The Life That God Blesses

Rich Nathan March 15-16, 2008

Spiritual Growth: How A Christian G.R.O.W.S. Series
Luke 10:38-42

This week on the front page of every newspaper in America there was a picture of New York Governor Eliot Spitzer, who confessed to personal failings and then who resigned from the office of Governor; his political career undone by the revelation of his involvement with prostitutes. Governor Spitzer was the extremely intelligent son of a wealthy New York state real estate baron. He graduated from Princeton University, Harvard Law School, before clerking for a Federal Judge which is a very prestigious thing to do when you are fresh out of law school. He went on to become a prosecutor and then an avenging Attorney General whose landmark prosecution and settlement with some of the nations top Wall Street securities firms caused Time Magazine to name him the 2002 Crusader of the Year.

He became Governor in a landslide victory in 2006. He is married to another brilliant attorney. He has two daughters.

When I read the story of Governor Spitzer I immediately thought of the old Simon and Garfunkel song, *Richard Cory.*

They say that Richard Cory owns one half of this whole town, With political connections to spread his wealth around. Born into society, a banker's only child, He had everything a man could want: power, grace, and style.

But I work in his factory
And I curse the life I'm living
And I curse my poverty
And I wish that I could be,
Oh, I wish that I could be,
Oh I wish that I could be
Richard Cory.

The papers print his picture almost everywhere he goes: Richard Cory at the opera, Richard Cory at a show. And the rumor of his parties and the orgies on his yacht! Oh, he surely must be happy with everything he's got.

He freely gave to charity, he had the common touch, And they were grateful for his patronage and thanked him very much, So my mind was filled with wonder when the evening headlines read: "Richard Cory went home last night and put a bullet through his head." We always profess shock and surprise at the revelation of another fallen leader. We always say, "How could this happen?" I mention Eliot Spitzer not to stand up here to condemn or judge him, but to ask the question: What's going on in the lives of the Eliot Spitzers, Richard Corys, Bill Clintons, Kenneth Lays, Ted Haggards, and Jimmy Swaggerts? We could list hundreds of other names in the last decade including many of us who are not nearly so famous as to cause our self-destructive behaviors to end up on the front page of newspapers. What's going on when someone who seems to have it all is discovered to be in the grip of a secret vice?

Gordon McDonald, in his book titled *The Life that God Blesses* offers a great explanation of why the lives of so many successful people often implode. He uses the illustration of a man who builds a yacht. And his only concern in building this yacht is the perception of the other members of his Yacht Club. He doesn't care about the seaworthiness of his vessel. So this man says, "Why should I spend my time and money on what is out of everyone's sight? I never hear anyone at the club admiring what is on the underside of the boat. They only praise what they can see." And so on the day the yacht was launched, all the people at the yacht club came onboard and complimented the boat builder on the sails, riggings, decks, and stateroom. They said it was the most beautiful boat that was ever built.

The man sailed the boat out over the horizon and was then caught in a storm. Pretty soon the boat's sails were in shreds. The masts were splintered into pieces. The decks were covered with water. And then a wave came and capsized the entire boat and the boat builder drowned.

The people in the Yacht Club shook their heads and said, "How could this have happened? We never saw it coming. Sailboats never capsize. Everything about the boat was so beautiful." But the problem with this particular boat was that the builder never paid attention to what was below the waterline. He never concerned himself with what other people couldn't see – the keel and the ballast that were to keep the boat upright.

When you see a successful person's life capsize, you can almost always guarantee that one thing is true – that person did not have enough below the waterline to keep their life stable and upright when the storms of life came and they were hit by a wave. Lives that capsize are almost always lives that are focused entirely above the waterline.

The Problem: Lives built entirely above the waterline

The successes that people can see, achievements that are applauded, big careers, big houses, big cars, good looks, wonderful vacations, great ministries – all the things that get people pats on the back and the admiration of the world.

I've been doing a series on spiritual growth with the stated purpose that on January 1, 2009 you and I would wake up and say the year 2008 was a good year for each of us. We're closer to God than we were a year ago. We're more freed up from habits and addictions than we've ever been in our lives. We feel more grounded. We're paying attention to what is valuable.

