

July 21, 2013  
Pentecost 9

*"Sitting at the Feet of Jesus"*

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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."*

A week ago Saturday we were sitting in a restaurant in Durango, Colorado. Three couples in their mid seventies were in the table next to us. Five were engaged in lively conversation. The one man was preoccupied with his smart phone. He completely ignored the people who were around him. It is rude to be on your cell phone while enjoying a meal with family and friends. It is beyond rude to be on the cell phone while driving. It is dangerous. Such a distraction can be fatal for you or for others.

Martha was distracted from having an important conversation with Jesus. She did not have a cell phone that distracted her. She was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She wanted the best for Jesus. In her desire to have the best for Jesus she missed out on a golden opportunity to join her sister Mary in sitting at Jesus feet and listening to him.

You want the best for Jesus. You want to give him your best when you come to a worship service such as this. You want the best for Jesus as you engage in singing and prayers, and as you offer encouraging words to your fellow Christians. You want the best for Jesus in how you live your life each day. You want to serve in your thoughts, words and actions. Even more important than the time we spend in serving Jesus is the time we have for Jesus to serve us. The best moments of your life are those moments when you sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to what he tells you in his Word.

### **Martha was busy serving**

You can't help but love Martha and admire her desire to want the best for Jesus. "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him." It appears that Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus were important people in the community. You will recall that a large number of people visited Mary and Martha after their brother died. Martha wants to use her nice home and her wealth to provide the best for Jesus. She opened her home to Jesus.

I have known people who are like Martha. The Lord blesses them with a wealth and a nice home. Out of love for Jesus they are very generous with what they have. They enjoy serving their Savior with the blessings the Lord has given them. Abraham was that

way. In our Old Testament lesson we heard how he welcomed strangers into his tent and provided them with a sumptuous meal. In Acts 16 we hear about a wealthy woman named Lydia who lived in the city of Philippi. The Lord opened her heart to believe the word of the Lord brought to her by Paul. She invited Paul and Silas into her home. When you are overwhelmed by God's amazing grace that rescues you from eternal death and punishment, you want to serve the Lord with the blessings he has given to you.

Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. The King James Version of the Bible says, "She was cumbered about much serving." The word for "serving" is the same word that is used for "ministry." It used to describe how Jesus served us. In Mark 10 Jesus says, "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." When you come to appreciate how Jesus served you by going to the cross and paying for your sins, it unleashes inside of you this burning love and desire to serve Jesus and give him your best.

Martha loved Jesus. She loved him with all her heart. She wanted the best meal for her Lord and Savior. She wanted to be sure there was fresh water and towels for him to wash up. She wanted her home to provide Jesus with a nice place to sleep that night. She became so distracted by what she could do for Jesus that she missed seeing what Jesus could do for her. Martha becomes so distracted by all the serving that needed to be done that she totally loses perspective. She gets upset with her sister Mary and even shows some impatience with Jesus. "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me."

Some years ago a man by the name of Charles Hummel wrote an article about the "Tyranny of the Urgent." He begins the article with these words, "Have you ever wished for a thirty hour day?" I am sure Martha wished that she had more time to get ready for Jesus and his disciples, and more help from her sister Mary! In the article Hummel says our problem is not a shortage of time but a problem with priorities. He points to the many hours that Jesus put into one day. But he always allotted the time to be alone with his heavenly Father in prayer. Think of how many tasks in life would be made easier if we spent more time in prayer.

Even more important than prayer is the time we spend at Jesus' feet listening 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 and too wrapped up in doing things for Jesus.

Martha needed Jesus to help her. I need Jesus to help me set my priorities straight. You need Jesus to help you set your priorities straight. Listen to him speak to you as he speaks to dear Martha, "Martha, Martha, 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." Jesus wanted Martha to put off the preparations and sit at his feet where he could speak to her and build her up in her precious faith. We can never get enough of Jesus speaking to us in his Word.

Forty years ago in July of 1973 I was ordained into the Holy Ministry in Santa Barbara, California. I look back at those forty years and think of all the blessings of being able to

serve people with God's Word. I think of all the hours spent in studying God's Word for sermons and Bible classes. There were times when there were just not enough hours in a day to get all the work done that needed to be done. The best moments were those spent alone with Jesus, sitting at his feet, listening to his Word in private devotions and meditations. Have I let other things distract me from that Word? Yes I have. I struggle to be more like Mary and less like Martha just as you do in your everyday life. The words of Jesus spoken to Martha speak to us today. "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed." One thing is needed and that is more time sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to his Word.

I want to thank this congregation for allowing us to have two weeks off to travel to Colorado. We were able to visit our children Stephanie and Daniel. We also spent time in God's beautiful creation, camping and hiking. In the evening around the campfire or at breakfast we enjoy opening the Bible and reading together. This year I failed to pack a Bible. I did bring the devotional book "Meditations" which we read. The last day of camping we found the Bible that had been tucked away in a bag. I only share this story to illustrate how many different ways we can be kept from opening up the Bible and reading it in our daily lives. There are so many preparations to be made. And yes, there are so many television programs to watch, and text messages to view, and video games to play and books to read. There is little time left to sit at Jesus feet. It's time to get back on track and get back into spending more time at Jesus' feet. What Mary found at the feet of Jesus was priceless.

### **Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet**

It says that Martha had a sister named Mary, "Who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said." Mary was not sitting across the room listening to Jesus. Mary was not splitting her time between making preparations and listening. She was giving her full attention to Jesus. We call our gathering here this morning a worship service. The main emphasis is not on our coming to serve the Lord but on his coming to serve us.

Mary listened to what Jesus had to say. What do you think Jesus said to Mary? I am sure he did not spend time talking about the weather or the politics in Jerusalem or even some new store that opened up in town. If you listen to other words of Jesus that are recorded for us in the Bible, then you have a good idea of what Jesus said to Mary that made her hunger and long for every word that came from his mouth.

Wherever Jesus went he spoke to people about the kingdom of God. He spoke about his heavenly Father's plan to rescue people by giving up his Son to die on the cross. "God so loved the world...." What a joy it must have been to hear Jesus talk about carrying out the will of his heavenly Father to rescue people and bring them into his kingdom. Mary learned from Jesus that she was like a sheep that was lost. She learned from Jesus that he was her Shepherd who had come to rescue her. From Jesus she learned what happens to those who believe in him after they die. Later when her brother dies Mary would confess her faith in Jesus' power over death with the words, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died."

Let's remember that Mary was not alone in confessing her faith in Jesus when her brother

died. When Jesus told Martha that her brother would rise again, she boldly confessed her faith with the words, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." It was dear Martha, busy and loving and serving Jesus, who was privileged to hear these great words of Jesus for the first time, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Then Jesus asked her, "Do you believe this?" She responded, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

We aren't told how Martha responded to what Jesus told her about sitting at his feet. Can't you almost hear her praying at night before she falls asleep "Lord Jesus please forgive me for getting so wrapped up in preparations that I failed to sit at your feet and hear your words." We pray when we fall asleep at night. May this also be our prayer as we plan the days and weeks and months of our lives. "Lord Jesus, help me set my priorities straight and spend more time sitting at your feet." Amen.