

July 1, 2007  
Pentecost 5

*"Feed Your Faith from the Word"*

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### **LUKE 10:38-42**

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*As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" <sup>41</sup> "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

We never cease to be amazed at how birds fly in the air. Look at all the energy they expend to flap their wings. It seems they are always looking for food. They completely depend on our heavenly Father to take care of them. In our Bible camp we took some bird seed such as this and scattered it for the birds. Even if we do not feed the birds, our heavenly Father provides more than enough bugs, and fruit, and seeds for the birds to eat. Jesus once told us that we should not worry about what we will eat or what we will wear. He encouraged us to look at how our heavenly Father takes care of the birds to become convinced that he also cares for us as well.

Even more important than feeding our bodies is feeding our faith in Jesus. The Lord our God carefully put his words into the Bible so we can sit at the feet of Jesus and feed our faith as Mary once did. Every time we open our Bible to read, or come to worship as we are doing this morning, or read in devotional books that are true to the Bible we have our faith strengthened. I cannot imagine getting so busy in life that we forget to eat food for our bodies. But it does happen that we get so busy in life we neglect the important feeding of our faith? We become like Martha when we neglect those priceless moments in life when Jesus is there to feed us in his Word. Jesus had to encourage her to get her priorities straight. It is my prayer that this sermon will encourage us to feed our faith more in the Word. That's the most important priority in your life and mine.

### **We can get distracted by serving and doing good things**

It isn't just bad things that can distract us from God's Word. This can also happen when we are doing good things. So it was with Martha. It says that she opened her home to Jesus when he traveled on the way to Jerusalem. No five star hotel could compete with the fine accommodations in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Imagine opening your home up to Jesus, his twelve disciples, and others who were traveling along with him. Food had to be prepared. Beds or mats had to be secured along with enough blankets to keep warm at night. Then there was the water to wash the dirty feet and bodies that every good Jewish home had in those days. It was a lot of work but it was a service that filled Martha's life with joy. Martha was a woman of great faith. When her brother Lazarus died and she said to Jesus, "I know that my brother will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

If only there were more people in the church today ready to commit to serving the Lord as Martha was. The church would never have to ask for volunteers to do various different tasks such as ushering, or serving on a committee, or helping out with Bible camp, or visiting the sick, or attending Bible studies. People would stand in line to joyfully serve the Lord. See them raise their hands and joyfully say, "Pick me! Pick me." "I want to serve Jesus by helping other members of the body of Christ."

The book of Ecclesiastes says there is a season for everything, a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a time to be busy serving and a time to sit at the feet of Jesus listening to his words. Martha had a sister named Mary who captured the golden moment. She "sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said." A woman once told me that she always felt sorry for Martha because she had to do all the work and Mary was doing nothing. I believe she missed the whole point of this account. When there is an opportunity to hear God's Word and sit at Jesus feet we need to drop everything. We need to be like a sponge taking in every word he speaks to us. Why did Mary want to sit so close to Jesus? I don't think she was hard of hearing. She simply wanted to hear every word that Jesus said and did not want to be distracted by anything, including the preparations for a meal that needed to be served.

When you sit at Jesus feet you learn things about yourself that you never knew before. In our Bible camp we learned about a man who came to Jesus and said, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" If I never have any contact with the words of Jesus I am going to live my whole life believing that I can inherit eternal life by how well I live my life. Jesus told that man the story of the Good Samaritan to help him realize how sinful he was, and how much he needed to have a Savior. Jesus was always helping people see how much they needed him. He pictured people like sheep that wander off and get lost, and need a shepherd to rescue them.

If I never sit at the feet of Jesus as Mary did, I will never learn about the love that God has for me in sending his Son to die for me. There is one thing you never get tired in your life. You know what it is! It is love. My parents are old. My dad is 89 and my mother is 86. It makes me happy to know that they love me. You are happy when you know your husband or wife loves you, your children, your brothers and sisters, and even your pet dog or cat. When I sit at the feet of Jesus, I learn how much God, the mighty God who created the heavens and earth loves me, even though I have not loved him as I should or loved other people as I should.

