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Some of you may remember back in the days of black and white TVs when we would have to tune into a station by turning a knob for either UHF or VHF. Once we found something to watch, we would then use the fine-tuning dial to get a clearer picture. Sometimes the picture would roll from top to bottom, which would require an adjustment in the horizontal tuning dial. If the picture still was not clear, we could adjust the antenna on top of the TV or on the roof to tune into a clearer signal.

We may no longer have to take as much effort to tune in our televisions, and even our radios have push buttons and presettings to easily select our favorite stations, but tuning in is something we still do in other areas of our lives.

I've found myself more tuned in this week to news reports about the coronavirus and to healthy habits, such as washing hands and avoiding large crowds of people. Activities that I have taken for granted I now have to reconsider, such as whether exercise in a public setting or home alone. Although I'm trying to tune in to the recommendations of

health officials, I experience dissonance as I begin to change patterns in my life.

If we ignore tuning in to certain issues in life, we can find disharmony. For example, when I play my euphonium in the Elkhart Municipal Band or my guitar with the band Fishers of Men, one of the first things I do is tune with the rest of the group. If one person is out of tune, one can hear annoying beats as the sound waves interfere with one another.

A tuning fork has often provided the standard for tuning, first invented in 1711 by trumpet player John Shore to tune instruments. Nowadays electronic tuners and apps on our phones provide an easier means of tuning, making the tuning fork a bit obsolete. It's so easy to get our instruments in tune, but often it's not so easy to discern whether our spiritual lives are tuned in.

The Gospel writer Mark tells us of a time when some religious leaders seemed out of tune in regard to the issue of money. Have you ever struggled with questions about how to use your money? Some religious leaders wanted to set a trap for Jesus by

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asking whether they should pay taxes, so Jesus invited them to bring him a coin. He asked whose picture was engraved on the coin, and when they indicated it was the emperor's picture, Jesus replied, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's."

It's really easy to get distracted by our money and our stuff, using them as an excuse to avoid God, and that's when we need to readjust our spiritual fine tuning.

I recall a family visiting for worship with a member of our congregation I served many years ago. It happened to be stewardship Sunday, a day when we focused on our gifts to the church in the coming year. The next week I asked the member of our church if her friends enjoyed worshipping with us, and she replied, "No, they won't be back."

I asked, "Why? What happened that will prevent them from returning?"

She replied, "Because they don't want to hear anyone talking about money in church."

They happened to pick the one Sunday we focused on the topic of money, and for that reason, they used it as an excuse to not return. They tuned out due to the distraction of money.

Jesus often encountered those who seemed out of tune, as when he visited the home of two sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha welcomed Jesus into their home, and then she got busy doing what hosts do: preparing a meal, setting the table, offering hospitality. Her sister, Mary, however, decided to sit and listen to Jesus, which irritated Martha, who suggested that Jesus tell her sister to get up and help.

Jesus replied, "Martha, you are worried by many things." Notice that Jesus doesn't say Martha's tasks are unnecessary or unimportant, for being a host and offering hospitality are good things to do. Luke, the narrator, indicated that she was distracted by the activities, which led to a feeling of resentment of her sister's choice of listening to Jesus. The Greek word that Jesus used to describe Martha can mean "to be troubled in the mind." When our

faithful activities lead us to resent those who don't practice what we do, we may experience a troubled mind. Like Martha, our good intentions and activities can draw us away from Jesus and one another.

Luke described the encounter of Jesus with the sisters using the Greek word περιεσπᾶτο (per-ee-**spah**-to), often translated as "distracted" or "preoccupied." The word can mean "to draw away," "to be overly occupied" or "too busy." It's when the good things we do begin to draw us away from the presence of God that we need to tune in, to draw closer to Jesus for a reminder of his guidance in our lives.

Sometimes we get so busy with our religion that we forgot whom we worship. Even our meetings, our good deeds, our fellowship events, and our faithful tasks can draw us away from noticing what God is doing among us. We just might miss what's going on, as one woman discovered when

Late one Christmas Day a resident of... community...[in] California, accompanied by his

wife and children, set out to sing carols for the neighbors. As they were tuning up outside their first stop, the woman of the house came to the door, looking distraught. "Look fella," she said, "I'm just too busy. The plumbing's on the blink, I can't get anybody to fix it, and there's a mob coming for dinner. If you really feel like singing carols, come back about nine o'clock, okay?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Bing Crosby respectfully, as [the group headed] elsewhere.¹

The group was tuned and ready to sing, but the woman of the house was not tuned in.

When we get so focused on what we're doing, we may not notice what God is up to. When we lose sight of God, we may even begin to think we're in control, and when things don't go our way or people don't follow our ideas, we may feel resentful, forgetting that maybe they have a different way of perceiving how God is moving among us.

To retune our lives means we pause and notice God's activity around us; we listen for the harmony in what God is doing to discern whether we are still in tune with God's music. To get preoccupied or

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distracted means we play our own melody, which may be out of tune with what our Creator hears.

Sometimes we may even find ourselves playing the wrong tune, as was the case with

A couple [who] had installed a fancy horn system on their car that played various tunes. This unfortunate couple had the embarrassment of having their fancy horn system get stuck at a most inopportune time, while in a procession of cars that had come to a stop all at the same time. Their horn inadvertently began to play the tune “We’re in the Money.” The circumstance

Like Martha who busily prepared for Jesus to be in her home, we may get distracted by doing lots of good things and just so happen to miss the presence of Jesus among us. I hope in the remaining weeks of Lent we can slow down, pay attention, and notice what God is doing in our lives.

was the graveside service of their grandmother. The crowd was not amused.²

¹ Hodgins, Michael; Hodgins, Michael. *1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, and Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers* (Kindle Locations 3713-3717). Zondervan. Kindle Edition, #641.

² Hodgins, Michael. *1002 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers* (Kindle Locations 2842-2845). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.