In order to have these things in our lives, we have to engage in certain disciplines. I've used the acronym G.R.O.W.S. to speak about these disciplines.

G.R.O.W.S.

G=Giving

R=Relationships

O=Outreach

W=Worship

S=Spiritual Disciplines

Today in this last message I am going to talk about taking the time in your life to pay attention to what is below the waterline, the cultivation of your inner person. I want to talk about the cultivation of your own relationship with God, the secret places that no one can see. I've borrowed Gordon McDonald's book title and I've called this last talk, *The Life That God Blesses*. Let's pray.

Luke 10:38-42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Let me give you a little bit of background. In verse 38:

Luke 10:38

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

The village, of course, was Bethany. Bethany was 2-3 miles southeast of Jerusalem. It is just on the other side of the Mount of Olives. Bethany would be to Jerusalem like Bexley is to downtown. The center of town is just a couple of miles from the edge of Jerusalem.

Again, by way of background, I want you, as we are looking at the story, to note the very warm and incredibly hospitable relationship that Jesus had with women. If you go through the book of Luke, in particular, you see Jesus' extraordinary relationships with

women. Women are regularly found among Jesus' disciples. If you are taking notes, you might want to jot down Luke 8:1-2. It lists the names of some of the women who were followers of Jesus.

Now what was Martha's problem with Mary's behavior? Certainly one of Martha's problems was that Mary was behaving as if she was a man. Tom Wright, who is one of the world's great New Testament scholars, points out that in that day as in many parts of the world to this day, houses were divided into male space and female space. And male and female roles were strictly separated and demarcated. Mary had crossed an invisible, but huge, boundary within the house, and even more importantly, within the social world. The public room was where men met. The kitchen and the outer corridors that were unseen by outsiders were the places for women and children.

So here is this woman, Mary, sitting in the public space along with the other men. And by the way, when Luke says that Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, you shouldn't think of a teenage girl sitting there adoringly looking up at some rock star. You shouldn't think of a dog that looks adoringly at their master. Sitting at the feet was the posture of a student with their teacher, or rabbi. Mary was taking the position of a student of Jesus. She was a disciple. Martha is upset because that place was to be occupied by men.

Another problem: Women who step out of their assigned roles

I've seen this where women and men who have more traditional views of appropriate gender roles become very upset with women who choose non-traditional roles. How can you be in this workspace when you should be in the domestic space? How can you be preaching in a church or becoming a church leader? That's a male role, not a female role. You are acting like a man.

Certainly, gender issues are part of the subtext going on here in this story. But the other problem and the focus of today's talk is found in verse 40:

Luke 10:40

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

That word "distracted" literally means to be drawn away, or to be dragged away. It indicates that here is a person whose life is so weighed down by activities and busyness that they miss the truly valuable thing that is right in front of them.

The Washington Post, just about a year ago, conducted a fascinating experiment at a busy Washington DC government office building. At 8:00 a.m. in the middle of the morning rush hour, they stationed one of the world's great virtuoso violinists in the lobby of this government office building. The man's name is Joshua Bell.

Joshua Bell

He has packed concert halls around the country for his performances at \$100 per ticket. And here was Joshua Bell standing in the lobby of this government office building playing his \$3.5 million dollar Stradivarius for 43 minutes. The Washington Post secretly video taped nearly 1100 people pass by Joshua Bell. Only 7 people stopped to listen. 1100 people had their heads down and they kept going because they had work to do. Only 7 people stopped and realized something special, something amazing was going on here. They didn't want to miss it in the midst of their overcrowded lives.

What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare. (From "Leisure" by W.H. Davies)

We live such super-busy, overloaded lives that we miss the virtuoso performances that are happening right in front of us. Therapists have diagnosed what they call "hurry sickness" as one of the great afflictions in 21st century America. Hurry Sickness. It is multi-tasking – driving to work talking on the cell phone, drinking a cup of coffee and putting on your eye makeup all at the same time. It is watching TV, reading online, and eating dinner all at the same time. It is hurrying your children along – "Let's play a game. Let's see how quickly you can take your bath," because you need to blow through that time. "Let's see how quickly we can read this story tonight."

