

Doing the Work of God

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of actively pursuing a relationship with Jesus as the one essential aspect of faith that leads to spiritual fruitfulness.

Scripture: Luke 10:38, John 6:28, John 7:37, John 8:12, John 10:9, John 11:6, John 15:5

Topics: "Abiding In Christ", "Fruitful Discipleship"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the importance of actively seeking Jesus and abiding in Him to bear fruit, using the story of Martha and Mary to illustrate the difference between stagnant religiosity and genuine pursuit of God. He warns against being deceived by false vineyards that distract from the true pursuit of Jesus, emphasizing the need to press on towards a living, burning relationship with Him. Believing in Jesus and actively seeking Him is the work of God that leads to bearing fruit and experiencing the abundant life He offers.

Transcript

Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?' Tell her then' to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42

.....one thing is needful....

We all agree that only one thing is needful, that if we really seek Jesus everything else will take care of it. self ...we will bear fruit if we only abide in the Vine.

The danger is that it is possible to assume that we are sitting at Jesus' feet with Mary drinking in the life of God, when in fact we're stagnating.

Like a man who diligently goes into his prayer room and shuts the door every morning at 6.00 a.m., comes out at 7.30 a.m. looking like he is ready to face the world... yet nothing happens in his life---because nothing's happening in that room. He starts off sitting in a chair reading scripture and calling on the name

of the Lord but within five minutes he's asleep. The man himself isn't aware of how shallow his union with the Lord really is. He is quite certain that he has a valid spiritual discipline and can't understand why life is such a bore ...why so little seems to be coming forth by way of fruit.

"I'm seeking the Lord first. I'm not caught up in all the works righteousness of Martha in the kitchen. I'm just like Mary...so what's the deal?"

We have to distinguish between going through the motions of putting Jesus first and actually, aggressively, diligently seeking him.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

John 6:25-29

....this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

A householder goes out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After making an agreement on their wages, the master explains to his new employees exactly where the vineyard is and what they'll be doing when they get there.

"Get on that road and go straight. Turn neither to the left nor to the right. My vineyard is at the end of the road."

But on the way strange things start happening to the new employees. To the left of the road is a beautiful gate supporting a sign which reads,

"THE VINEYARD OF THE GIANT GRAPES".

"You've arrived!" shouts a man standing at the gate. "This is where you are to labor for the Master."

"But the Master told us to go straight to the end of this; road," said one of the laborers.

"You didn't hear him right! This is the place! Look at these grapes. Did you ever see the likes before?"

....some turn in, others keep going.

A few hundred yards down the road the workers come to another sign painted on a red barn.

"THE VINEYARD OF THE TRUE GRAPES"

A man waving a white cloth urges the workers to come in.

"This is the true vineyard," he says. "All other grapes are false. Our grapes alone make true wine."

"But the Master said we were to go straight to the end of the road," protests one of the workers.

"You didn't hear him right!" snapped the man by the barn. "Here, taste these grapes and you'll see what I mean."

"Don't!" shouts one of the workers. "This is not the vineyard of the Master!"

Nevertheless, some taste the grapes and turn aside while the rest travel on.

Soon the group comes upon still another sign which reads,

"THE VINEYARD OF HARD WORK".

Beneath the sign stands a man with a bull horn shouting,

"You whose consciences are troubled ... turn in here."

Looking into the vineyard one can see people picking grapes while angry guards lash them with whips.

"Harder! Harder you lazy lug. This is what you deserve!"

Strangely enough a sizeable group drops off and enters "The Vineyard Of Hard Work".

Just beyond the Vineyard Of Hard Work is the most elaborate gateway they have ever seen. A beautiful stone arch under which hangs a magnificent illuminated painting depicting Mary sitting at Jesus' feet in rapt attention, while in the background Martha can be seen frowning in the kitchen. It is marked by a sign which reads,

"THE VINEYARD OF PURE FAITH".

"This must be the real vineyard," cries the chap who has now taken the lead. "Look at that painting, doesn't the man in the picture look like the man who hired us in the marketplace?"

"This isn't the end of the road. I'm going on," says one of the workers.

But the leader and many followers pass under the arch and enter the Vineyard of Pure Faith.

A guide in a white uniform ushers the newcomers to a long row of vines lined with clean white canvas cots.

"All we want you to do is lie down on one of these cots ... just relax and believe."

In seconds they are flat on their cots and fast asleep. And while they sleep these laborers are robbed of everything they have.

The workers who stayed on the road and turned neither to the left nor to the right finally reach the end. And who should be standing there waiting for them but the Master himself.

"Welcome!" he says. "You took me at my word, did what I said. Come, enter my vineyard and we'll work together."

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." John 6:28-29

To labor in the Vineyard of God is to believe on him whom he has sent. And to believe in Jesus involves more than going into your prayer room, shutting the door, sitting in a chair and falling asleep, or lying on a cot and stagnating.

To believe in Jesus, to choose the one thing needful, involves an aggressive pressing on to know Jesus all the time.

"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

The ones who do this work of God are the ones who bear the fruit of God. The branch that really concentrates on abiding in the Vine is the branch that receives the life of the Vine and bears the fruit of the Vine.

Some of us have left the marketplace and got sidetracked at the Vineyard of the Giant Grapes...

...we've been caught up in the delusion of bigness and numbers.

And some of us have been drawn into the Vineyard of the True Grapes....

...for us the important thing is to be correct,

...to have the right view, the right position on all things.

We're scared to death of making a mistake, We'd rather do nothing and be correct than do something and run the risk of making a mistake.

And some of us have spent most of our lives in the Vineyard of Hard Work....

...trying somehow to atone for our uneasy conscience, yet finding no peace.

But the Vineyard which is the biggest threat to most of us, is the Vineyard which calls itself the Vineyard of Pure Faith.

...We tell ourselves we have a relationship with Jesus,

but this relationship has all the qualities of a dream.

We need to get up and press on to the end of the road. We need to move from a dreamy pseudo-relationship with Jesus, where we're falling asleep in our prayer chair and talking to ourselves to a living,

burning, fresh walk with Jesus.

Where our whole day is spent under the yoke with him,

- knowing he's at our side;

- walking and talking with him:

The Vineyard he has called us to is the Vineyard of Himself.

"If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me as the scripture has said 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" John 7:37

"I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

"I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." John 11:6

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit." John 15:5

Notice that after every "I am" there is an "if"

- a condition,

- a call for action on our part to draw near.

"I am the light

.... he who follows..."

"I am the door

....if any one enters...."

"I am the vine

....he who abides..."

He's there waiting at the end of the road, but it's up to us to press on. And even as we walk toward him, he's with us.

Mary was seated at Jesus' feet ... her body was still ... but her mind and spirit were in hot pursuit of every word Jesus spoke.

Zacchaeus even got into it with his body ... he climbed a tree.

Or, the woman who stooped down and reached through the crowd to touch the hem of his garment.

Each of us has to ask herself, himself, daily,

"Is my pursuit of the face of Jesus aggressive, active, willing to clear away all distractions even if it means letting go of everything I have? Or, is my pursuit of Jesus a tired motion void of mind, heart, soul, strength."

...."Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41b-42

Mary not only saw the one thing needful... she chose it.

We may see the one thing needful but to make it ours we have to do more than move toward it, vote for it, agree with it, sing about it.

We have to go after it with an active mind,

a burning heart,

a willing body every single day of our lives.

If we should be asleep right now, or half asleep, may God help us to wake up and get going and keep going until we reach the One who waits for us at the end of the road...

...and in a mystery we shall discover that he is with us, at our side,

and in our hearts all the way.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/doing-the-work-of-god/>

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