

American Lutheran Church of Sun City

First lesson: Genesis 18:1-10a

Second Lesson: Colossians 1:15-28

Psalm 15

Gospel Lesson: Luke 10:38-42

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 17, 2022

“Going vs. Growing Through Life” Sermon by Pastor David Sivecz

There once was a young boy named Danny. Danny lived during World War II. For some unknown reason, Danny became obsessed with one of the Royal Air Force’s planes, the Spitfire. Back in the day, he loved watching them fly all over in the movie newsreels. Danny believed if a pilot flew a Spitfire, they would always hit their target and return home.

One day the British Consul from Minneapolis came to Danny’s town to visit. Danny’s dad was chairman of the County War Bond drive, so that gave him the honor of entertaining the British Consul in his home. His mother, Suzanne, went crazy with preparations. She brought in all her friends, hired a German woman to clean the house, and even went downtown to buy a new dress.

When the Consul arrived, 40 people crammed into three rooms to welcome him. Each person couldn’t wait to tell this tall, thin diplomat from England about the town, their patriotism, and how they had a great-aunt in London. Everyone was eager to show their support.

Suzanne ran around frantically, serving, greeting, and ensuring everyone was comfortable and had a good time. After talking to so many people, the British Consul finally had a chance to sit down as Suzanne got him a drink. For a brief second, all the other guests momentarily turned away, so Danny saw his opportunity to ask him a question. So, he ran over to him and asked, “Will you tell me about Spitfires,”

The tall man looked at the eight-year-old and smiled. With a relaxed, but slight eagerness in his voice, he said, “Spitfires? I’ll tell you a story about Spitfires, young man. I flew one early in the war, and it was splendid. I shot down a Messerschmitt, and I came home alive. The next time I wasn’t so lucky. That’s why I’m not flying anymore. What is your name? “Danny!” “Well, Danny, I’ll send you some pictures of Spitfires.”

About a month later, Danny received a letter from Minneapolis. Inside the envelope was a folder with information and pictures about Spitfires. It also had a note from the Consul that wrote, “Dear Danny. I enjoyed talking to you. Good luck.” Signed by the British Consul.

You see, Danny was the only person who didn’t bombard the Consul’s ears with information about the town and American patriotism. Instead, this little boy was the only one who said, “Tell me about Spitfires.” He was the only one who wanted to hear from the British Consul. Danny wanted to listen to him, even if it was just for a few minutes. Danny wanted to learn from the British Consul.

How often do we ever get a chance to sit and listen to someone? How often do we take time from the week and hear what’s important? How often do we take time to rest and be renewed? Think about how much we are on the go and move from one thing to another.

If we are honest with ourselves, we are a people of busyness. Most, if not all of us, have to be doing something, whether it's working, playing, or planning. We have to be on the move because if not, we might feel like we are wasting time, are lazy, or being unproductive. On the flip side, whenever we see someone sitting and doing nothing, we might become judgmental.

How can someone waste the day away, go on so many vacations, or golf so much? I once heard that in the United States, people live to work while the rest of the world works to live. It's part of our society to always be on the go, be moving, and do something.

It's the same type of situation that we heard in our Gospel lesson. It began when Jesus entered a village and went to visit Martha and Mary. Like any significant person visiting, Martha wanted to be as hospitable as possible. She probably made herself a checklist of everything that needed to be done. Let's see here, sweep the dirt floors, move the animals outside, and wash the blankets. What else? Empty the pot, fluff the pillows, and make platters of food.

Apparently, she didn't get it all done because Jesus showed up. While Martha proceeded to be an excellent hostess, what did her sister, Mary, do? Did she pitch in by sweeping, making food, or fluffing the pillows? No, she didn't even entertain the guest; instead, Mary sat down and let the guest entertain her.

Her actions didn't go over too well with Martha. Because, immediately after realizing Mary wasn't helping, Martha complained to Jesus. "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?" Many of us probably believed Martha's complaint was legitimate. Again, she was doing all the work. She's the one who made things happen; she was taking care of Jesus, she was doing.

If anything, we should admire Martha for her work, hustle, and getting things done. There's nothing wrong with "doing." Immediately before our Scripture lesson, Jesus asked people to follow him and DO God's work. But they responded by making excuses.

After that, as we heard last week, Jesus came across a lawyer. The man asked him what he needed to do to have eternal life. Jesus recited the "Greatest Commandment," shared a parable or story, and then said, "Go and DO likewise." So, to be a Christian or a disciple of Jesus Christ means being a person who does and acts. We can't be Christians and not DO anything. Faith and action go hand-in-hand.

