

The Distraction Dilemma
7.21.24

(Coming out of funny video)

Getting to church isn't always the easiest thing to do...but we are so glad you chose to be here today. I believe God and His church are to be enjoyed and not endured.

I am Bobby and I get to serve as the pastor here at City Hope. Thank you from the bottom of our collective heart for showing up today.

I've been praying for you this week. That the Holy Spirit would meet you right where you are. Whether you came into church arguing or whatever you brought with you...God got something for you.

Tell the person next to you...you better listen up...Gods got something for you today.

I have some questions for us and I want you to be honest...*How many of you would say you get distracted pretty easily? Some of you can stay locked in.*

What's the thing in your life that distracts you the most?

When you say yes to that distraction...what are you saying no to?

I believe one of the biggest threats to Christ followers today is distractions.

I entitled today's sermon: ***The Distraction Dilemma***

I came across this quote in my study...

“Our lives can easily take us to the brink of burnout. The pace we live at is often destructive. The lack of margin is debilitating. We are worn out. In all of this, the problem before us is not just that the frenetic pace we live at, but what gets pushed out from our lives as a result; that is, life with God.”

There are things that we would classify as good that are taking up space in our lives that are likely keeping us from experiencing the greatness of God.

Our souls were not created for the kind of speed to which we have grown accustomed.

Thus, we are people who are out of rhythm, a people with too much to do and not enough time to do it.

There is no way to follow Jesus without unhurrying your life.

(Show a picture of a human skull)– What does this make you think of?...death.

We are all going to die. Not something we think about much. To remind yourself that you are going to die is to remind yourself to live for your eulogy, not your resume.

It's to remind yourself to not waste your precious fleeting time, but to focus on what matters in the grand scheme of eternity.

Paul tells the church...

Colossians 3.2 | Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

1 Corinthians 7.35 | ³⁵ I am saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is proper and so that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction.

How do we overcome this distraction dilemma?

Adults listening, we can probably identify the distractions pretty fast. We may hate to admit it, but we know what they are.

Teenagers listening today...this isn't one of those messages for the old people. This is for you too.

Some of us are overwhelmed, insecure, unconfident, anxious, lazy, depressed, or just flat out struggling, not because you're a terrible person, but because you're distracted.

Some of us are defeated, simply because we are distracted.

Praise God his mercies are new every morning. I don't know about you but I'm ready to stop being distracted and experience all that God has for me.

I may have been distracted yesterday...I may have even been distracted this morning...but because of the mercy and Grace of Jesus I don't have to stay distracted.

Go with me to 2 Kings 2. We'll start there and then go to chapter 3

I need to set up this chapter so stick with me for a few minutes here. Context:

There was a prophet of God named Elijah. Elijah was sent by God to guide Israel away from corruption and suffering. He would condemn the sinful Kings and leaders who were over Israel.

If you're looking for a hero in the Bible, Elijah should be in your top 5. He raised a boy from death. He prayed fire down from Heaven. He was truly a man of God, called to do God's work.

Elijah means, "The Lord is my God"

Here is where it gets a little squirrely. Elijah takes on a boy named Elisha as a disciple.

In 1 Kings 19 Elisha leaves his family and starts following Elijah. He watches Elijah work and live for the Lord.

Elisha himself becomes a prophet and a strong man of God.

So, for years and years these two are inseparable. Elisha loves Elijah like a father. God was using them in mighty ways.

Are you still with me? If you're with me say I am.

In 2 Kings 2, Its time for Elijah to go with God. Elisha was emotional. This was his best friend and mentor.

2 Kings 2.1-3 | The time had come for the LORD to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal, ² and Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD is sending me on to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. (This is the type of relationship they had. Elijah tried to tell him to stay back...³ times...Elisha said, " I will not leave you" (Vs. 2-4-6)

³ Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" He said, "Yes, I know. Be quiet."

People tried to tell Elisha that Elijah was leaving...He replied, "I know, Be quiet."
(Anybody got any teenagers?)

Elisha was pretty emotional. Snapping at people. He was struggling.

2 Kings 2.11-12 | As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire with horses of fire suddenly appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went up into heaven in the whirlwind. ¹² As Elisha watched, he kept crying out, "My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!

Elisha cried...he has lost his mentor. He has lost all the momentum he and Elijah had serving the Lord.

This is where we are going to pick up reading together. Lets stand in honor of the reading of Gods Word.

2 Kings 2.12-25 | When he could see him no longer, he took hold of his own clothes, tore them in two, ¹³ picked up the mantle that had fallen off Elijah, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the mantle Elijah had dropped, and he struck the water. "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" he asked. He struck the water himself, and it parted to the right and the left, and Elisha crossed over.¹⁵ When the sons of the prophets from Jericho who were observing saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha."

