

Putting Idols Away

by Annie Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of gratitude and faith in God during challenging times, highlighting the need to focus on God's comfort and relief amidst difficulties. It encourages self-reflection to identify and remove idols from the heart, emphasizing the significance of maintaining a strong spiritual connection with the Lord daily. The story of Mary and Martha with Jesus illustrates the value of choosing to spend time with the Lord and the transformation that can occur in a person's life through faith and service.

Scripture: Romans 8:1, Luke 10:38, John 11:1, John 12:1, Colossians 3:17

Topics: "Gratitude in Adversity", "Spiritual Connection with God"

Description

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Transcript

for taking this trouble to come. I'm so happy to see all of you on the screen at least. Although we couldn't see each other, haven't seen each other for so long.

I'm also thankful for brother Vincent who's translating for me and for my husband. May God bless him. These days that we are facing are very unusual days.

We never heard of or read of days like this where the whole world was affected. But praise God, he has given us some comfort and relief in spite of these difficulties. So when we think of the restrictions and problems that come with this, let us also thank God for relief and comfort he gives us.

Sometimes we make a mistake of focusing on the problems but not on our saviour who will solve our problems. We thank God for so many opportunities he gave us in the past years when we were struggling. We could meet each other in church and conferences.

Did we ever think a time will come when we won't be able to meet or see one another like this? But God knew and so he prepared things like this computer technology and Zoom for us. So we can encourage each other at least in this way. But suppose there's a time when even this is not available for us.

Will we be able to manage or will we sink down in our spiritual life? At that time we can think of many saints of God who were put in prison and had no contact with other people. But God gave them grace to be faithful till the end. So God will give us grace till the end.

Our hope is in God, not in anybody or anything else. When we, those of us who are mothers, when our children are going to school, this is what we tell them. You must do your studies every day.

Don't keep portions pending for the next week or next day. And revise what you did in the past. And if possible do a little bit ahead so you'll be on top of your education.

That's the same thing we have to tell ourselves in our spiritual life. Every day we have to keep our connection with the Lord. In the past we may have slackened in that area.

But now the days are so critical that we cannot take that risk. So I'll give one test. We can think whether our spiritual condition is okay or not.

When nothing is happening and when we are by ourselves, what are the thoughts that come to our mind? And we find that some of those thoughts are the same thoughts which come to our mind all the time. For example, suppose somebody has hurt us in some way. Whenever our mind is at rest, our thoughts go to that person who hurt us.

Sometimes when we wake up in our sleep also, that person comes in our thoughts. Or suppose it's some material thing which we are wanting or which got spoiled in the house. That thought comes to our mind.

Then the Lord tells us, See, you have got an idol in your heart. You have to take that idol away. We think of idol as something which other people go down and bow and worship.

And the Lord told Ezekiel who was a prophet. He said, Do you know what my people are doing in Jerusalem? He said, they are worshipping idols in their heart. Nobody knows it but idols are in their heart, not outside.

That's possible for us also, dear sisters. Those idols may be a form of our clothes or our material things or gadgets. Or sometimes even some person whom we have some liking for and we have not given up.

Or some loved one. I am thinking of some young girls who have some desire to marry some boy. But that may not be God's will for.

And they keep on dreaming and thinking of that person. So that person has become an idol and taken the place of Jesus. So this is the time for us to search our heart and the Lord will show us.

And when the Lord shows us, don't be condemned about it. Romans 8.1 says, There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8.1 says, There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Come to the Lord, confess, repent and come back to Him. Every day when we walk with God, God will show us a flaw in our life. That thought you had about somebody, that was not glorifying to me.

And immediately we say, Lord, I am really sorry. Please forgive me. Help me to come back to you.

Every day we need repentance and forgiveness. And we can come back to the Lord and have that full connection with the Lord. When Jesus was on earth, He visited many families.

Many people rejected Him, but there were many people who also welcomed Him. What a comfort it must have been for Jesus that there were some homes which always welcomed Him. I think of us as sisters.

There was one home where there were two sisters which welcomed Jesus. We know about that home. That is the home of Mary and Martha.

