

I hate to admit it, but I admire advertisers and their ability to sell us products we didn't even know we needed. Some of these advertisers are geniuses at convincing us that if we just had their product, it would fill some hole in our lives and would bring us complete satisfaction. One of the more famous ads along these lines came out in the early 1970s. It was an ad for Schlitz Beer. The ad implied that Schlitz Beer was the ultimate beer experience. The tagline went like this, "**You only go around once in life: Go for all the gusto you can.**" Remember that advertising slogan? What does that even mean? I don't know, but consumers loved it. Everyone knew the Schlitz Beer tagline, even those who didn't drink beer.

There's a term you'll hear advertisers use today, and it refers to a recent phenomenon in our society. It's called "FOMO"—the **Fear of Missing Out**. It's the idea that someone somewhere is having a better time than we are, living a richer life than we are, attending a better party or taking a better vacation than we are, and that we'd better cram as many experiences into our life as possible so we don't miss out on the good life. After all as Schlitz beer waned us, "You only go around once in life...."

FOMO is popping up in other areas of our society as well. Therapists started noticing that people were cramming their social schedules with as many parties, events, adventures as possible. But they didn't seem to be enjoying these experiences. Instead, people had a nagging feeling that somebody somewhere was having a better time than they were. Texting and the rise of social media made FOMO even worse.

Suddenly, you could let friends know that you were at the coolest new restaurant in town, or you could post pictures of yourself at a much-desired vacation spot. Now everybody felt this instant pressure to do more, to search for some new and amazing experience or adventure that they could post online to impress their friends with.

All of this rushing about led to a new issue, one that counselors called “**decision paralysis.**” Suddenly, people were so overwhelmed by their options and so driven by the Fear of Missing Out that they literally couldn’t make a decision. They couldn’t commit to anything, because if they committed to one party, or place or option, then they might miss out on other, possibly better options. But is all this anxiety and chasing down better options what a full life is all about?

I think Jesus is addressing this question in our gospel today. But his definition of living life to the fullest is different from our FOMO driven society. Two sisters, Mary and Martha, open their home to Jesus. Martha wants to be the good host, so she rushes around fixing the meal, setting the table, taking care of all the details. Now let’s be clear about this: Marthas are vitally important in our lives. Some of us would be in trouble if we didn’t have a Martha to make sure things get done. Parishes, volunteers groups, workplaces need a lot of Marthas to be successful. Still, the hard work and attention to detail of the Marthas of this world often gets overlooked. It’s really tough to be a good host, to take care of others’ needs, especially if no one seems to appreciate your efforts.

Martha’s sister, Mary, wants to be a good host too, but she has a different way of approaching it.

She sits at Jesus' feet and listens to him teach. When Martha complains to Jesus that her sister isn't helping, Jesus says, "**Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.**" Jesus isn't saying that what Martha is doing isn't important, but he is saying that there are times when we need to recognize that something even more important might be right in front of us.

An eleven-year-old boy named Tyler Sullivan skipped school one day, but it was for a good reason. Former President Barack Obama was visiting his hometown for a big event, and Tyler's dad was introducing the President to the crowd. Imagine his teacher's surprise when Tyler presented her with a note the next day, written on presidential letterhead. It read, "*Please excuse Tyler. He was with me. [signed] Barack Obama, the president.*"

Jesus defends Mary's neglect of her hosting duties by saying, "*Please excuse Mary. She was with me. Jesus, the Messiah.*" He isn't trying to pile more guilt on Martha's shoulders. But he's trying to teach both sisters about the essence of life. Life is short. You only get one go-around. Don't get lured into using up your energy on what doesn't matter. Only one thing matters and the best cure for FOMO is sitting at the feet of Jesus. Being in his presence, hearing his word, letting that focus calm all the competing things calling for our attention.

Jesus is saying here, "Don't miss out on the opportunity to know God." Our society promotes achievement and consumption and radical independence

rather our relationship with God. Yet God is our Creator. The Way, the Truth, the Life. He is where we come from, the reason we are here and our ultimate destination. What good is our life if we skip over something so important. But I can't stress enough that this isn't about a list of things God wants us to do; it is about experiencing the nearness of his love and his power in our lives.

A pastor tells of serving a church in Paraguay. One day, a native Maka Indian man named Rafael came to visit. When the pastor asked Rafael what he wanted, Rafael replied in his language, "I don't want anything; I have just come near." Rafael just wanted to sit on the porch and be near his new friend. He just wanted to enjoy his presence.

Some of us show up here at mass because it's expected, because we believe it will make us a better person, because it will help us get into Heaven. But that is the wrong way to approach worship. Worship is about enjoying God's presence. It's about giving and receiving love in a community that cares for one another. Did you know that's the purpose of worship? Did you expect to find love when you walked in here today? How sad it would be if you missed out on that opportunity.

Every second is an opportunity for us to experience God. If we're afraid of missing out on something, this is the experience we should be afraid of missing. If we're going to spend our lives chasing something, this is what we should be chasing. God is in this moment. It's God we don't want to miss.

In the 1950s, Dr. Don Cooper was working the emergency room at a Kansas City hospital.

In a seemingly tragic moment Dr. Cooper accidentally injected a tranquilizer too quickly into a patient, and the patient went into immediate cardiac arrest and died on the table. The patient had absolutely no heartbeat. Dr. Cooper was so upset over his mistake that he slammed his fist down on the man's chest. Instantly, the patient revived. Imagine that—a surgeon so angry that he slams his fist down on a patient's chest so hard that he brings him back to life. But here's what's more interesting. Dr. Cooper was so afraid of admitting his mistake that he kept this incident a secret for many years afterwards. Sadly, his fear kept Dr. Cooper from seeing an amazing opportunity right before his eyes. If he had published his findings, he could have been instrumental in the development of CPR. Instead, it would be almost ten years later before CPR was developed as a treatment in cases of cardiac arrest. He let what could have been the defining moment of his life slip by.

So what are you doing in this very moment? Are you daydreaming about your vacation, or dreading tomorrow's work? Or are you seizing this very moment to pray, to focus on God, to look for the Creator of the Universe to speak to you and fill you with His love? You only get one go-around but it's probably not the beer you drink that will be the highlight of your life. Only one thing matters, it is the better—make that the best—option, and it can't be taken away from you. Or to put it in New Testament language, if you are suffering from FOMO, the fear of missing out, make sure you're not missing out on the Kingdom of God, God's presence and promise in your life. That's the only moment that really counts.