They came to meet him and bowed down to the ground in front of him. ¹⁶ Then the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “Since there are fifty strong men here with your servants, please let them go and search for your master. Maybe the Spirit of the LORD has carried him away and put him on one of the mountains or into one of the valleys.” He answered, “Don’t send them.” ¹⁷ However, they urged him to the point of embarrassment, so he said, “Send them.” They sent fifty men, who looked for three days but did not find him. ¹⁸ When they returned to him in Jericho where he was staying, he said to them, “Didn’t I tell you not to go?” ¹⁹ The men of the city said to Elisha, “My lord can see that even though the city’s location is good, the water is bad and the land unfruitful.” ²⁰ He replied, “**Bring me a new bowl** and put salt in it.” After they had brought him one, ²¹ Elisha went out to the spring, threw salt in it, and said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘I have healed this water. No longer will death or unfruitfulness result from it.’” ²² Therefore, the water still remains healthy today according to the word that Elisha spoke. ²³ From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking up the path, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, chanting, “Go up, baldy! Go up, baldy!” ²⁴ He turned around, looked at them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the children. ²⁵ From there Elisha went to Mount Carmel, and then he returned to Samaria.

Recap of 2 Kings 3.1-13 | Israels king is faced with a battle from Moabs King. Israels King tries to gather up some constituents. He gets a Godly King of Judah, named Jehosaphat. They also get the King of Edom to join. So the 3 kings and their armies march to battle. After a week, they run out of water and they think God planned all this to take them out. They call on Elisha for help.

Now remember, Elisha is going through some things. He is emotional. His best friend is gone. He almost got jumped by some children.

When they first ask, hes like, go ask your own people. Leave me alone. But then he answers.

2 Kings 3.14-15 | ¹⁴ Elisha responded, “By the life of the LORD of Armies, before whom I stand: If I did not have respect for King Jehoshaphat of Judah, I wouldn’t look at you; I would not take notice of you. ¹⁵ Now, **bring me a musician.**” While the musician played, the LORD’s hand came on Elisha. ¹⁶ Then he said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘**Dig ditch after ditch** in this wadi.’”

Whew that’s a lot....Lets pray

There is a lot going on here...but don’t get distracted from what God has for you today.

Some of us, many of us are caught up in the distraction dilemma. Our life is not what it could be and frankly not what it should be because of distractions.

I want you to see what God showed me this week.

1. **Get a new bowl** | 2 Kings 2.20

Elisha was frustrated with the men who wouldn't listen to him. Now they are whining to him about not having water. They needed healing to take place.

Why a new bowl? Why wouldn't an old bowl work? This act symbolized God's power to purify and heal.

We have a human desire to avoid change and avoid new. But for so many of us change is what we need the most.

This is the starting place for all of us. Your new bowl is a relationship with Christ. You need a new life in Christ.

Jesus is in the business of healing souls. We see so many stories in the Bible of people getting instant healing for their bodies, he doesn't seem to do the same with people's characters.

There is not a single story of Him taking away an ugly habit or personality trait by waving his hands.

He just keeps teaching, and loving, and rebuking them. Helping all of us understand our need for a new bowl.... salvation.

We are born into this world as sinners, and we need a healing to take place. Salvation is a kind of healing.

How do I get a new bowl? It starts with confession. Confession is not all about beating yourself up in public.

Confession is about courageously naming your woundedness and wickedness.

It's not only about confessing your sin, but confessing the truth about who you are, who Christ is, and who you truly are when you are in Christ.

Has distraction kept you from getting a new bowl, a new life in Christ?

If you have never taken that step, it's time for you to get a new bowl. It's time for healing.

2. **Find the music** | 2 Kings 3.15

Elisha's musician provided a setting in which he could attend to God rather than being distracted.

While the musician played, the Lord's hand came on Elisha.

In the midst of all the crazy...He paused to spend time with God.

The result was Elisha received Gods Word. He communicated Gods plan for receiving deliverance.

“In a world that for the most part rejects him, ignores him, and chooses any distraction over him, imagine how much it must bless the heart of the Father to hear, “I want to be with you. I choose you, God, over every other option.”

Find the music in your life. What’s the setting or vibe do you need to find in your life in order to focus on Gods plan for your life?

What habits need to come into play to help you eliminate distraction and focus on Him?

“What we repeatedly do, we become.”

God is looking for relationship, not well-prepared speeches spoken from perfect motives.

Get alone with God and sing His praise. Speak His names. Whisper His name. Write His praise.

Find the music.

3. Dig some ditches | 2 Kings 3.16

Elisha heard from the Lord...it’s time to get to work. Dig some ditches.

He told the Kings...If you want to see victory, dig some ditches.

Some of us have some ditches we need to be digging. But we’ve allowed distractions to keep us from digging.

If you do what you can do, God will do what only He can do!

Ditches:

Give if you haven’t given

Serve if you haven’t served

Read if you haven’t read

Pray if you haven’t prayed

Love if you haven’t loved

Confess if you haven’t confessed

Teach if you aren’t teaching

Lead if you aren’t leading

What ditches do you need to start digging? You cant think your way to Christlikeness.

“If we don’t take our discipleship to Jesus seriously, the odds are very high that we will become less like Jesus.”

Do you need some victories in your life....dig ditch after ditch.

Conclusion:

Are distractions keeping you from the life you desire? Are you ready to take control?

Salvation

Sanctification

Surrender