And that was good that they welcomed Jesus. They thought that they are doing something good for Jesus. Definitely it was good for Jesus to come and get refreshed after walking so long in a home where there was some food waiting for Him and people welcomed Him.

But they forgot that it was a greater blessing for them to have Jesus in their home. When Jesus and His disciples came to the home of Mary and Martha, we read in Luke 10, last part. We read of two types of sisters.

We all know that. Two types of ladies. One was Martha who was very hardworking and sacrificial and spent all her time getting ready for Jesus.

Jesus must have observed, this woman loves me and is serving me and doing so much for me. So whatever we are doing for the Lord, the Lord is not ignorant of it. He takes note of everything that we do for Him.

But there is a time for us to do and there is a time for us to wait upon the Lord. For me, I find that many days I have been so busy but I found that while I am doing my work, my heart and my thoughts can be turned to the Lord. And then I pray, Lord don't let me become a martyr but while I am doing my work, I want to be a martyr.

I will be thinking of you and you please speak to me. So sometimes we have to plan our work in such a way that we have some time with the Lord and not spend all our time working and working. All of us know that the work in the house never gets finished.

So we should say, Lord I want you to be first in my life. Jesus told Martha, Mary has chosen the best part. So some things we can learn from Martha was that she complained, she had that complaining spirit.

Sometimes we think that we should stop serving people because we may become like a Martha. That's a wrong idea. So many people stop showing hospitality to others because they think, oh I want to be like Mary.

God spoke to me one time in 1 Peter 4.9 Practice hospitality without complaint. The Lord says, be hospitable. Many verses are there in the New Testament.

Be hospitable, be hospitable. But we should not have complaint about it. So that was the mistake that Martha did.

Complain, complaining spirit. But there was one good thing about that complaint. She came and told that to Jesus, not to other people.

Some of our sisters may have some complaint because of our weakness. We may complain about the servant, about our children. Some have complained about their husbands.

And some have complained about their mother-in-law or daughter-in-law. We may not say it outwardly but that complaining spirit can be in our heart. But we can learn one thing from Martha.

Just go and tell Jesus about it. Lord, I have this problem. Please help me to get over this complaining and speak to the other person so that you can change her also.

All these things are opportunities when God shows what is in our heart coming out. So when God shows us these things, we should not say, I am a wretched creature. There is no hope for me.

We should not say like that. That also is the devil's trick to make us go down and down. We can say, Lord, I am wretched but you can make me better.

And another thing about Martha, when she heard that Jesus was praising Mary, what was her attitude? Suppose somebody praises our sister or somebody else, what is our attitude in our heart? Is there any jealousy or not a good attitude in our heart? And we as mothers, we have to sense something in our children also. One child might be good in studies and one child is weak. One is good looking, other not so good looking.

One is very obedient and helpful, other one is not like that. But all are our children. We have to help the one who is weak.

The one who is poor in studies, we have to spend more time and help that child. One who is careless, we must say, you have to learn to be careful with your things. Suppose there is one child who is always losing his things in school.

Always looking where their socks or their clothes are. And we have a tendency to keep on scolding, you are always careless, when will you learn to be careful? Then we have to say, I have to help this child to be careful. Because in the future, he or she has to learn this lesson.

So, one thing I decided was, when I will have forgetfulness, I will think, there are four or five things which I need to remember. Whenever I go, I must see if I have my keys, my glasses, few things like that for me, which I should not lose or misplace. And for some people, their mobile phone is very important.

So, we tell our children, just remember, whenever you go, you have these four things in your bag or in your pocket. And when you come back, take those four things and keep them carefully in one place, so you won't have to search. So, we can help our children like that, give them tips to help them to remember.

And when one child is praised, we must see, my other child should not be jealous. So, instead of joining in the praising, we call this child who is weak and say, it's okay, I can see you have many good qualities, we'll help each other. So, all the opportunities we get to help our children to overcome their weaknesses, we must take.

And we tell them also, my dear child, God taught me, most important thing which is needful is to be connected with Jesus. Even if you're not doing so well in your studies, Jesus will help you, but weak connection, keep the connection with Jesus. And the time which Mary and Martha spent with Jesus was a preparation for the future.

When we spend time with our Lord Jesus, it's a preparation for the coming days. We'll have more trials in the coming days. We need strength for that.

