

**Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple”,
presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 01-22-2017 at Crossroads United Methodist
Church, Waunakee, WI.**

In Romans 12:2, we are reminded that spending too much time immersed in the culture of this world, we soon conform to that which is not life giving. Being with God fully, is to reconnect with the source of true life.

²Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

In the Gospel of Luke, we find Jesus experiencing an average day with his friends. It could be an average day for any of us. One of his hosts is busy making preparations and fussing over details. The other focuses on being completely present in Jesus' company.

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!”

⁴¹The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, ⁴²but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.”

May God help us continually choose the right thing that will not be taken away from us. Amen.

Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple Series”

Busy, busy, busy.



I'd like to take the pulse of this congregation.

How many of you have a to do list – even if it's tucked somewhere in your brain, a list of things you need to get done?

Leave your hand up.

Those of you who have less than three things on your list, put your hand down.

Those of you who finish a task, does it only get replaced with another and another?

Those of you who have a list that isn't getting bigger, but getting smaller, put your hand down.

Those of you who have actually finished your to-do list before coming here today, put your hand down.

Those of you who can actually sit through church without mentally scanning your to-do list, put your hand down.

Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple Series”

What was the difference between Martha and Mary? I always think Martha gets kind of a bad rap. Martha has a list of things she wants to get done. She may not have been expecting Jesus. Now he's here and the place is a mess. She'll have to feed him and prepare a place for him to sleep and take care of all of the details so that his stay is comfortable. And Mary's not helping! Martha throws Mary a nasty glance. It shoots past Mary unnoticed. Finally, she can take it no longer and she blurts out, “Jesus, tell Mary to get off her dead butt and do something!”

Mary is not concerned about what has been done, what needs to be done, what she needs to do, or what Martha's problem is. She is completely present with Jesus. She is an open gateway to the giving and receiving. She is giving God, in human form, her undivided attention, and she is being filled with that which is lifegiving. Martha, on the other hand, is checking another item off her to-do list only to replace it with another and another and another. She's missing this moment that may never come again. Her focus is not on Jesus in the present moment.



In several gospel scriptures, we find Jesus not only meditating, but also encouraging his disciples to do the same. And he's not contemplating his navel or practicing mindlessness, he's actually practicing what we now call mindfulness.

Jesus calls us to settle the busy-ness of random thoughts and overactive bodies. Christian mindfulness is designed to fill the mind with just one thing: seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness. We aim to release the distractions around us so that we can attach our deepest selves to God. We do this by learning to be completely present.

Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple Series”

It’s a practice. And when practiced regularly can have a profound effect on our health and our mental state. Matthew 11:28 tells us, “Come to me all you who are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest.” If you are coming to God, it means you are attending to the invitation of the holy. It means that you are not attending to anything else.



Have you ever felt like you were with someone but they weren’t completely present?

To be fair, Author, speaker and expert in the field, Eckhardt Tolle says, “Most humans are never fully present in the now, because unconsciously, they believe that the next moment must be more important than this one. But then, you miss your whole life, which is never not now. Your life is really only ever now.”

One of the most life changing books I ever read was by Tolle. It was called, “Practicing the Power of Now.” He talks about this mindfulness practice, where, I believe, I have truly felt God. And as I’ve practiced it, I’ve discovered that this is the same practice, although I didn’t have a name for it back then, that I used when I was much younger. The place where God was always waiting for me. The practice is so natural that we are born with it, but lose it as we are pulled along on life’s busy conveyor belt. I know when I have reached that place because tears stream from my eyes even though I am not crying. Being still in God’s presence is transformational.

Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple Series”



Tolle Advises: Whenever you notice that some form of negativity has risen within you, look at it not as a failure, but as a helpful signal that is telling you; “Wake up! Get out of your mind! Be present!”

He talks about presence being that place – that state in between the mind stuff.

Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple Series”



You are not your mind. But, your mind does try to make you feel like it owns you. It races along analyzing grief, regret, grievances, sadness, bitterness, non-forgiveness. It begins to try to cope with things that may or may not happen in the future. Things that are not happening right now. It wrestles with unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry and all forms of fear.

