

Martha and Mary

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev W.Macleod

[0 : 00] We shall now turn to the Gospel of Luke and chapter 10.

The Gospel of Luke, chapter 10. And we shall read at verse 38. Luke's Gospel, chapter 10, and at verse 38.

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.

And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. 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. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

[1 : 33] We often praise the good housewife, the woman who keeps the house clean and tidy, nothing is out of place, the meals are beautifully presented, the cooking is excellent.

And yet, here, Jesus is praising the good listener. In the parable that we were considering last week, the parable that comes before this section, the parable of the Good Samaritan, we saw that Jesus was encouraging us to love our neighbor, and especially to love the Good Samaritan, who is our best neighbor, and the Good Samaritan is Jesus himself.

Martha shows her love for the Good Samaritan, for Jesus, in a very practical way, by the way she provides for him, provides him with hospitality, looks after him, and cares for his physical needs. But Jesus shows his, but Mary shows her love for Jesus, the Good Samaritan, by her sitting at his feet, listening to him, trusting what he says, and following his teaching.

And Jesus commends Mary's love more than that of Martha's. So I would like us to consider this passage today, to think, first of all, of the loving hostess that is set before us here, and then, secondly, the loving disciple, and thirdly, the loving rebuke.

[3 : 45] first, the loving hostess. Jesus has come to Bethany, a little village situated two miles east of Jerusalem, and Martha receives him into her home.

She seems to have to own the house. Perhaps she was a widow, maybe she was the oldest. she loves Jesus, and really welcomes him into her home, and shows him hospitality.

Now, hospitality is something which is greatly commended in the scriptures. Time and time again, it's praised. We must show kindness to others. We must show love.

We must show hospitality to those who are strangers. That is something which is greatly commended in God's word.

We're told, for example, of Abraham, who entertained strangers, and didn't know that he was entertaining angels.

[4 : 55] He entertained angels unawares. He was being hospitable, and he welcomed strangers, and in fact, he was welcoming angels.

And one of these angels was the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus himself. Hospitality is greatly commended. And she wants to give to Jesus the best.

She's working very hard, cooking, serving, providing the meal, doing all that is necessary, and even more than is necessary.

and it wasn't very easy, because it wasn't just a matter of providing for Jesus. She had to provide, too, for his twelve disciples.

So if you count Jesus and his twelve disciples, that's thirteen, Mary, fourteen, Martha, fifteen, probably Lazarus, two, sixteen, entertaining for sixteen people.

[6 : 06] Not just that, we're told of certain people who followed Jesus around, certain women who followed Jesus around, ministering to him of their substance. No doubt there would be these women, perhaps certain male disciples, too.

Maybe some friends had come in, so there was a huge crowd there. and there was Martha busily trying to provide for all these people.

And there's so much to be done at the same time, thinking of it in today's context. The soup maybe, boiling over, perhaps the sauce burning, the meat needing to be cut, the sweet needing to be prepared, and you can imagine Martha panicking.

There's so many people, there's so much bustle around in the house, so much to be done, so much to be done at the same time. And then she looks and she sees her sister, Mary, sitting there at Jesus' feet, sitting so calm, so contented, enjoying it all.

It's not fair. Martha is jealous. She's losing her temper. She just can't cope with all that has to be done.

[7 : 27] And there's her sister, not giving her any help at all, just sitting at Jesus' feet. And in the end, Martha blames even Jesus himself.

Lord, dost thou not see? Can you not see what my sister is doing, that she's sitting there listening to you and she's not helping me and I've got so much to do.

And you can see Martha there blaming Jesus. Commander Jesus to come and help me. It's not fair the way she's sitting down there and I've got to slave away doing everything for this meal.

Dost thou not care? I'm sure there's many a woman in the congregation here who can sympathize and fully sympathize perhaps with Martha.

You can just imagine what it would be like, all this crowd in your own house and trying to provide a meal for them and your own sister whom you would expect to be helping you in the provision of the meal.

[8 : 39] She's just sitting there at Jesus' feet while you're working away and sweating away and everything seems to be going wrong. Martha really loved Jesus and she wanted to please him and she wanted to give to Jesus the very best and provide the very best meal for Jesus.

