

**Pastor Mollie's Sermon**  
**September 22, 2019**  
**Luke 16:1-13**

About 5 years ago I gave up on the idea of balance.

Balance is a myth.

1 It is simply not possible to keep the important things in your life in perfect balance every day, all the time.

At the same time, maintaining balance has become another mark of achievement in motherhood, in ministry, in this culture that pressures us to have it all together all the time.

From my own experience-

“Look at how well she is able to balance her personal life, her family life, and the demands of the church!” How does she do it all?”

And my response to the “how do you do it?” question- is “I didn't know I had a choice?!”

But in all seriousness- it is a “one day at a time, or even one hour at a time- method for me.

I hear these questions and comments as affirmation yes.

Any one of us can probably recall a time in life where we were juggling all that was on our full plate?

Whether it entailed, work, family, volunteering, traveling, sickness, education, multiple schedules...

Do you ever wonder if people actually got a glimpse of “how you do it all” your ability to be effective in all aspects of your life could be called into question?

In addition, assumptions about the concept of balance make its attainability all the more out of place.

To expect that all of your responsibilities -- to your multiple roles and those to your own self -- can be at equal weight all the time is simply not reasonable.

Circumstances arise that tip the scale regardless of how much effort you put into keeping the weight even.

Of course, the attractiveness of balance is rooted in the idea of making sure that all that is important in your life receives equal attention.

This goal, however, has lost its true focus.

It should not be an ideal that equal attention is a daily possibility (mostly because it is unachievable) but that equal attention over time is essential to how you live your life in all of its complexities.

In practical terms, this approach to “maintaining balance” requires constant renegotiation of what is most important to you in your life.

That is, you assess regularly and frequently where, how, and why your commitments have come into a state of imbalance.

If one commitment in your life (and, you really need to figure out what these are) is receiving or has received the most concentration for a while (likely for good reasons), how can you bring some of the others into focus?

For instance, Christmas and Easter week, are full on game time for me at church!

But I and my family know that the week following is realigned to focus more on family and a little less at church.

Every week, I ask myself,

Which areas need more attention than others at a particular time?

And giving myself permission to know that this is ok...  
For some, this daily strategy of realignment and recalibration may seem exhausting.  
Yet, more exhausting is the energy it takes to maintain a myth.  
Trying to make all 8 pieces of the pie the same size... all the time!  
The church excels at tipping the scales.  
It succeeds like no other entity in your life in usurping your time and energy, convincing you that the rest of your life is not as important as it.  
Why? There is an unspoken theological justification that just as Jesus sacrificed all (but he was human too),  
just as the disciples sacrificed their lives (yes, but they were human, too)  
congregation members are expected to engage in that same kind of self-sacrificial behavior.  
Yet what should be the focus of our church and ministry in the first place is faith in God.  
Faith in God, however, is not a denial of self.  
Faith in God, at least according to Luke, also means faith in your own worth.  
And your own worth has to be embodied in tending to those core commitments in your life that are central to who you are.  
This is where our Gospel text for this week offers a critical corrective -- of our own confirmed commitments and of the church,  
which often seems to have an imbalanced sense of its own priorities.  
The point of Jesus' story is not to bash the wealthy.  
Often our impulse as we hear this text all too quickly dissolve into the binaries of this world:  
case in point, that you have to choose God over money. Period.  
The Gospel is not that easy, as much as we want it to be.  
Jesus is not calling out the rich.  
Jesus is calling out our loyalties, not only to God, but also to that which in your life enables you to be who God has called you to be.  
That is, we are no good to God if we are not good to ourselves.  
Being good to ourselves is not an act of sacrifice or self-care or even self-serving --  
it is an act of salvation, being and existing in a way that you believe you are named and claimed,  
so as to make possible that others might see God's love is for them too.  
A skewed loyalty to the church couched in self-sacrifice ends up only communicating to others that **if** they do not have the same kind of loyalty to God, will God really see them?  
Does God really love them?  
I am convinced that when our own loyalties are out of kilter, it is awfully hard to find the imagination or the impulse to making sure that God's loyalty to the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized is heard.  
If we are constantly in a state of need because we are not committed to what we need, how can we possibly be present to those in need?  
How can we have faith in God who listens to those in need,  
who sees them, who finds them, who frees them, who wants to have dinner with them, who became flesh for them, who died for them, who rose from the dead for them, who ascended for them, when you live your life as if these truths were not true for **you**?  
The question of our dedication, our service, on the part of Jesus is not a request to give up all that gives you life for the sake of a life dedicated to Jesus.  
Unless you want to give all your money and time to the church... that's fine too.  
It is, rather, an invitation to live as God's faithful people,

Our God, who sees our needs, who sees the complex realities of our lives,  
who sees all that we are trying to do for the sake of the Kingdom of God,  
who sees that we are indeed faithful in much.  
God knows the struggle is real when it comes to maintaining a balanced life...  
So instead of living a myth, give into the values and priorities that make up who you are, and  
always remember whose you are!  
Amen