Hurry Sickness. You race to get off the plane first so that you can stand by baggage claim the longest. You get impatient when people take a long time to formulate their thoughts. You always drive 10-15 miles above the speed limit. Hurry Sickness. You indulge in self-destructive escapes – too much alcohol, too much TV, too much time on sex.com.

The text says that Martha was dragged away. She led a distracted life and she missed the virtuoso performance that was happening right in front of her. Jesus, the Son of God, was sitting in her living room teaching – a once in a lifetime opportunity and she was too busy and missed it.

"Martha was distracted by all of the preparations that had to be made." That word "distracted" literally means to be drawn away or dragged away. And it indicates that an overloaded life draws a person away or drags them away from something that is valuable.

You see, this is a very subtle thing. That what a person is drawn away from or dragged away from by the busy, hurried life is relationship, personal connectedness, intimacy. And what a person begins to do when they suffer from Hurry Sickness is substitute work and tasks and activity for relationship. Part of the seductiveness of an overloaded life is often very well-intentioned. We are going to work very hard and we are going to work 60 or 70 hours a week or more so that we can provide wonderful things for our children. Things that, perhaps, we didn't have growing up. And we are going to be able to give them the kind of life and home and education that will bless them. That is all very well

intentioned. But what you are being drawn away from and dragged away from through your many hours of work is relationship and connectedness to your children, or your spouse, or your God.

You know that the biggest excuse that people make for not connecting with one of our small groups is busy-ness, life overload. "Gosh, I would love to meet with other Christians, but life is so crazy right now. Maybe in the future when I get more time." Friend, you will never have more time. You are always going to have only 24 hours in every day and 168 hours in every week. Your overloaded life is dragging you away from other things. So we just focus our lives on building above the waterline rather than on developing inner space for a relationship with God.

Most importantly what a person is dragged away from in the busy, hurried life is cultivation of life below the waterline. We don't pay attention to our inner space, to our souls. And I'm sure that is what was happening to Eliot Spitzer and pastors who have fallen, and other successful people who we discover some scandal about. We begin to believe that what's really important about us is our IQ, our university degree, our clothes, our looks, our street smarts, our business connections. And all that works until it stops working, until your life gets hit by a wave, until a storm hits and there is nothing below the waterline.

Let's drill in here a little bit. What are some of the marks of a life that maybe on the edge of capsizing if it is hit by a wave? How can we diagnose this soul sickness before it ends up destroying us?

One of the marks, certainly, is stress - chronic, unrelieved stress in your life.

The sign of stress

Scientists tell us that when you live a life in which your body is constantly on high alert – you are a police officer working in a dangerous part of town, you are a paramedic, an emergency room worker, social worker working with very demanding people, a teacher in an unruly classroom, a leader of a large enterprise – when you are constantly on high alert, a set of hormones is released into your bloodstream that provoke the "fight or flight" response. Your blood pressure goes up. Your brain shuts down to non-essential activities. You stop being open and flexible and aware of your surroundings. When you are in the "fight or flight" response you miss the virtuoso performances. You just have a narrowing of your focus on the thing that is right in front of you.

And then other hormones are released into your body that suppresses your immune system. You find yourself getting sick more often, having more colds. These other hormones that kick in actually reduce the capacity of your body to create new neurons, so you find it harder to learn, harder to create. Physicians have told me that a large percentage of the problems that they see among their patients are not caused by any organic causes. They are not caused by viruses – at least not at the root. They are

related to stress - stomach aches, backaches, insomnia, anxiety, depression, and burnout.

It is the distracted life. The life of just building above the waterline where everyone else can see, and not paying attention to below the waterline cultivation of your soul, it is not just spiritually unhealthy or emotionally unhealthy, it is physically unhealthy.

What are some of the other signs?

