

Message 1: The Priority of His Presence

LUKE 10: 38-42

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word.

40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."

41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;

42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

MESSAGE GOAL: The goal of this message on The Priority of His Presence is to understand that worship is fundamentally the privilege of being in God's presence, and so we must begin by prioritizing His presence.

INTRODUCTION: Worship is one of the most important ways of building our relationship with God.

The purpose of worship is to draw closer to Him.

But sometimes, we can easily lose sight of that purpose.

If we enter into worship as just another religious duty, we have missed a key element of what worship is all about.

Sure, when we worship, we sing and pray and confess with our words about God's greatness and glory.

But there is something even more important that should happen in our worship.

The foundation of worship is the recognition that we are coming into God's presence.

When we worship God, we are placing ourselves in proximity to His presence.

We don't do this to get something from Him, or impress Him with how spiritual we are, or get ourselves "revved up" spiritually, but so that we can be with Him, listen to His words, humbly receive His instruction and correction, and to be changed.

Making the most of His presence should always be our priority.

What we do with our opportunity to draw near to God is what this story from Luke's Gospel is all about.

Jesus was invited to the home of two sisters, and He accepted their invitation readily.

Jesus is always ready to be welcomed into our homes and our hearts.

This was true for them, and it is true for us today.

He wants to be present with us.

But the important question is this: what do we do when He arrives there?

How do we respond to His presence?

Sometimes in our walk with God we can get so busy with all the right spiritual activities—church, reading the Bible, witnessing, serving the needy, etc.—that we forget the importance of simply being with Jesus.

In our story today, we see two different approaches to the spiritual life.

Martha is a spiritual “busy bee,” always up and moving and doing things for God.

Her sister, Mary, is more concerned with simply being with Jesus, sitting at His feet and listening to what He has to say.

While Martha is totally occupied with trying to serve Jesus (and perhaps impress Him by doing so!), Mary is building a relationship with Him—not by doing anything, but simply by sitting at His feet.

I want to make three observations about this story.

As we do, we should ask ourselves: In what way am I like Martha?

And in what way am I like Mary?

IMPORTANT POINTS:

1. A CRITICAL CONTRAST (VS. 38-39)

A. In verses 38 and 39 we are introduced to Mary and Martha

- Martha takes the lead in welcoming Jesus and the disciples into her home.
- Martha is energetic, vivacious, full of life, and has a strong personality.
- Mary is much more reserved, quieter and generally has less to say.

B. The contrast in their personalities can be seen in their approach to faith.

- Martha is a spiritual workaholic.
- She believes that if you want to be close to God, you should be as busy as you can be in doing God's work.

C. Mary: Sitting at Jesus' feet.

- Mary has a different approach. She believes that if you want to be close to God, you should simply sit at His feet.
- As a matter of fact, in many of the references to Mary, she is sitting at Jesus' feet.

She is at His feet after her brother, Lazarus, has died (**John 11:32**). *Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

She is at His feet in worship in **John 12:3**. *Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

She is at His feet in this story.

- Mary recognizes that Jesus is superior to her and that she needs to be in a place of listening.
- Mary recognizes that Jesus can tell her things that she can't learn anywhere else.
- Mary recognizes that Jesus welcomes her to be near Him.
- Mary recognizes that it is not just information that she needs from Him, but relationship.
- Like Mary, you and I need more than a formal Bible study with Jesus.
- We need to hear from the Living Word Himself.
- If we only hear the Word without hearing from the Author Himself, we have turned our Bible study into an academic exercise.
- When we speak of "devotions" we mean that we are devoting ourselves to Him.
- Mary didn't invite Jesus to have a Bible study with Him, but to come to know Him better.

- Do you desire to be in God's presence to gain information or to deepen your relationship with Him?

2. A CRISIS COMPLAINT **(VS. 40)**

A. Martha is distracted from Jesus by her work for Jesus

- Martha starts off well by welcoming Jesus to her house **(verse 38)**.
- But then she gets angry at Mary because she isn't helping with preparing for the meal.
- She impatiently asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her out **(verse 40)**.
- She starts off with Jesus on her mind, but she gets distracted from Him by the gigantic meal she is creating.
- She is distracted by the good thing that she is doing for her guest and so isn't in a close vicinity to her guest.
- All her preparations become about a performance, and she misses the whole point about being with Jesus.

B. Martha then questions Jesus' care.

- Martha's annoyance leads to a theological questioning of whether He really cares.
- She is more concerned with serving Jesus than being with Jesus.

- Her theology is being controlled by her perception of her circumstances.
- She sees it as Jesus' fault that she isn't getting enough help because Jesus is occupied with "entertaining" Mary.
- She has seriously missed the whole point of Jesus' visit.
- Notice that Mary doesn't say a word about all of this.
- She is an innocent bystander.
- If you are doing something for God and you develop a bad attitude from doing it, you aren't doing it for Him anymore.
- So Martha told Jesus what to do.
- That is never the sign of a right relationship with Him.
- She doesn't request.
- She pretty much demands.

C. The problem is Martha's underlying attitude: "If you really loved me, then..."

- Now, of course, it's not that we can't find a little sympathy for Martha's predicament.
- No one wants to be left to do all the work by themselves.
- Perhaps Martha is concerned about what she is missing out on or worried that she'd be too tired

to take it in when she finally got the chance to listen to Jesus.

- But her attitude has become such that she wouldn't even properly be able to appreciate the time with Jesus.

3. A DIVINE CORRECTION (VS. 41-42)

A. Jesus responded by questioning Martha's priorities (verse 41.)

- Jesus repeats her name twice. Whenever Jesus says something twice it means He is very serious!
- Jesus says that Martha has too much on her mind.
- She needs to settle down and get a proper perspective.
- She needs to let go of the frustration, irritation and blame, and look at her herself honestly.
- If serving God makes you difficult, then something is wrong with your service.

B. Jesus affirms Mary's choice.

- The principle that Mary grasped was "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).
- Martha is busy, but Mary is busy being blessed!

- Listening to Jesus should always be our first priority.
- Paying attention to His Word is the starting place for our spiritual lives.
- Through prayer and the Word, we should sit as His feet, just as Mary does.
- Jesus says that only a few things are really necessary.
- We sometimes make our faith too complicated.
- Jesus isn't hungry for a seven-course meal.
- He is hungry for you!
- Mary made the best choice.
- She understood why they'd all gotten together in the first place.

C. Being in God's presence should always be the first priority.

- David was not called a man after God's own heart because he lived a perfect life, but because he was always pursuing the presence of God.
- "One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Psalm 27:4)
- "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" (Psalm 122:1)

- “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.” (Psalm 42:1)
- Like David, we should long to be in God’s presence and seek every opportunity to spend time with Him.
- Instead of sending Mary into the kitchen, Jesus invites Martha to come join and sit at His feet.
- Mary doesn’t have to say a thing to defend herself.
- She is quiet during the whole exchange.
- Jesus intervenes on her behalf.
- When we are in God’s presence, we should let Him do all the talking!
- When your service is keeping you from His presence, you need to readjust your priorities.
- What kind of passion to do have for making a priority of God’s presence?

Take-Away

PRESENCE LEADS TO IMPROVEMENT

There are a lot of important things that you can’t learn from books.

For example, no one ever became a really good golfer by reading an instruction book.

Instead, you can only become a better golfer through interaction with someone who has mastered the game.

You watch and learn from what they do, you ask questions, and you ask them to critique your stance and your swing.

Even the act of playing a round with someone who is better than you often will have the result of your improving your own game.

The Priority of His Presence

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