

Sermon, July 17, 2022
Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42
“Deeper: Stop”
Rev. Dr. Brian Jones, Senior Pastor



One of the biggest movies of the summer, so far has been “Top Gun Maverick”. And not just here, but worldwide. It’s been one of the first real block buster’s since we began to come out of the pandemic. I think there are some reasons for that. It might be because the producers knew it was a movie made for the big screen, and if you wanted to get the full affect, you had to go to the theater to see it. It’s visually stunning, the plane aerobatics are unbelievable. So that could be it.

A part of me also wonders if it’s also simply nostalgia. The first Top Gun movie came out in 1986. 36 years ago. It harkens back to simpler times at least in the minds of many of us. Feel good times before the crises we face today. A lot of that is true, I believe.

But there may be another reason why the movie has resonated with so many people. The movie, and I don’t know if I can say above everything else, but almost, is a celebration of speed. The entire movie is built around people and machines going ever faster.

We see this from the very beginning. The opening scenes begin with Tom Cruise flying an experimental plane, attempting to reach Mach 10. By the way, Mach 10 is right around 7,672 miles per hour. It's a tense scene, the plane moving faster, you can see the air moving around the plane. I won't spoil if he makes it or not, but it's a gripping scene.

And I won't spoil the movie for you but the idea of going faster weaves itself in and out of the movie. The plot revolves around the pilots being able to go faster and faster in a very narrow space. The success of the mission depends on how much they can get done in the shortest amount of time possible.

Well, no wonder it has resonated with so many of us. Because while most of us don't fly fighter jets for a living, that concept that we need to do more and more in the least amount of time possible is exactly how many of us live. One of the most famous lines from the first Top Gun movie is I feel the need, the need for what? Yes, I feel the need the need for speed. Which, taken by itself, is kind of a cheesy line. So why do we remember it? Because that's how we live, we live with a need for speed.

We multitask so we can do two or three things which is more productive than doing one thing. Except, of course, when it's not. I'll confess I'm preaching a bit to myself this morning. I reached out to one of our congregation members this past week who is going through some difficult times. I had to leave a message for them. Once I realized I didn't have the person on the phone, I started multitasking while leaving a message. Which caused me to leave my cell number with the wrong numbers twice. I had to send them an email with the right number and an apology. We have traded value for productivity, business for things of significance. Life goes by in a blur.

We no longer communicate in long, well thought out letters. We try to share our deepest convictions on social media with limited character space, we substitute emoji's. Think about that. Someone asks for prayers, and we could type out the word *praying* or the more loquacious *I'm praying for you*. Nope, I don't have time for that, I'll send you a pray emoji. Why, because I felt the need for speed to do more, to get more accomplished.

Life moves at a blur, and we are happy with it. We assume doing more is a substitute for significance. We assume that we can be happy with hundreds of surface relationships that allow us to move and not invest ourselves instead of relationships that, while perhaps fewer, change and transform us as well as transform others.

Most of all, going faster substituting productivity for substance and significance, keeps us from going deeper. Pastor Amy got us off on the right foot last week as we began this series. We've titled this series "Deeper". Some of it will deal with prayer, but prayer is only a means to the end. What we really want to do is to ask ourselves *what does it mean to go deeper in my walk with Christ?* What does it mean to move

beyond a surface Christianity that's more about tasks and less about being changed by our relationship with Christ.

Of course, that's assuming we want to go deeper. But that may not be the case. If I go deeper, I can't keep everything on the surface. I can't hurtle through life, I can't measure myself by how much I get done. It calls us to not to go faster, but deeper. We feel the need for speed, yet there is a conviction of the Holy Spirit whispering to go deeper.

Now perhaps you think I'm being a bit harsh in saying all we want to do is move faster and faster on the hamster wheel. But I would call your attention back to our Gospel reading this morning. Mary and Martha and Jesus. It may come as a surprise to you, but this is not the first time I've preached on this passage of Scripture. And I've taught it in Bible Studies more than once over the years. I have noticed a very consistent reaction when I teach this. Who are the majority of people sympathetic toward in this passage of Scripture? Martha. By a huge majority. It's not even close. I've seen people take up Martha's cause, defend Martha, blame Mary for not doing more. Why?

Because we get Martha. We are Martha. Multi-tasking, trying to get everything done, being a good host, feeding people, doing all of the things you are supposed to do. It's not that they aren't important things or unnecessary. The issue is Martha is moving so fast that life is a blur, and when life is a blur, we fail to see Jesus.

Because that's the real issue here, isn't it? The issue isn't should lunch be made. The issue is missing the presence of Jesus in order to get something else done. I love that the lectionary places this Gospel and this epistle reading together. I don't know they always connect, but this is spot on. In Colossians, Paul begins to talk about the nature of Jesus fully human and fully God. It's theologically rich and poetic at the same time. Paul is overwhelmed and astounded when he thinks about Jesus. And here is Martha with this Jesus, the Jesus of Colossians in her living room. The One who speaks and created the universe. The One who is the eternal God, Virgin born. Healer of the blind, who casts out demons, walks on water, fed 5,000 people, the Messiah, the alpha and the Omega, the bright morning star, the lily of the valley, the rose of Sharon, in her living room. And she almost missed Him because she'd rather go Mach 10 and get more done.

How often have you and I been Martha? Doing good things, but missing an opportunity to sit at the feet of Jesus. How often have we sacrificed an opportunity to go deeper because all we wanted to do was go faster. How often have we missed the face of Jesus, the blessings He pours out in our lives, moments of unscripted joy simply because our insatiable need to do more?

Jesus looks at Martha, and He doesn't condemn her for wanting to do more. He simply says *your sister has picked a better way*. It's Ok to stop. It's Ok to come and simply be in My presence. That's always the

better way. Its Ok to let go of the tyranny of needing to get more done. You can make the most excellent meal you have ever made, and you'll need to make another one in a few hours. You can perform well at your job, but there will be more to do tomorrow. But the moments that really matter are the moments when God speaks to us, when the risen Christ says *stop, breathe, go deep with me*. Those are the eternal moments.

This morning, we want to encourage you to do just that. Let go of the need to do everything. Give yourself permission to slow down. Realize your greatest need isn't to go faster, but deeper in your relationship with Jesus. And may you be blessed with His presence. Amen