

Margins 4 – Creating Margin for a Full Life

September 29, 2013

Luke 5:4-10

Over the course of this series, we have been talking about creating space to really live. In looking at the topics within this series, it is like the story I am sure many of you have heard about the professor who stood before his class on the first day of class and proceeded to fill a large, glass jar with large rocks. When the jar was full, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone responded, "Yes." He then got out a cup full of smaller pebbles and poured them into the jar, filling in the cracks. He asked again, "Is this full now?" Some said, "Yes," others were unsure. He then pulled out a cup of sand that filled in the cracks between the rocks. He asked again, "Now, is it full?" No one knew how to respond. He then pulled out a cup of water and began slowly pouring it into the jar, filling it to the brim. He then proclaimed, "NOW IT IS FULL!" He then asked the class, "What is my point of this little exercise?" One student raised their hand and said, "Your point is that no matter how full or busy your life may seem, there is always room to add more to it." The professor responded, "Absolutely not! In fact, my point is quite the opposite. My point is that life is always going to be full- there is no getting around it- but if you do not put the big rocks of your life in first, then there won't be room to add them later. The big rocks have to come first."

That is what this series, in a lot of ways, has been about: Looking at the big rocks of a Godly life. We have looked at the importance of having a relationship with God and how that needs to go in first, as we talked about last week. The week before, we talked about how we need to build margin for those most important relationships in our life. Those relationships have to be invested in for them to grow. The first week, if you remember back, was about building margin into your life for Sabbath rest. This is really an investment in self. God knew that it is in the pauses of our life that we gain greater clarity and can understand life better. These three big rocks are important. Today, I am adding a fourth rock to that: We have to build margin in our lives to grow and live into the future God has for us.

When my grandmother died in 1998, the staff of Crossville First UMC (where I was on staff) sent a nice plant to me from them. I repotted the plant a month or two after the funeral into a more permanent pot and have had the plant since then – in that same pot. During the summer I leave it outside on the back porch at the parsonage. A few weeks ago, a storm came through Franklin and blew the schefflera over. When I went to pick it up by one of the stems it came out of the pot and, as you can imagine for a plant in the same pot for 15 years, it was root locked. There was no room in it for any growth at all. What that plant needs in order to grow is MARGIN – space for the roots to expand and the plant to grow. That plant will not outgrow the roots' ability to provide for it.

And that is no different for you or me. If we do not have space in our life, we will not grow either. In order to live into the future God has for us – and understand two things here: God has plans for every one of us and they are big plans, plans to prosper us and give us hope for a future – then we need to create margin in our lives for God to help us live into this.

In our text for today, we see Jesus calling Peter to “Come follow me and I will make you a fisher of men.” But before that, Peter had to really come to grips with some things in his life. Peter did not know Jesus. Jesus was just beginning his earthly ministry, and here Jesus is coming and trying to tell Peter how to do his job. For Peter was a fisherman and fishing was the thing he knew best in this world. But on this particular morning, Peter was coming in from a fruitless night of fishing. He was tired, frustrated and ready to put this day of work behind him. It is at this point that Jesus comes to him and tells him to push back out into the water, swing the nets over into the deep end and put them back into the water for a catch. In Peter’s mind, I can only imagine he was thinking, “Who does this guy think he is? I know fishing and this is stupid. First of all, the shallow end is where the fish are this time of year. Second, they won’t be hitting at all now that the sun is out.” It would be like me telling Bryan how to play he piano or Harry how to play the guitar. It would come across as silly.

But in Peter’s mind, he had to make a choice. I daresay he knew there was something special about this man before him. Everyone who came in contact with Jesus throughout his ministry knew there was something about this man. But then he had to decide, “Do I listen to him or do I continue on with the same old same old?” Peter could have said, “I don’t have time for this! I’m tired and frustrated and I just want to go to sleep. I am going to have to work twice as hard tonight to make up for the lack of fish I caught last night.” But he didn’t. He relinquished control of his schedule to Jesus. He allowed there to be some margin so that he could see what would happen if he listened to Jesus, and he did just as Jesus commanded him. And the catch was unbelievable: So big they had to bring another boat over to take some of the fish because the nets were breaking.

More important, though, Peter went on a journey with Jesus that eventually had Jesus say to him, “You are the rock upon which I will build my church.” The Catholic Church claims Peter as its first Pope – Christ’s official representative on earth. In my “what if” mind, I ask, What if Peter did not make time to entertain Jesus that day? What if Peter did not build margin into his life to see where God might be leading?

But when I think too long about that, I begin to ask “what if’s” about my own life. I begin to wonder where I have been too busy and have failed to build margin into my own life, to the point where I missed out on the nudging and leading of God. I wonder where I missed out on God’s greatness for me because I settled for the mediocrity of my current reality.

I hope that you see this in your life. Margins help us to live life to its fullest. When we build margin in our life for God, that relationship becomes exceptional. When we build margin in our lives to invest in those core relationships in our life, then we experience joy that we had been missing from those relationships. When we create margin to rest, then we find in those pauses the true meaning of life and are able to experience heaven on earth!

When we build margin in our lives, we can better see the path where God is leading us, guiding us to a future of great promise!

Now, let me be clear – it can be scary. Ask anyone who dared to live into an uncertain future simply because they felt God leading them. It can be terrifying, but the alternative of unfaithfulness is unacceptable. Yet too many of us go through life in cruise control because we are not willing to risk taking control.

In our busy world that goes 24/7, that never lets up, that constantly puts demands on us, that tries to push us over the edge, we need to build margin where we can stop and step back and evaluate and reflect on and see where it is God is moving so we can get on board.

Peter was a key figure in the greatest movement to ever sweep the earth, and that happened because he was willing to have margin in his life to live into a new reality. He was willing to step back from where his talents and abilities were and do what it was Jesus was asking – simply because it was Jesus asking him.

What about you? God is calling you to make a difference in this world, and God is calling this people called Bethlehem to do great things, let me assure you!

Will you build margin into your life for these big rocks: God, relationships, rest, and your future?

It will help you live life to the fullest.

THANKS BE TO GOD

AMEN