

Luke 10:38-42

There was a time when Jesus and his disciples entered a small village of Bethany which was about two miles east of Jerusalem and while there he went into the house of Martha. Martha had a sister named Mary and a brother named Lazarus. We are told in John 11:5 that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. **Luke 10:38-42 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.**

On this occasion Jesus and his disciples entered into the house of Martha where Martha was a good host and Mary was a good listener. You can imagine how Martha wanted everything perfect when Jesus came to visit, as many are today when they have guest. She wanted to be a good host and started cooking for her guest which was probably at least fourteen in number; Jesus and his twelve plus Mary. It seems that Mary was also a guest since they entered the house of Martha and not the house of Mary and Martha. John 11:1 tells us that Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived in Bethany but nothing is said about them living together, but here we are told that they entered into the house of Martha and perhaps this is why she felt compelled to honor her guest.

(39) And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. While Martha was working away preparing for her guest, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word: Martha didn't get the help she wanted from her sister Mary and it aggravated her. "*Sitting at Jesus' feet*" was the ancient posture of disciples or learners. They sat at the "*feet*" of their teachers - that is, beneath them, in a humble place. Paul is represented as having been brought up at the "*feet*" of Gamaliel, Act 22:3. When it is said that Mary sat at Jesus' feet, it means that she was "a disciple" of his; that she listened attentively to his instructions, and was anxious to learn his doctrine.

(40) But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. The word "cumbered" means to hinder or distract somebody or something. Martha was distracted with much serving. Martha did nothing wrong in working hard for Jesus – in fact serving the Lord is good. Her problem was that she became distracted with much serving and felt the burden all alone which led to a bad attitude. She became distracted. Distracted from what/whom? She became distracted from Jesus.

There are many people who become irritable in their service for the Lord like Martha. It is easy to look at all we do and to criticize those who seemingly aren't doing as much. But Martha's real problem wasn't Mary; it was Martha. She had become distracted and had taken her eyes off Jesus. Martha's frustration is typical of those who diligently serve with good intent but forget to *sit at Jesus' feet*.

So we see Martha being cumbered about with much serving. She was distracted with the cares of the serving and providing for her guest. It should be said that there is no evidence that Martha had a worldly or covetous disposition. Her anxiety was to provide for

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the Lord Jesus. As mistress of the house, this care properly devolved on her; and the only fault which can be charged on her was her priorities. The apostles were traveling with Jesus. This meant there were thirteen of them plus Mary to be fed. Martha wanted to provide Jesus and his apostles with a good meal. There was a lot of work to do and she felt that she needed help.

She was so concerned about being a good host to Jesus when she could have sat with Mary at his feet. Her strong sense to serve led to fretfulness and aggravation. She was frustrated that Mary was listening to Jesus instead of helping her. Finally this aggravation built to such a level that she went to Jesus and said “Don’t you care?”

Dost thou not care ... - This was an improper reproof against our Lord. It was as if He had encouraged Mary in neglecting her duty. **(40b) Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.** Notice that Mary “left” Martha which implies that Mary too had been busy is preparing to serve Jesus, but she quit to listen to Jesus. This aggravated Martha and apparently she felt it would do no good to ask Mary to return to help her, so instead she solicited Jesus to intervene. You can almost feel the tension in what she said to Jesus; “*dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?*”

(41) And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: (42) But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

In verses 41-42 we see the reply of Jesus to Martha. He begins by calling her name twice. This certainly would have gotten her attention. This is not the only time Jesus repeats a name twice for emphasis. It happened on the Damascus road when Jesus spoke to Saul of Tarsus and said, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me.* Then there was the time when Jesus was telling Peter of his upcoming denial and said, *Luke 22:31 Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

In our text Jesus begins by saying Martha, Martha. We can almost read the love in Jesus’ voice as He says this! Martha was doing good - she wanted to serve Jesus! But she had not added the **one thing** [that] **is needed**. This story shows us three types of Christians. There are people like Mary: Those who know how to serve and *also sit at Jesus’ feet*. There are people like Martha: Those who diligently, and with the best intention serve God, but without adding the *one thing* - a continued focus on Jesus - and it results in great frustration. There are people who aren’t doing either. They are not even in the house with Jesus, for they are too busy with their own pursuits.