Luke 10:40

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

The sign of self-pity

One of the things that you see as an initial matter in the life of someone who is not cultivating life below the waterline is the tendency toward self-pity. And it comes out here in the NIV with these words "by myself" — she has left me to do the work by myself.

Luke 10:40

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

The Greek brings it out even more forcefully by saying, "...me alone, me am left." Me alone, me am left. The essence of self-pity is this sense that I am all alone in this. No one knows the trouble that I have experienced. People have gotten distracted. People whose attention has been diverted and drawn away somehow by the overloaded life and care begin to have this sense of growing isolation from everyone else. I, alone, am undergoing this incredible pressure. No one else has this kind of load on them, of children or job or financial pressure. No one else can understand what we are going through. No one cares.

You know, this is the starting point of something really bad — self pity. It is engendered by too much busyness, too much overload. Self-pity comes to us as a temptation. It is like a seed. We can open ourselves up so that that seed of self-pity gets planted in our soul and we can water it and nurture it and fertilize it until it becomes a really large and awful plant. As we are going to see, there are all these dimensions to self-pity.

We can receive that thought, "Yes, I have been treated unfairly. Poor me. Nobody understands. I am alone. I am isolated. I am cut-off." Or when that temptation to think that or to receive that comes your way, to sweep it aside.

You have a choice to turn to God with your problems and your pain, or you can choose to turn away from God. You have the choice to believe that God has a future for you and will open a door for you even though the present circumstances look really bleak. You have a choice to cultivate your inner life, or instead to continue to live entirely for the applause of other people. You have a choice to believe that God is for you and will give you wisdom to discover a way out from under the pile. Or you can choose to believe that God has forgotten about you and has abandoned you.

You have a choice to open up your life to other people and to stay in relationship, or to withdraw, to cut yourself off and to be like Martha, self-pitying, self-centered, self-consumed, self-concerned. This is where it starts, though, for believers. Over and over I have seen it. It always begins with self pity and succumbing to the temptation that, "I am alone, no one cares, no one understands. I am alone with my struggle, I am alone with my trial or I am alone in this ministry. I alone am serving God faithfully in this particular ministry."

That leads to a third problem. The third problem is being critical toward other Christians for not doing their share.

Luke 10:40

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself..."

The sign of <u>criticism and cynicism</u>

She starts with self pity and then she becomes critical of her sister for not helping her out.

This is the next step in the spiral down. We become critical of other Christians. We become cynical towards the church.

"How come other so-called Christians don't care about relationships like I do? Everyone else is just caught up in their own little world, busy with their own homes. How come they don't want to relate, to really build deep relationships and friendships like I do? It just seems like everyone is so isolated and so caught up in their own thing."

Have you ever become really critical of other believers, really cynical about church – about this church or other churches? Cynicism is one of the chief marks of growing distance from God. We live right now in a really cynical world. Everyone looks at things with an eye of suspicion. Cynicism has become the basic style. Just to stand back and judge everything and everyone. Just watch John Stewart – everything in life is looked at with a raised eyebrow.

The sign of bitterness towards the Lord

Luke 10:40

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Well, now we are really going to spiral down to the fourth thing. The fourth thing is that you become bitter toward the Lord. Self-pity leads to being critical of others and that leads to being really angry towards God. When we are angry, often in our anger and self-pity and all of that, we become really angry at God, and we start accusing God of something. And that is found in this statement, "Lord, don't you care?" "You don't care God!"

Here's what bitterness sounds like: "I am all by myself. I am doing all of this for you, God. I am working my tail off. I have all of this pressure and all of this stuff going on. You're not answering my prayers or protecting me from others. Honestly, I feel like you don't even care."

And you start getting this hard callous growing over your heart and you say, "I don't think you care, God, about me or supporting my end. I am here laboring away for you and you don't care about me at all."

Oh, that is a dangerous place to be. Because then the person says, "Well, hey, if God is not going to care about me, if God won't answer my prayers or meet my needs, then I am not going to care about God, or what he says about the way I should live my life. And I am going to go out there and get my needs met any way I can."