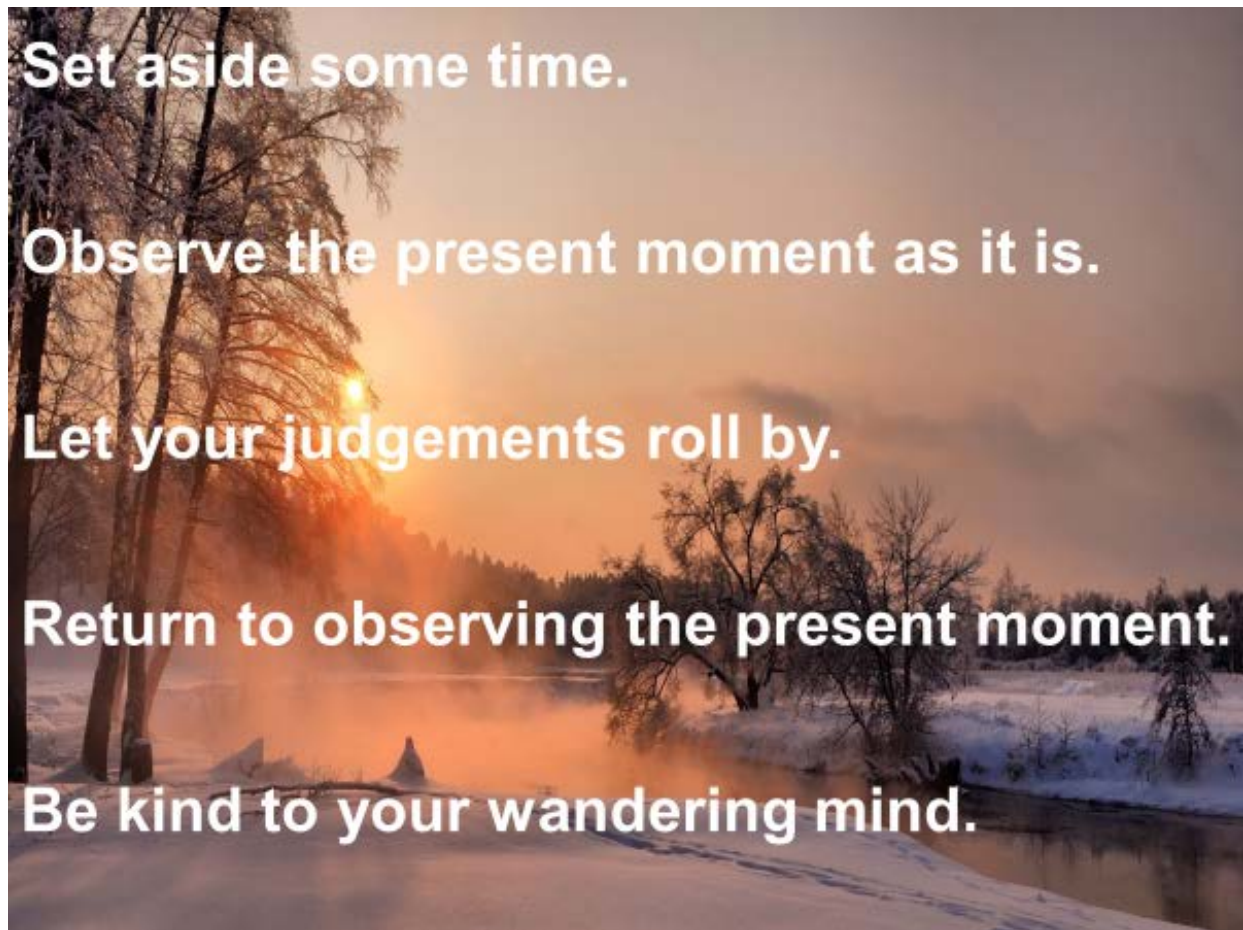
Mindfulness is that state of bliss that is practiced by engaging the 5 senses and getting out of your mind. Right now, what do you feel? What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you taste? I'll give you an example...

Pause for a moment..

What do you see? Focus on a piece of your clothing. Really look at it. Have you noticed it like this before? How does it look? What is the texture? What does it feel like? You are practicing being in the present moment. During my prayers, this is what I do. And every time... I see something differently than I've seen it before.

Mindfulness helps us put some space between ourselves and our reactions, breaking down our conditioned responses. Here's how to tune into mindfulness throughout the day:

Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple Series”



1. Set aside some time. You don't need a meditation cushion or bench, or any sort of special equipment to access your mindfulness skills—but you do need to set aside some time and space.
2. Observe the present moment as it is. The aim of mindfulness is not quieting the mind, or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: we're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgement. Easier said than done.
3. Let your judgements roll by. When we notice judgements arise, make a mental note of them, and let them pass.
4. Return to observing the present moment as it is. Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment.
5. Be kind to your wandering mind. Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back. That's the practice. It's often been said that it's very simple, but it's not necessarily easy. The work is to just keep doing it. Results will accrue.

The story is told of a farmer who lost his watch while loading hay in his barn. He searched all over the area where he had been working but with no success and then he rested, exhausted.

As he kept quite still he heard something – it was a ticking noise. It must be his watch! He followed the sound and there was his watch.

Message: “Making Stillness Happen”, Week 4 of “Finding Simple Series”

When we fill space meant to be shared with God with all sorts of distractions, including our own talking and our own agenda, we position ourselves to miss His still small voice. but if we calm down and follow the advice of the psalmist we are likely to have more success: ‘Be still and know that I am God’ (46:10).



During the next song, go through your planner and think about how to schedule intentional presence with the Holy Spirit....

You can also sing along with the song if it moves you. Make this time about letting the Holy Spirit lead you.

Choose to be Mary. Choose the better thing, that cannot be taken from you. Amen.