

WHAT HAVE YOU CHOSEN?

Luke 10:38-42 Text vs. 41b *“You are worried and upset about many things.”*

Do you ever find it hard to stay focused when you’re being distracted? You know, a lot of things going on around you. Then suddenly, you discover you’re not getting much done! Well, distractions can be dangerous. Especially, if you’re driving your car. Something moving on the side of the road can distract you and cause you to have an accident. Or even worse! So, staying focused is very important!

And the same is true of spiritual matters. Our Gospel lesson today is a good example of that! In the story of Mary and Martha, Jesus told Martha to stay focused. Now, it would be easy to criticize Martha. She had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him. Yet, she went off and got involved with dinner preparations. She allowed herself to become distracted by earthly things when she could have been focused on spiritual things.

But don’t come down too hard on her until you ask yourself, would you have done the same thing? There’s a knock on the door. You answer it. And there’s Jesus standing right in front of you! What a surprise! Martha, the eldest of the three family members had that experience. And she felt it was her duty to prepare a meal for her Lord. Make His visit in their home as comfortable as possible. So, instead of just sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to Him speak, Martha decided to show her love and appreciation for Jesus by serving Him a good dinner! But to Jesus, that wasn’t what was best for her! She had let earthly things distract her.

And how many times have you done that? Can you say you’ve never been distracted? Or lost focus on something to which you really needed to give your full attention? That’s why people make to-do lists! And what’s on your list? Pay the bills. Get the oil changed. Pick up bread from the grocery store. Call the kids. Clean the house. Wash the clothes. Whatever! But you gotta’ be careful when you go over your list. What did you leave off? What’s missing? OH!!! Prayer time. Family devotions. Bible study. Did you accidentally leave them off? Or were they ever on?

See, it’s easy to become distracted by earthly things when your juggling a lot of things in your life all at the same time. You tend to overlook the important things! Family. Work. Friends. Hobbies. Oh yeah! And God! Look at that! He’s last on your list! But hasn’t that become a problem for you every day? Choosing what you think’s most needful and important. You see, Martha didn’t realize it, but her *busy-ness* caused her to neglect Jesus. It seemed the right thing to do at the time! But she hadn’t chosen what was most needful in her life at the time! Instead of being in the presence of Jesus while He was there with her, she got busy doing a lot of things that could have waited. She was so busy, she forgot to make time for Jesus. *“She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. So, she went up to Jesus and said, ‘Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha. You are anxious and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.’”* (Luke 10:39-41)

He wasn’t condemning Martha for what she was doing. He merely wanted to change her attitude. He didn’t tell her to stop being hospitable. Keep in mind, He had turned to her for a much-needed rest before the brutal week ahead of Him in Jerusalem. Her service was a blessing to Him. He had gone to Martha’s home to show how much He held her in high regard. And His opinion of her was not to be taken lightly. It was as if He was reminding her, she may be the head of her household, but He is her Lord! And no matter how much you may think you are in charge; you must still submit to God’s authority by being humble and having a servant’s heart. Rearranging Martha’s priorities in a loving, straightforward way, Jesus wanted her to put Him first. It didn’t mean Martha needed to stop being hospitable. No! It meant she needed to stop what she was doing and be with Him! There’s nothing wrong with that! You can’t be a “Martha” if you’re only doing *busy* things for God.

Howard Marshall, a Scottish New Testament scholar in his *Commentary on Luke* said, *“Mary, sitting at Jesus’ feet, is a good picture of a student sitting at the feet of a Rabbi. Jesus allowed Mary to sit and learn at His feet, a position reserved only for males. By allowing Mary to sit at His feet, Jesus emphasized the importance of loving Him. Learning of Him. And getting to know Him. Many Christians become relaxed in their faith because they use up all their energy trying to attain some lofty ideal about the ‘Christian experience’.”* In other words, they know it’s God’s grace that saved them, but they believe they must somehow pay God back by doing a lot of good works.

The real Christian experience requires only that you have faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And remember, you can’t do anything to make God love you more. You can’t do anything to make Him love you less. God isn’t keeping score. Martha was *working* for Jesus’ recognition. She asked, *“Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to serve alone?”* (Lk 10:40) which said, *“Look at me, Jesus! Look at all I’m doing for You! I am a much harder worker than my sister. You should be proud of me!”* Jesus understood what she was saying. In fact, He understands you better than

you do! So, don't look down on what you feel you're doing for the Lord as putting you at a disadvantage. Look at it as an advantage. That's how Jesus saw Martha. And it's how Jesus sees you!

A book by John Ortberg titled, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, tells of the time he asked a friend for some spiritual guidance about living life in Chicago and the pace of his family life. Because of the condition of his heart, he wanted to know what he could do to be *spiritually* healthy. After a long pause, his friend answered, "You must eliminate hurry from your life". Ortberg wasn't satisfied with that. He asked what more he could do. "There's nothing else" the man said. . . . Ortberg thought about that. . . . Later he said: "Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life in our day. Hurry can destroy your soul. Hurry can keep you from living well. The great danger for many is, not that you will renounce your faith, but it's that you will become so distracted, and rushed, and preoccupied, that you will settle for a mediocre version of your faith."

Is that where you are in your spiritual life? Mediocre? Church doesn't mean much to you anymore? You can do without it? In fact, you may already be doing that! Martha thought she was doing a good thing when she was entertaining Jesus in her home. She wanted her hospitality to give Him the best. Mary, on the other hand had chosen to sit and be still before the Lord. And to listen to all that He said. We live in a hectic and confused world! Sometimes, even ministry can have you caught up in *doing* things for the Lord, instead of *being* with the Lord. You've lost the joy of servanthood! Yes, it does take discipline to slow down. To spend time in prayer. It does take time to read and meditate on the word of God, *The Holy Bible*. Things can keep you from listening to Him speak to you by His Holy Spirit. The same can be said when you substitute *being* with someone, and instead you start *doing* something for them. Both are important.

But from God's perspective, your priority should be to spend more time just being with God, rather than doing everything else that comes between you and your daily relationship with Him. In other words, you can still be moving forward with the Good News of Jesus Christ and doing His good deeds. But you also need to be having quiet time with Him! Sir Francis Drake, an English sea captain who was the first to circle the globe in the late 16th Century (1577-1580) said this prayer. "*Disturb us Lord when we are too well pleased with ourselves. When our dreams have come true, because we have dreamed too little. When we arrive safely, because we have sailed too close to the shore. Disturb us Lord when with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst for the waters of life. Having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity. And in our efforts to build a new Earth, we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim. Disturb us Lord to dare more boldly. To venture on wider seas where storms will show you are Master. Where losing sight of land we shall find the stars. We ask you, push back the horizons of our hopes, and push us into the future in strength, courage, hope, and love.*"

And that leads right into this: If you don't like what's going on in your country, your life, or your church, it's about time to become a Mary. It's time to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn more of Him. Look at what you've chosen? Are you going your own way? Or are you going Jesus' way? "*Mary chose the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.*" It's your choice. And it's up to you! What are you going to do about it? What have you chosen? AMEN