I have seen pastors and mature Christians get into this incredibly dangerous place of anger with God, where bitterness justifies anything.

I've watched Christian leaders and pastors' wives walk away from their marriage, walk away from their own kids, walk away from church, walk away from Christ, just get so far out there because they allowed bitterness, feeling that they were being ripped off before the Lord, to settle into their hearts.

The book of Hebrews warns us against allowing a root of bitterness to grow up in your heart. It says that it causes trouble and defiles many. I've seen the defiling effect of simple bitterness towards other people and towards God.

Bitterness opened us up, then, to saying, "Well fine, God, you are not going to meet my needs. You are not going to come to me and start touching areas of my emotional life. I am exhausted. I am producing so much. Well, fine. I'll just focus now totally on my career and making money and forget about the Kingdom. I'll just go back to school and do my own thing. I will get into some kind of emotional attachment and connectedness with a man at work or a woman at my gym. Maybe I will have a little fling, an affair. Maybe I will get into some kind of escapist behavior. Hey, it's OK, right? Because God

doesn't care about me, I will start meeting my needs myself." This is where Eliot Spitzer and Ted Haggard and everyone who has self-destructed got to.

Now, I want you to see how Jesus responds to what he is observing in Martha's life.

Luke 10:41

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,

Now, he uses the double "Martha, Martha." And throughout the scriptures, the Lord, when he wants to say to someone, "Hey, baby, I need you to listen to this. I want you to hear this. This is urgent," he uses a double name. "Abraham, Abraham, put the knife down." "Moses, Moses, come over here." "Samuel, Samuel, I have something to say to you." "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat."

Jesus calls us by name

Is Jesus calling your name today? Does any of this apply to you?

Let's look at the specific content of what Jesus said to Martha. He said in v. 41,

Luke 10:41-42

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

The first thing that Jesus says to the Hurry Sick, person who is building life entirely above the waterline is, "Your life is a product of your choices." Mary has *chosen* the better portion.

Jesus reminds us that we have choices

See, the hurry-sick person always believes that they have no choice regarding the way they are living. Living a stressed out life is simply their fate.

But friends, for the most part, the overloaded life is a choice. Jesus is saying, "Martha, no one did this to you. You chose to prepare 14 dishes. I didn't ask for that. You chose to do it." Do you see that, friends, in your own life? That you are making choices all the time to say "yes" to one more thing, one more debt, one more person, one more obligation? We are making choices to live entirely above the waterline and we make choices to not stop and pay attention to the virtuoso performances all around us. We are making choices to not invest in our marriages. We choose not to slow down enough to thoroughly enjoy the brief time we have with our kids, or to slow down to be with our grandchildren, or to slow down enough to nurture great friendships.

So Jesus says,

Luke 10:41-42

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

If you want to begin to live a sane life, you've got to see that you are making choices to live insanely.

Jesus invites us to a simpler and deeper life with him.

You know, Jesus always loves simplicity. And the way you can recognize the voice of Jesus is that he will almost always speak to you about one thing. We are drawn into hundreds of complicated details. Jesus is always only putting his finger on one sin in our lives. "I want you to deal with this one thing, this one attitude, this one issue." With Jesus it is always a matter of this single focus, this one thing that is necessary.

Well, what is that one thing in your life? Is the Lord putting his finger on one choice that you keep making that causes your life to be insane? What is the one thing, the one issue? Is it your choices about your work? Your hobbies? Your obsession regarding your home? And he says that there is only one thing that is needed. Actually, the Greek here is "there is only one dish that is really important or necessary." See, I think Martha spread this banquet table out with a dozen dishes to serve the Lord. And Jesus points to the one dish on the table as he said this, you know, to the one meat dish and he says, "Martha, you have lots of things going here, but you know there is only one real main course. There is only one thing on this table that is really important." And then he points to himself. "Don't miss me!" Don't miss building your inner life while you are working so hard to be outwardly successful.

Let me close by making a few suggestions so that we don't miss Jesus while we are rushing through life. The most important thing that you can do to build below the waterline is to create space for God through solitude.