However, after Martha made her case, Jesus responded not by condemning her but by inviting her to sit down and listen. Jesus invited her to hear what's truly important. He wanted her to take time to rest and be renewed.

I can picture Jesus in a calm, compassionate, and soothing voice saying, "Martha, Martha. I know you work hard. I know you want to be the best disciple you can be. But, please, not for my sake, but yours, stop and get re-energized." Where do we go to get re-energized? What gives us that "pick-me-up" to continue to DO? How do we find the strength to continue throughout the week?

Based on what I've heard, especially for most of the people in this country, we are more over-scheduled, over-booked, and over-committed than ever before. Whenever I listen to what many families go through, I think of when I was a teenager. I know that was many years ago, but my family wasn't anything special. Here's how it looked in the Sivecz household.

Typically, the morning began with my parents getting up at 5:00 AM. If there was heavy snow the night before during the wintertime, my dad woke up at 4:00 AM to snow blow the driveway. Then around 5:30 AM, my parents would get their coffee, fold clothes, shower, and prepare their lunches. Around 6:30 AM, my brother and sister would get up to take showers and get dressed. Of course, no morning was complete without our morning ritual... trying to get me out of bed... multiple times... so none of us were late. Once we got to school, it was eight periods of classes.

Once the school day ended, my brother, sister, and I had after-school activities. If it was a day during the musical rehearsals and basketball seasons, my parents would take my sister's dinner when they picked me up from basketball practice and dropped off my brother for an evening practice. Other days there would be confirmation, doctor's appointments, homework, and projects.

That was just during the week. Then Saturday would roll around, and there would be a cross country, track meet, or basketball practice. For the whole year, we ran here, there, and everywhere. We became almost like robots - just doing, just moving, just going through the motion.

Again, I can hear Jesus say, "Martha, Martha, come and sit because you need to listen to what I'm saying." "David, David, stop for a second because what I'm saying is more important." "Kimberly, Kimberly, rest for a moment because I'm going to replenish you." We find energy and strength from Jesus Christ. Jesus nourishes us so remember why we are here and our purpose in life.

Yes, each of us has a purpose in our lives until the day we die. The precious lives that God gave us were meant for more than just being busy, than busy schedules, or being overworked. Our lives have a purpose, and when we forget that purpose, we become busybodies, and busyness is the archenemy of a Christian. Busyness doesn't provide a purpose. Busyness doesn't help us but instead distracts us from what's important and our priorities.

So, here's the question? How many of us are just going through life? Instead, what if Jesus wants us to grow through life? To grow, Jesus invites us to sit and be reminded of who we are and whose we are. It provides us with that energy or "pick-me-up" to continue in our purpose.

Years ago, there was a rather unusual commercial repeated over the television. In particular, the announcer on the commercial narrated several scenes of a person's life. The first scene showed a crying baby and a proud father. In the background, the father excitedly said, "Oh, it's a boy. It's a boy. We're going to name him Stanley, and one day he will become the president of the United States."

Quickly, the commercial moved to the second scene where Stanley was getting married. At Stanley's wedding, the bride's father approached him and said, "Stanley, I know you would like to go to medical school, but you are going to join me in the purse manufacturing business."

Again, the commercial moved to a third scene. Stanley and his wife stood overlooking an ocean on an expensive vacation. He obviously had been a successful manufacturer and had made a lot of money.

Then it moved to the final scene, where it showed Stanley's minister preaching at his funeral. The minister stood in front of the congregation and said, "Stanley was much beloved by all those who lived here at the Shady Nook Nursing Home. He was the best gin rummy player, and a few people knew he also had the lowest cholesterol count of anyone here."

Then the announcer on the commercial said, "Isn't it sad to live your whole life and never make a ripple and never rock a boat? Join the Peace Corps."

Although our purpose isn't to be in the Peace Corps, we do have a purpose. Do you know that purpose? Your purpose and my purpose is to be God's beloved children. It's the difference between going through life and growing through life. It's the life that Jesus invited Martha and us to live. It's why we come to worship, why we are Christians, why we are sitting here right now, and why faith can and will have such a profound deep impact through the rest of our week.

Jesus continually invites us to hear, to listen, and to know that you and I are children of God. Because to know that's our purpose means we can prioritize what's important and let go of what burdens us. It means placing our time and energy into the things that matter to God, not the world. It means experiencing abundant life right here and right now, so we can peacefully rest in the arms of Jesus.

So, I encourage you to sit, relax, and listen to these words. You are God's beloved precious child. You are not forsaken. You are created for something more. You are worthy of Christ's love. You are made for the glory of God. Be at peace to live in God's unconditional love and favor.

- Amen