Mary and Martha didn't know that in later, their son, their brother is going to get sick and die and they go through a lot of sorrow. So, the time which they spent with Jesus should be taken so seriously that they value everything that the Lord was telling them. So, dear sisters, this time when we spend with Jesus, when we get to hear God's word and read God's word, let us be diligent in that area.

Every opportunity to hear a good message, take heed to it and keep it in our heart. We cannot go out and meet with our friends, but we can take that time to read and to pray, little bit at a time. And in the coming days, that will give us strength.

In John chapter 11, we read how that sickness came to Lazarus. And Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus. Our brother is sick.

Jesus loved that family so much. So, he should have dropped everything and come. But we know the full story, why Jesus came.

Why Jesus didn't come immediately. Sometimes when we go through some big difficulty and sorrow, we cry out to God in prayer. And we think, why the answer hasn't come.

But we will find out later that God has a better plan for that. Sometimes his answer will be no for us. I found that the times when I got closest to the Lord was when I was going through some suffering or other.

Sometimes when my children were sick, very sick, that was the time when I got close to the Lord. So, looking back, we also can say the times when we came close to the Lord was when we faced through big trials in our life. When we had blessings in our life, we were happy, and we praised God for that.

But when pain and sickness came, we know how close we were to the Lord. That time also, the best thing to do is to tell Jesus about it. When you open your Bible to John chapter 17, he said one word, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.

Verse 4, it says it is for the glory of God so that the son of God may be glorified. It says, it is for the glory of God so that the son of God may be glorified. So, whenever any trial comes in our life, this is the motto we have to think of.

This is for the glory of God. Some tragedy happened, some sickness happened, some accident happened, this is for the glory of God. Sometimes we are so careful to wear mask and protect ourselves, but still, some of us have got COVID infection.

But God healed those people. Praise God. So, through all sicknesses, we can say, this is for the glory of God.

Any financial difficulty, job problem, anything, let it be for your glory. And that will help us to go through all life situations when we take trials like that. So, when the lot delayed, he waited till Lazarus became worse and died.

And finally when he came, it was four days after Lazarus' death. And that was also in God's plan. Because he was not just going to heal, he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

So, he was going to perform a greater miracle. But Mary and Martha didn't know. When they saw Jesus, they only had sorrow, Lord, if you had been there, you would have healed so many sicknesses.

If you had been here, our brother would not have died. But yet, you see that they were not blaming Jesus or complaining about it. They said, Lord, if you had been there, our brother would have died.

Sadness only came out of their heart. I have heard people at critical time, they say, why God did this for me? Why, why? And complain about God. Here also, we can learn what it was a good thing that came out of Martha's mouth.

Here also, we can learn came out of Martha's mouth. See what she says in verse 22 of chapter 11. She says, Lord, even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

In the time of the death of her loved one also, she gave that victorious word as a testimony. That's because she took that correction earlier which Jesus gave her. So, she had that connection with the Lord.

So, instead of complaining, her nature was changed. God can change us who had a complaining spirit and make us women who have a thankful spirit. God can change us so that thankfulness and praise to him will always come out of our heart.

And God, Jesus gave a greater revelation through these words, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he died, yet shall he live. So, those words have comforted so many people who have lost loved ones.

That if our dad or mom have passed away and they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will see them one day and we will be alive and we will see them and they are living with Jesus. And in verse 27, Jesus gave her a greater revelation. She believed Jesus, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

Through every trial and tragedy, which we think is tragedy, Jesus makes greater and fresh revelation in our heart. And that revelation will help us to go through our life. That was Jesus' will that Lazarus should be raised from the dead.

That was his will. But for Jesus' life, that was God's will that he should give up his life for our sake. He could have thought I raised up Jesus, can I go through life and go back to God without facing death.

But we are so thankful to our savior who chose to die for our sake. So, we know the rest of the story how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. And for Mary also there was some revelation.

And Jesus you know the result of that big miracle. There was joy in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. But also there was persecution.

The Jews, some of them believed but some of them wanted to put even Lazarus to death because a lot of people were coming to Jesus because of Lazarus. Sometimes when God does wonderful things for us, we have to be prepared to face persecution also. Jesus said, in this world you will have tribulation.

