

Luke 10:38-42; John 11:17-27; Too Busy Serving to Stop I. Martha's Service II. Mary's Place

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you ever feel so busy serving at an event that you start to forget why you signed up for it in the first place? Maybe you have invited a guest into your home, but you find yourself so busy cooking that you never actually sit down to visit with that guest. If you have ever hosted Thanksgiving at your home, you may know what this is like. At the end of the day, when everyone finally goes home, you see the mountain of dishes and then you ask yourself- did I actually give thanks today? Well, today in our series on Sibling Rivalries we find ourselves in Bethany at the house of Martha. Here we will learn a lesson on priorities and attitude when it comes to service within the Kingdom of God. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God as He gently corrects those who are distracted with work.

### **I. Martha's Service**

In our first point, we consider Martha and her service. To orient ourselves, we remember that Martha and Mary have a brother named Lazarus. The same Lazarus who died and was raised by Jesus. These siblings are dearly loved by Jesus as John 11:5 states. As a family, they lived in Bethany which was just East of Jerusalem by a few miles. They often supported Jesus and welcomed him and his disciples into their homes when Jesus was traveling in the area. And since Martha is listed as the one welcoming Jesus into her home in 10:38, she was likely the older sister who owned and managed the home. Now we can all picture in our mind an older sibling who is a "take control and get things organized" kind of person. In our text, we find that Martha was busy with many things. Jesus, his disciples and many other followers have been welcomed into her home. It could be a group upwards of 20 people and maybe more. This would take a lot of planning and preparing of food to feed them all. It was socially unacceptable to invite guests into your home and let them leave without them being filled. So Martha is busy serving in v. 40. As our text says- she was distracted with much serving. She was over occupied, mentally distracted, burdened and a little overwhelmed. She was troubled by the cares of hosting- with

much or great serving. She was putting on the dog as they used to say- going all out and putting out the fine China as people used to do. Seeing her sister just sitting there, she tells Jesus to do something about it and instruct her sister to help! She is clearly overwhelmed with doing the dishes and her little sister is just sitting on the couch! Now we can understand her frustration- I would be too! But Jesus is going to gently correct and critique her- and we need to pay careful attention to exactly what Jesus is saying. Jesus does not critique or criticize Martha for serving. No, not at all. It was not bad that Martha was serving food to those gathered. We need more Martha's in this world who are willing to step up and help out- willing to do the work and get their hands dirty! Note the context in Luke 10 is the parable of the Good Samaritan- to serve your neighbor you need to be willing to do the work! To take care of the needs of those God has placed in your path! That is not what Jesus is correcting. No, we have to look at how Martha was serving! What is her attitude? She was troubled, anxious, worried and distracted. This led her to complain to Jesus and criticize her sister. Jesus mildly rebukes- lovingly correcting Martha for her anxiety and for being troubled over the serving of food. She was so concerned that everything look and taste just right that she forget why she was serving- even who she was serving. As Phil. 4 says, do not be anxious about anything. So instead of just saying that Martha was bad and Mary was good- we need to have a balance. We are not called to simply sit around all day reading our Bibles and never lifting our hands for service! James 1 says that we need to be hearers and doers of the word! So Martha's service is not wrong and sinful- it was her troubled heart and anxious mind that is the issue. Martha had become weary and heavy laden with her troubles- what she needed was rest from Her Good Shepherd. She needed to remember that Jesus could feed thousands of people with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Should she fret over feeding this small crowd? But Luke 10 is not the last time that we come to meet Martha. No, it would be Martha who would run out to meet Jesus in John 11. It will be Martha who says- I know that whatever you ask from God, He will give you. I know that my brother will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. So Martha's faith and confidence in

Jesus does grow! It is Martha who confesses- Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world! This gentle rebuke for her troubled and anxious heart gives way to a steadfast faith that believes even after her brother is dead.