Jesus talked to people about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the story of love, the story of the mighty King of kings and Lord of lords coming to earth. It is the story of the King opening up the greatest treasure in the world, the love of a heavenly Father that he earned for you by dying on the cross. If you sit at Jesus feet you will learn about love that has provide a place for you in the future that is so beautiful it brings tears to your eyes. You learn about a better way to live your life than the old selfish way that you were born with when you came into this world. When you listen to Jesus you hear him speaking promises to you, whispered in your ear and placed into your heart, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and no one will pluck them from my hand." These are some of the things Mary heard as she listen to Jesus that we still hear today when we sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him speak to us.

Martha, lovely, beautiful, Jesus-loving and Jesus-serving Martha, missed the golden opportunity to listen to Jesus because she was too busy wrapped up in doing things for Jesus. She was so caught up in doing something for Jesus that she missed what Jesus wanted to do for her. "But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister had left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me.'" It is so easy to get distracted. Have you ever driven behind someone who was so distracted as they were talking on the cell phone that they did not pay attention to what was happening all around them? Have you ever been so caught up with work or even play that you had a time in your life when you were too tired to worship the Lord on Sunday? Or maybe you had so much television to watch, or video games to play, or projects to do around the house, or so many activities, that you had little or no time to read the Bible and be alone with Jesus. We can even get distracted by doing good things for other people such as being parents to our kids, or helping people in need, or being there for our husband or wife, that we don't have quality and quantity time alone with the Lord in his Word. What is most sad is we usually come up with a good excuse as Martha did.

### **We need Jesus to set us straight**

Martha was rather tough with Jesus, wouldn't you agree. She accused Jesus of not caring. Talk about losing your perspective. Then she bosses Jesus around with the words, "Tell her to help me!" "She has left me to do all the work by myself." We understand Martha because we have all been there. We also understand the words of Jesus were not intended to hurt Martha but help her.

Oh, dear friends, listen to the loving voice of Jesus as he speaks to Martha and puts her on the right path. "Martha, Martha." What tenderness and love there is in the way Jesus spoke that name. Think of someone speaking your name in the most loving caring way you have ever heard it spoken. Then you get a little understanding of how Jesus spoke to Martha. Jesus cuts to the heart of the problem. "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Usually it does not work to hold up the example of a brother or sister to help a child. In this case though, Jesus knew what he was doing. He wanted Martha to sit down and enjoy the words that were being spoken just as Mary enjoyed them.

The best moments of your life are those moments when you sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his Word. What Jesus wanted for Martha he wants for all of us. If you have a Bible, don't let it sit on the shelf and gather dust. Open it tonight before you go to bed and read, even if it is only a few verses. Start in the book of Mark. Flip through the psalms. You will always be blessed. Colossians 3 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." The word in the Greek has the thought of taking up residence in our lives or living in our home. This week Jesus wants to come and be in your home. That will happen when you read the Bible either privately or together as a family.

About seventy years ago a motivational speaker and self-help adviser Ivy Lee approached Mr. Charles Schwab, then president of Bethlehem Steel Company and proposed that he could make his company more prosperous if he followed his advice. Schwab answered: "If you can show me a way to be able to accomplish more with the time I have, I'll pay you whatever you ask within reason." So Lee gave Schwab a blank piece of paper and told

him: "Write down the most important things that you have to do tomorrow." Schwab did so. "Now," Lee continued, "number them according to their importance." Again Schwab obliged. "Tomorrow morning, start with number one. Then go on to number two and so forth... Don't worry if you haven't completed the list by the end of the day. At least you will have accomplished the most important projects. Test it for as long as you would like, and then send me a check for what you think this advice was worth." A few weeks later, Charles Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for \$25,000, a large figure in those days. He said it was the best lesson he had ever learned in his long business career.

Write down the ten most important things you will be doing tomorrow. Then number them in order. The number one priority in our lives is spending time alone with Jesus. The time to feed our faith is priceless. Amen.