

De-stressing Your Christmas Season

Luke 10:38-42

A little boy and girl were singing their favorite Christmas carol in church the Sunday before Christmas. The boy concluded "Silent Night" with the words, "Sleep in heavenly beans." His sister elbowed him and said, "Not beans, peas!"

This is the way many of us feel by the time Christmas comes, the song might as well end with beans or peas instead of peace because the peace of the season seem to elude us.

I have made a list of things that lend a hand in our stress level, see if any one of these speak to you: Shopping for gifts, Getting to all of the parties, Putting up the decorations, cooking meals, buying a tree, fighting traffic, having enough money to buy gifts, figuring out when to celebrate at both set of parents without offending either of them, gaining weight, sending out Christmas cards, cleaning the house, forgetting someone for whom you should have purchased a gift for, facing relatives you don't get along with, dealing with Christmas lights that wont work, missing loved ones that have passed away. Do you feel your stress level going up yet?!!!

When you compile a list like this, it's easy to see why Christmas is a major period of increased stress for many people.

Do you think Jesus has something to say to us about all of this?? Lets look at Luke 10:38-42

- We will enjoy Christmas much more when we focus on "What is needed."
- So, what is stress? Martha said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me." I think Martha was experiencing some stress don't you think?

- She was rushing around trying to get everything done, after all Jesus was in her house. Stress is your body's alarm system.
- Stress can result from anything that: Annoys you, threatens you, excites you, scares you, worries you, hurries you, angers you, frustrates you, challenges you.
- Think about a rubber band. If stretched, it will go back to its normal, relaxed state. If it stays in that stressed position permanently it will crack and break! Maybe some of you are feeling this stretching already.
- I wouldn't be surprised if a few of you are actually dreading the next few weeks.
- I wouldn't be too surprised that some of you are putting a "To do " list together while pretending to listen to my sermon! I got you, and you and you!!
- So what is the cure for stress during the Christmas season? The answer is to be like Mary. Martha was so distracted by all of the preparations that she missed the point!
- Jesus said "Only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better."
- She realized spending time with Jesus was the more important thing. We must never get so busy with outward things that we neglect the quiet and peaceful worship of the Lord.
- So how can we be calm in the midst of stress all around us at this time of year? Here is a good place to start. Cross out everything that takes away from the real meaning of Christmas.

- Example: If it's stressing you out, do you have to be the hostess with the mostess? Do you really have to go to that extra party? Do you really have to go on that trip?
- Here is an idea, lay out a plan. NO pastor pandemonium is part of our Christmas tradition!!
- What's the main thing that needs to happen this Christmas? Plan ahead. Share the load (other family members can help!) Lighten the calendar and respect your budget!! Determine how much you will spend this year.
- Put your most significant relationships first. Christ, Spouse, Family and so on... Don't neglect them for what seems like other obligations. You'll regret it later in life.
 - Focus on those who are in need.
- Christmas doesn't have to be the most stressful time of year. We need to be more like Mary who focused on "what was needed."
- On the night that Jesus was born, angels from heaven announced, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Don't let celebration of the most peace filled night in earth's history turn into the most stressful time of the year!!
- Listen to the words of this beautiful song: Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright, round yon virgin, mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild. Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.