But be confident, I have conquered the world. So we can take comfort from those words of Jesus. And we read a beautiful ending to this story in John chapter 12 where they had a big celebration for this event.

They had a dinner and they invited Jesus and his disciples. And here also in John 12 we read that Martha was serving but this time there was no complaint. Here also in John 12 Martha was serving but this time

there was no complaint.

In John 12 verse 2 we read that Martha did the work. What a change in Martha's life. So we have hope that God will change each one of us.

And Lazarus, they were all sitting together and having fellowship with the Lord. But here also we read that Mary got a chance to do something very wonderful. She got one pound of expensive ointment.

When we buy perfume we won't buy one pound such a large quantity. We buy only small quantity ounce. It's so expensive we cannot afford it.

And one small quantity is enough the whole place will smell of that that's enough. But Mary didn't count the cost. We read that when the words of David saying I will not offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing.

And Abraham who offered his only son to God. When God asked him to do something he didn't count the cost. When God looks at us sinful race he didn't count the cost he gave his only son to die for us.

We see us struggling and he does anything he wants he can to help us out of our struggle. And whatever we do for the Lord we should not count that cost. When the Lord asks us to go apologize to somebody we think of our reputation.

Don't count the cost when we obey the Lord it will be like a sweet perfume in the whole house. And Mary got a chance to anoint the feet of Jesus. She got a chance to show gratitude to Jesus.

Dear sisters when the Lord asks us to do something they are all small things which the Lord is asking us to do. Maybe get up half an hour earlier or do this extra thing for the sake of your husband or children. Be little more thoughtful towards your family members.

Be little more forgiving towards your mother-in-law or daughter-in-law. Be little more patient with others. Those are the things which we can do in our life to show our gratitude to the Lord.

Even in this thing which Mary did she had to face persecution. Even one of the disciples were criticizing her. But Jesus again took her side and praised her and said she has done a wonderful thing.

Jesus told the people leave her alone. Whoever harms us or tries to persecute us Jesus will tell them just leave her alone. Jesus tells us I accept what you have done for me.

Jesus told Martha this is prophetic what you did. No one else will get this opportunity which you did. To anoint my body nobody will get that chance.

Before the women could go and anoint Jesus' body he had already risen from the dead. So use the opportunities which we can do for the Lord and his people when we get the opportunity. She put one pound of ointment can you imagine the powerful smell sweet smell in the whole room.

Everyone who sat there got a smell of that ointment on their clothes and their body. In verse 3 it says the house was filled with the fragrance of perfume. Our house, homes spiritually can be full of the perfume of the presence of Jesus.

Whenever anybody comes to our home our children growing up they can sense the glory of Jesus and the presence of Jesus in that house. At one time there was complaining spirit in this house. Now that sweet perfume of Jesus is in this house.

In Colossians there is a verse, whatever you do do all for the glory of God. That is Colossians 3.17 So those are the two words which I want to leave with you dear sisters. Whenever we face trial say this is for the glory of God.

Not only the good things when our children come with the first report first class we say glory to God. But more than that when we face trials we can say this is for the glory of God. Instead of saying why this happened to me say Lord I know why this is for your glory.

And the other verse is whatever you do do for the glory of God. That is the verse which I said in Colossians 3.17 So let's keep those two verses in our heart in these days. Lord let me live for your glory.

Each day of my life let me live for your glory. God bless you dear sisters. Sister will you say a prayer also.

Yes. Dear Lord our Heavenly Father Thank you that you are our loving Father. Thank you that you care for us more than our earthly fathers.

You are so loving and patient with us. Even when we have strayed away from you you brought us back into the fold. Help us always to remember to remain close to you Lord.

Help us to wait at your feet like Mary Lord. And while we are doing our work help us always our thought will be turned towards you Lord. So we always will be dwelling in your tabernacle.

Thank you Lord for your love to us to teach us so many wonderful things. Help us to be patient Lord with our children and with our loved ones. Help us to hear the words well done from you just like you told Mary.

That is our reward Lord. Your praise is all that we need and we want. We ask all these things in Jesus name.

For your glory. Amen.

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