Jesus tells Martha preparing the meal is great, but it is even greater to listen to his words. Mary has not done wrong. She wants to spend all the time she can listening to Jesus. In matters of priority, she has chosen the best thing.

APPLICATION: There are several applications that we can see in this story. [\(click\)](#) For one and the most obvious is the matter of

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priority. Some things are more important than others. It's been said that we often fill our lives with the urgent and ignore the important. This is easy to do. Our lives are filled with so many seemingly urgent things that we forget the important things. While the urgent things may be good, they can, and often do, come before sitting at the feet of Jesus. To those who are busy serving the Lord in various ways, perhaps one thing is needed – sitting at the feet of Jesus.

I trust we understand that sitting at the feet of Jesus mean listening to his teachings which is done by studying his Word-the Bible. ***Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*** It's crucial that we set aside a time to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Another application is to note the progression of frustration. Martha was frustrated with Mary and it seems that this frustration progressed into anger and bitterness. Jesus said in essence that Martha was anxious and bothered over many things. This frustration led to many other negative emotions, thinking, and behavior. **Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.**

(click) Application No. 3. Love for the Master is demonstrated. We see this in Mary's behavior. While one thing was lacking in Martha's behavior, it was not so with Mary. The good part Mary chose was that of a scholar at Christ's feet. Now this was going against the culture of the day. Sitting at the feet of a teacher implies that you are a student and Mary, a woman, sitting in the company of men went against the social custom of that day. And more amazing is that Jesus accepted her into the group. This one thing made life simple and supremely blessed. If we would embrace this concept, then much of the fret and worry of life would cease.

The first important lesson to learn from Mary is to seek God's presence and to listen well as He speaks to us. Mary wasn't concerned that she was breaking the cultural rules of her time. She was bold in making sure that she had a place to sit and listen to Jesus, just like the men were doing.

The fact that Mary dared to break this cultural role in society shows that she was very hungry to hear all that Jesus was teaching. Also, recall that Jesus defended Mary when Martha complained that she was not helping her.

When Mary sat at Jesus' feet she obviously was devoted to Him and listened to His words carefully, but this is not the only time that Mary showed her love and devotion for Jesus. ***John 12:1-3 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. (2) There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. (3) Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*** The house was

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filled with the fragrance of the perfume. This made quite a stir with Jesus disciples, especially Judas. It's all about a very expensive bottle of perfume! This bottle of perfume was worth a about year's wages. This perfume was made of pure nard, a fragrance imported from India. The nard was kept in an Alabaster jar which was a form of marble. Alabaster jars were intricately crafted and sealed so that to open the jar, the owner would have to break it, and the perfumes or oils would have to be used immediately.

This meant that Mary could only use this very expensive nard once. Mary was wise and she had listened carefully to all that Jesus had been teaching.

Jesus was not popular with the religious leaders at this time. They actually were plotting to kill Jesus. Jesus had been preparing the disciples for His imminent arrest and crucifixion but they hadn't quite grasped that this would happen soon.

But then we have Mary who had been listening to all that Jesus had been teaching and in an act of devotion, she ministered to Jesus by pouring out this expensive nard all over His feet. In these times, nard or Spikenard was used in preparing a body for burial. This very expensive nard was usually reserved for the burial of Kings and the upper classes. So it was very fitting to be used to anoint the feet of the King of Kings! So you can see that Mary loved, trusted, and believed every word that Jesus spoke and that was how she was able to take the opportunity to bless the Lord.

How can we bless the Lord? Simply by spending time in his presence. Due to our sin, we could not enter the Holy Presence of God so God made a way for us. He bridged the gap between our sin and His holiness through the death of His Son, Jesus on the cross.

Invitation