So we have here a loving hostess. a follower of Jesus who loved Jesus and wanted to give him the very best.

Secondly, we have presented to us in the passage a loving disciple. Mary seems to have been helping her sister in the preparation of the meal before Jesus arrived.

For we're told that she had left her sister and that she had left verse 40 she had left me to serve alone.

She had been with Martha to begin with preparing the meal but then she left Martha when Jesus appeared.

[9 : 58] She seems to have lost interest in everything else. only one thing seemed to matter. She loved Jesus very much. She loved Jesus so much that she wanted to hear every word that he spoke.

She didn't want to miss anything and it was a rare opportunity. The Lord of glory, the King of kings, the Son of God, her Saviour was in the house.

and was she going to be busy preparing a meal where she could sit down there at his feet and ask him questions. She had special access to him in her own home.

She could ask him questions. She could listen to his answers, listen to his answers to other people's questions, listen to all that he had to say, the wonderful words that were coming out of his mouth.

Mary didn't want to miss anything the life giving words. I wonder do you know what it is to value Christ in this way, to value his words, his words that are recorded for us in the Bible.

[11 : 12] The Bible is the word of God. Do you value the Bible, reading the Bible? Yes. And the preaching of the Bible, so that you don't miss any opportunity that you can't be there, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

For Jesus says to his disciples, he says to his ministers, whosoever heareth you, heareth me. And when you hear the minister preaching God's word, you're hearing the preaching of Jesus, because Jesus preaches through his ministers.

And do you then value the words of Christ the way Mary did, so that you take every opportunity that you can to sit at the feet of Jesus to hear what he has to say.

His words are truth, his words are life. In the passage that we read in 1 Peter chapter 2, we are asked to desire the sincere milk of the word as newborn beings, so that we might grow thereby. Now just think for yourself of a child, a baby. A baby can't talk, but the baby's hungry and wanting milk. And the baby will let you know that they want milk.

[12 : 38] They'll scream, they'll shout, they'll bawl, they'll make a noise, they'll make a fuss, and nothing will satisfy that child until the child gets the milk. I wonder, do you know anything of that in your own experience, to be as a newborn babe, desiring the sincere milk of God's word, thirsting for the words of Jesus, to read, to meditate, to hear, to hear being preached to you the word of Jesus, and feeding on it with the same intensity.

Once you give milk to this screaming, crying child, suddenly peace reigns. The child is concentrating on one thing, drinking, drinking in, and delighting in it. Think, too, of a child growing up. A two-year-old child longs to be three. A three-year-old child longs to be four.

A four-year-old child longs to be five. Even later on, a fifteen-year-old longs to be sixteen. The sixteen-year-old longs to be seventeen, able to take out a provisional driving license, perhaps. The seventeen-year-old longs to be eighteen, considered an addict, able to vote. Now do you know what it is? Not to be content, being a baby, a spiritual baby, but a longing to grow up.

[14 : 38] Longing to mature, to develop, to be an adult, spiritually. Do you have this desire, this longing to grow?

As Christians, we are children. When a person is converted, they are born again, they become babies. Now are we growing, growing up as God's children, good listeners, good learners, like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus with a real appetite, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, concerned about the one thing needful.

Are we? it's interesting to notice in passing the way Jesus fully accepts Mary as a disciple. Woman though she was, he values her listening to him just as much as men listening to him. The rabbis of his time didn't believe it was right to teach a woman, but Jesus fully believed in the essential equality of men and women.

In Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female.

[16 : 10] In Jesus Christ we are essentially one, we are on the same level, we are to grow together, to be disciples listening to and being taught by Jesus and growing in our belief and faith and trust and love and obedience.

A loving hostess, first of all, Martha, a loving disciple, Mary. Finally, a loving rebuke. Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Careful, now it's careful, careful is used here in the old English sense, we think of careful as something good, but careful can also mean full of cares, care for, and being full of cares, it's not a good thing, it's a sinful thing.