## II. Mary's Place

Now, lets move on to consider her sister Mary. Imagine for a moment that there is a husband who loves his family and does his best to provide. He works long hours so that his wife can have everything she needs- but his work keeps him away from home. Although his family may have lots of money, his wife says- I want more. I want you to be here! More than money, I want you to spend time with me and be a part of this family! A year later we find this husband with a lower paying and less stressful job. His wife and kids are so much happier because their husband and father has chosen the better thing- relationship over anxious work! In a similar way, Mary chooses the better thing in our passage as well!

In the opening words of V. 42, Jesus states that one thing is necessary. What is the one thing that is necessary? Well, we could say that of everything that needs to be done, there is but one thing to remember. Jesus puts it like this in Matthew 6:33; seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. All these other things will be added to you. Martha's priority should have been on seeking God's glory and communion with Him, and that would have greatly decreased her anxiety. And as far as Mary goes, she has chosen this greater thing. So Jesus continues in v. 42, Mary has chosen the good portion. Mary has set a priority on communion with me. It is interesting to note that Mary is often to be found at the feet of Jesus. In John 11, she falls at Jesus feet. And again, in John 12, Mary is anointing the feet of Jesus. This is not just a location of interest, being at the feet of someone is to be considered a follower and disciple of them as well. So not only was Mary literally at the feet of Jesus, she was also a follower of Jesus who learned at His feet. We can see that Jesus takes no offence to her presence- in fact Jesus delights to see Mary here and defends her place. Any who come to Him will never be turned away! So Mary has a good place- she has chosen the good portion. Of all the priorities and responsibilities we

may have in our lives, this is the one that must be first. We all have one job, and that is to be a disciple- a follower of Jesus! This is an honorable choice- and to learn from Him is a proper pursuit. We all need to remember that we are dependant on Him- so that we learn to look to His hand for all that we need. Even as Jesus said in Mt. 4, man does not live on bread alone, but by ever word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. When you think about it, Martha was so busy preparing earthly food that she was missing out on the spiritual food! If we do not put a premium on our Spiritual pursuit- if we do not place a priority on communion with God- it will not happen. It would be like coming to church on Sunday and missing the sermon because you were too busy in the kitchen preparing food. Surely the food can wait- don't neglect your soul! And how about one more- of all the good things that you can do during the week- the best thing to do all week is to come to church to worship God with His people!

This is a good lesson for us all to remember. Communion with God- learning from His Word- sitting at the feet of Jesus- is something that must come first in our lives. As Psalm 16:5 puts it, the LORD is my chosen portion and my cup. Or if we seek the LORD with all our heart, if we delight in the LORD, He will give you the desires of your heart as Psalm 37 states. It is so easy to get caught up in the business of life that we forget or neglect what should be the one thing that is necessary. We get so caught up in doing what needs to be done that we neglect what is our good portion! The fact is- worshipping God and resting in Him is to be our greatest desire. If we do not put communion with God first, something else will always take its place! In order to reorient our lives, we must all set aside quiet moments for spiritual growth. I have been struck by the business of our lives this past month. The business of the world keeps us distracted and pulls us in many different ways. The constant access to technology means that we can be surfing or streaming or swiping at all hours of the day. These tools can easily fill our time which could be used for spiritual growth. For sitting at Jesus' feet! Added to this, the world fills us with anxiety. Watching the news only serves to increase our stress. When what is really needed is spiritual devotion as we rest in the presence of our God. Scripture reading and mediation if not a priority, will be

rushed if it happens at all. We are called to seek the Lord- to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength! God does not just want us to be busy for Him, He wants us to know Him! He wants our hearts and our love- not just our actions! So even when we are busy serving God and serving others, let us not do these works without love! For without love, we gain nothing.

As we close, Martha's actions are a good reminder of what to watch out for. Stress filled and anxious about the little things could describe many of our lives! But the simplicity of faith, hope and love made evident in the devotion of Mary is an encouragement for us all to seek the LORD'S presence. May we all desire to commune with Jesus and sit at His feet! Today is the Lord's Day- have you rested at the feet of Jesus? Or have you been anxious and troubled about many other things? Come to Jesus if you are weary and heavy laden- sit at His feet- be fed with His word! As our theme states; Jesus Christ teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God as He gently corrects those who are distracted with work. Choose the better thing- to sit at the feet of Jesus!