1. You need solitude.

Solitude is a need that every one of us has. It doesn't matter if you are an extrovert or an introvert. Every one of us needs to pull back from other people, away from busyness, to reflect, to sort things out. Solitude doesn't mean that you withdraw to a monastery. It may be that you love nature and you just decide to take a walk on one of the trails at one of the local parks. It may be that you sit in a quiet place in a library or tucked away in the corner of your den. Maybe you shut your office door for a half-hour before work or over the lunch hour to read the scripture and pray. But you need space and you need quiet. And you need space and solitude to hear God speak to you.

You need solitude

2. Create space for yourself by unplugging the TV

Marlene and I used to do this almost every summer when our kids were growing up. We just said, "We're not going to spend the summer dominated by the TV set. This is an opportunity for our family to connect." It is amazing how much time you gain when the TV is turned off.

- 1. You need solitude
- 2. Create space for yourself by unplugging the TV
- 3. Be quiet in the car.

Now, there are lots of other ways to gain a little bit of space. If you commute to work and you are by yourself, then just make a commitment this next month to turn off the radio and turn off your CD or iPod and just allow your car to be quiet. Don't get on your cell phone. Don't multi-task while you are in the car.

- 1. You need solitude
- 2. Create space for yourself by unplugging the TV
- 3. Be quiet in the car
- 4. Begin to journal

Especially if you are a busy mom or dad with a few kids at home and you say, "There is absolutely no space for me, not even in the bathroom," one thing you could do is to buy an inexpensive notebook at the drugstore and get a pen and start journaling.

You say, "I don't know what I would do in a journal." Write out your prayers to God. That will slow you down. Write out things that God has been speaking to you about. Look back and reflect on your day. What are you thankful for? Write it out. What don't you want to miss? What virtuoso do you not want to rush by? Is it the time your child comes home from school? Is it the time you read to them before bed? Is it the time you spend with good friends? Put it in your journal. "Lord, help me not to miss this today."

- 1. You need solitude
- 2. Create space for yourself by unplugging the TV
- 3. Be quiet in your car
- 4. Begin to journal
- 5. Get involved in a mentoring relationship

You know, sometimes when we want to build deep in our lives, we can't do it by ourselves. Building below the waterline is always a solo project. God has put us in a church where we can be cared for and grow together.

Here is something we are going to be offering. We are going to be offering a Mentoring Discipleship Training class on Wednesday Night, March 19th, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Mentoring Discipleship Training Class

Wednesday, March 19th, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

This training will provide essential principles, models and resources for guiding life on life discipleship relationships. Tim and Ingrid Briscoe will provide an opportunity for questions and answers following the presentation. So here is what I want you to do, If you are interested in attending or finding out more about this class:

- 1. Sign your name at the bottom of this flier.
- 2. Provide your phone number and email address.
- 3. Drop it off at the table in the lobby as you leave.

Let me share with you a vision that I think is from God for our church. What would be really incredible is if in every coffee shop and bookstore and hangout around Central Ohio, whenever you went in there you would see a couple of folks from the Vineyard with an open Bible sitting, talking – a longer time Christian with a newer Christian – involved in growing together. A couple of guys, a couple of women sitting together saying, "I don't want to just run through life with everything above the surface, just keep moving from one achievement to the other. I want to create inner space in my soul for God. I want to run deep, not just broad and shallow. I want to have a life that God can bless." Let's pray.

The Life That God Blesses

Rich Nathan March 15-16, 2008

Spiritual Growth: How A Christian G.R.O.W.S. Series

- Luke 10:38-42
- I. The problem: Lives built entirely above the waterline
- II. Another problem: Women who step out of their assigned roles
- III. Signs of a coming disaster
 - A. The sign of stress
 - B. The sign of self-pity
 - C. The sign of <u>criticism and cynicism</u>
 - D. The sign of bitterness towards the Lord

IV. The healing of our souls

- A. Jesus calls us by name
- B. Jesus reminds us that we have choices
- C. Jesus invites us to a simpler and deeper life with him