Martha had many cares, many worries, she was troubled about many things, there was so many things involved in the meal, getting everything perfect, getting everything just right, serving everybody, she was troubled about many things, she was fussing about, trying to make too good a spread for Jesus, there was a bit of pride in it, no doubt, pride is something that doesn't help, doesn't help us if we're trying to serve God by Christian hospitality, pride can keep you from being hospitable, you don't invite people to your home because you feel that you're not quite as good at cooking, or at baking, or whatever, as certain other people, and you don't want to show that you're not quite as good as they are, you're not quite as good at running your home, and pride keeps you from being hospitable, and when you are hospitable, pride can affect you too, by making it a terrible burden for you because you feel you have to reach such high standards, and you feel you have to do this, you have to do that, and so it's a terrible burden being hospitable, and it can be a real worry. careful and troubled, Christian hospitality shouldn't be something that causes us great cares and worries, it should be something in which we are sharing what we have ourselves.

[19 : 22] Martha was too busy to have time for Christ. She was doing good things, there was nothing sinful in the things she was doing, it was good things and she was doing it for the Lord.

And yet, Jesus has to rebuke her, because she was doing too much, trying to put on too much of a show.

Maybe you feel sometimes that you have so much to do, maybe you feel the pressure, there's so many things, so much demanded of you, your family are demanding so much of you, they're requiring you to do this, to do that, to do the next thing, they're always at you to do things, your friends are requiring so much to be done by you, your job is requiring so much of you, and you find yourself at the end of the day careful and troubled about many things, burdened with many worries, under so much stress because you're rushing here, rushing there, fussing, doing so much, and forgetting the one thing need for them.

Maybe your life is so busy, and Jesus is saying to you, the music has to stop, turn off the television, be still, and know that I am God, take a little time to think, a little time to be quiet, a little time to listen to my voice, sit at my feet, and learn from me.

Maybe Jesus is telling you to stop the baking, the hoovering, the dusting, to read your Bible, to meditate, and to pray. You can be too busy sometimes even in the Lord's work.

[21 : 32] Sometimes you can be too busy running around meetings, organizing in this and that, involved in this organization, in this good work, in that good work, visiting friends, the sick, the needy, and Jesus is saying stop, sit at my feet, and listen to my voice.

Maybe you're trying to run your life perfectly, trying to achieve so much, and do so much, wanting everything to go like clockwork, and you're full of worry, and Jesus says, stop.

He says to us, be careful for nothing, be anxious about nothing, don't be worried, stop worrying, take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself, sufficient unto the days, the evil thereof.

You've got enough worries today without worrying about tomorrow's worries, and take today's worries and cast them upon Christ, and remember that there is one thing needful, seek first that one thing needful, no wonder are you a person, are we people of the one thing, or are we people of the many things?

Around us there are so many people, people of many things, but are we people of the one thing, loving Jesus, following him, trusting in him, listening to his voice, hearing what he has to say to us, and obeying him.

[23 : 17] Disciples of Jesus, totally dedicated to him. Let's not grudge other people, or complain about them, because they do this, so they do that, or they don't do this, so they don't do that.

Let's ourselves choose the good part that shall not be taken from us. Let's relax, and enjoy Christ. rest. And if you are one of those people whose hearts are set upon the one thing needful, then your place next Lord's day is at the Lord's table.

That's a place for the Lord's people. Let the others fuss around as they like, but your place is seated with the Lord at his table, because you love the Lord, and you want to follow him.

And remember, Jesus says here, Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her. It shall not be taken from her.

Many things we lose, but we won't lose this. If we choose the good part, if we choose to sit at Jesus' feet, if we choose Christ as our teacher, if we choose to follow him, then we choose that good part that we won't lose.

[24 : 45] Let us pray. Greatest one, we pray that thou would help us to choose that good part that shall not be taken from us.

Help us to set our hearts, our minds upon these things. We pray that thou would draw us to thyself. Grant, O Lord, that our hearts would more and more be set on thee.

Help us to seek thee and to serve thee, and forgive us for all our sins. For Jesus' sake, amen. We shall conclude singing in Psalm 116, verses 13 to 19.

Psalm 116, verses 13 to 19. 13.

to 19 to 19 to God's praise. God's praise. Thy love shall make the day of our life.

[26 : 27] to 19 thee we mother never hear knows onvery