

One afternoon back in December I was driving on the Intercounty Connector heading to my mom's.

It was rush hour, 30 degrees out, and the sun was going down....

SCREEN: Low tire pressure warning light

when I saw this warning light on my dashboard----*low tire pressure*.

I quickly pulled over, got out, and saw that one tire was nearly flat.

Even though I'd never changed a tire on this car, I decided *I can do this*.

I was in the middle of changing the tire when a friend texted me.

It read '*Call me ASAP!*'

I put the phone back in my pocket and finished changing the tire.

Twenty minutes later I was on my way again.

Oh, and that URGENT text from a friend was about scheduling a lunch.

SCREEN: blank red background

Everyday, we have to choose between something important and something urgent.

I've been there, so have you.

Do you make your mortgage payment on time OR buy your teen a new smartphone?

Do you continue the conversation with a family member OR answer the 'Spam Likely' call?

Study for the final exam OR spend hours with a friend having yet another relationship crisis.

We face choices like these all the time.

Sometimes, things that appear urgent are disguised as important.

When in reality, they're only distractions.

Someone else's crisis does not always have to be our crisis.

Lots of people fill their days spinning to respond to the urgent, while neglecting the truly important.

My friend's text looked urgent, but it wasn't.

Changing a flat tire was more important.

SCREEN: I Choose main screen

So we've come to the final week of our message series titled, I Choose.

This month we've been learning about some fundamental choices we need to make so we can truly serve God and others.

On this final week, we're being asked to choose: the important over the urgent.

The important over the urgent.

Let's turn to the readings.

SCREEN: blank red background

Scripture is filled with stories of individuals facing big life choices.

Some choose wisely, others did not.

Our first reading today told the story of David and King Saul.

Saul was the first king of Israel and Judah, David was a member of Saul's court.

King Saul was a flawed leader.

He could be prideful, arrogant, power hungry and jealous of others.

In his darkest thoughts, Saul decided that David was a rival who had to be eliminated.

This fixation, *this obsession*, became Saul's most urgent task.

Today we heard that King Saul ordered 3000 men---his top soldiers---to find David.

3000 men to look for one man!

And they failed.

And after all this effort, all this energy and commitment of time and resources, what was the result?

David snuck into Saul's camp at night, saw the king sleeping, thought to himself,

If I wanted to I could kill the king but that's not my intention.

Saul focused on what he thought was urgent.

David choose what was important: honoring the king who was God's anointed.

Today in the Gospel, Jesus was continuing his sermon from last week.

His mission was to get people back on track with their faith.

They'd lost sight of what was most important in their relationship with God.

People had become distracted with keeping 613 rules

that the Jewish teachers had come up with.

The leaders taught that every single rule was necessary; that it was urgent to keep them.

Jesus knew that a religion focused entirely on rules does not make for happy members;

it actually keeps people from truly serving God and others.

In his sermon Jesus taught what is most important in life.

He said, love your enemies, be generous, be merciful and forgiving

and presented what we now call The Golden Rule:

SCREEN: Do to others as you would have them do to you

He's saying: *this is what's important---God and others---don't stress over the urgent.*

Jesus lived a short life here on earth.

He was only 33 years old when he died and his public ministry lasted just 3 years.

Yet he accomplished the most important work of all.

He was able to do it because he never lost sight of what was most important;

his relationship with the Father and the mission he'd been given.

He taught his followers to do the same.

By following Jesus' teachings, disciples can filter out the distractions

and focus on what matters most.

SCREEN: blank red background

When I ask people, "*How's it going?*",

the answer I most hear is, "*I'm so busy! So busy...*

I'm running my kids to activities, my job is crazy,

I'm helping a sick relative, I'm active in a half dozen groups!"

Everybody is busy.

When people ask me how I'm doing, I'll usually say, *Busy!*

Look at all you're doing; it may be good stuff.

But added together is it possible, just possible that it's too much?

There's nothing wrong with keeping busy.

But if you're running yourself ragged; if you're not happy and feel unfulfilled, you're missing out on what's most important in life.

I want to give you two ways to help you choose the important over the urgent.

SCREEN: #1 Be ruthlessly selective with your 'yeses'

Ruthless sounds harsh, but you might need to be.

I'd say, be incredibly prayerful and careful about what you say 'yes' to.

For some of you, the greatest barrier to a meaningful life is not being *UN*committed, but being *OVER*committed.

If everything is important then nothing is.

And if a dozen urgent things take up all your time, you'll never have time for the truly important.

So be ruthlessly selective with your 'yeses'.

Which leads to the second way you can choose the important over the urgent:

SCREEN: #2 Do first what matters most

And as disciples of Christ, what matters most?

Our relationship with God!

You have to take time every day to focus on what matters most.

It's the only way to stay balanced.

Prayer has to be the first thing you schedule, before anything else.

If that means getting up a little earlier, then do it.

If it means using your commuting time to pray, make it then.

If it's at the end of the day when everyone else is in bed, do it then.

Whatever works for you...make time *first* for what matters *most*.

If you're not sure this message today applies to you, here's one sure way to figure out:

name 3 urgent things you needed to do this past week and 3 important things.

Which got more of your time?

SCREEN: blank red background

Today I am inviting you to choose the important over the urgent.

And at the end of Mass, you can take some big steps to do this.

First, offer a Prayer of Personal Commitment to Christ.

Right after the dismissal, I'll invite you to join me at the foot of the sanctuary

to offer a prayer of commitment (or recommitment) to Christ.

Copies of the prayer are at the end of your pew.

Just bring the prayer up with you and either standing or kneeling, quietly offer your prayer.

When you're finished, you'll leave your prayer in one of the baskets in front of the altar.

That's the first invitation today to help you choose the important over the urgent.

And the second invitation is to sign up for a Lenten small group.

We began small groups at St. Pius 5 years ago.

My men's group has been meeting for over three years.

Every Tuesday, for 90 minutes we meet to pray together, discuss the message series and support each other in our walk of faith.

My life and my ministry as a priest has been so enriched by being in a small group.

Our Lenten small groups will meet 5 times and will follow our Lenten message series titled, *Everybody Always*.

It's based on the book by Bob Goff of the same title.

If you're in a small group now or sign up for a Lenten group you'll get a copy of the book today---it will cost you just \$5.

Everyone else will be able to buy the book starting next weekend.

This Lent we'll offer groups for men, women, married couples, young adults, and mixed adult groups.

We'll have weekday, weekend, daytime and evening groups forming.

Talk to anyone in a small group and they'll tell you the difference it's made in their lives.

Before I joined my small group I'd decided,

I don't have time for this, I'm the pastor, I'm too busy!

Now I can't imagine my life without it!

If you've decided you don't have time, here's where I'd challenge you:

look at all the things you do make time for...surfing the internet,

keeping up with social media, binge watching a TV show, hobbies, clubs.

We are all very creative in making time for things we want to do.

We need to be just as creative when it comes to those things we need to do.

And nothing is more important than growing in faith.

If you feel like your life is in a rut, feel like something is missing,

or just need to kick start your faith, be renewed this Lent, sign up for a small group.

I guarantee you won't regret it.

You'll transform your Lent, your Easter and your life.

Christ teaches us that when we make our relationship with God

the most important relationship, everything else in life falls into place.

But if we put God last, nothing else makes sense.

Today, take a step towards Christ.

Today, choose the important over the urgent. Amen. +