don't lose ourselves, but rather find ourselves. Our true selves. The selves we were meant to be from the beginning.

PRAYER