

Mary, Martha, Both, or Neither

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into the story of Mary and Martha from Luke chapter 10, emphasizing the importance of balancing sitting at Jesus' feet in relationship and going out to serve with the right attitude. It highlights the need to prioritize Jesus above all tasks and worries, focusing on maintaining a deep relationship with Him while also actively serving. The sermon encourages listeners to learn from Mary's submission and love for Jesus, while also recognizing the necessity of action like Martha, but with the right heart posture.

Duration: 44:48

Scripture: Luke 10:37, Mark 3:14, Acts 1:4, Psalm 46:10, Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Prioritizing Relationship with Jesus", "Balancing Service and Worship"

Description

This sermon delves into the story of Mary and Martha from Luke chapter 10, emphasizing the importance of balancing sitting at Jesus' feet in relationship and going out to serve with the right attitude. It highlights the need to prioritize Jesus above all tasks and worries, focusing on maintaining a deep relationship with Him while also actively serving. The sermon encourages listeners to learn from Mary's submission and love for Jesus, while also recognizing the necessity of action like Martha, but with the right heart posture.

Transcript

All right, let's turn to the word. We're in Luke chapter 10. Luke chapter 10 and we'll just read verses 37 through 42.

Luke chapter 10 verses 37 through 42. And remember the previous session that we dealt with is the story of the Good Samaritan and the lawyer who asked Jesus the question, who is my neighbor? Verse 37, and he said, he who showed mercy on him. In other words, who is my neighbor? He who showed mercy on him.

Then Jesus said to him, go and do likewise. Now it happened as they went that he entered a certain village and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

But Martha was distracted with much serving and she approached him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me. And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her.

The story is well known and I'm sure that we have all heard ministry on it and the the application of it is seems to be pretty obvious. But I trust that this morning we'll be able to maybe just bring a few fresh ideas and obviously bring the whole thing, make it real to us again. So verse 37 I'm going to come back to because that is the context.

Remember here's one of the problems we have is that we read these sections and if you have a modern Bible like mine, it'll have headings and the heading on this one is Mary and Martha worship and serve. And so you'll start reading at that heading and ignore what happened before. And yet it is all in a context and we're going to we're going to speak about that near the end.

Now verse 38, now it happened as they went that he entered a certain village and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. Luke, while he is very precise in many things, at the same time remember that he is writing these ten chapters not in sequence. In the book of Acts he writes everything in sequence, in time sequence.

There is there is almost nothing in the book of Acts that is not out of sequence. In Luke he is and the Holy Spirit obviously through him is directing him to not deal with things in sequence but to deal with things in subject matter. And so things are grouped together for a purpose in order to convey a particular message.

And as I said earlier if we don't read it in context then we miss the purpose or the point that he is that he is trying to make. And so this may have been anywhere in those ten months between Jesus moving from Galilee to Jerusalem to the crucifixion. It says he entered a certain village.

We assume that this village was Bethany because Mary and Martha come up in the in the Gospels again when their brother Lazarus died. And it tells us there that they were in Bethany. These obviously were the same the same people.

Jesus loved them. He had a personal affinity for them. He loved to spend time with them when he was able to to do so.

And you remember that the message that Lazarus whom you love. So Jesus had a particular affection for Lazarus. The setup in the home is difficult to understand because it seems that there are these three siblings living together.

It seems from this passage that it is Martha's house. Because it happened as they went that he entered a certain village and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. So whether she was a widow we don't understand the background.

We don't know. It just tells us these were these were the people. But Martha is clearly the the alpha female in this home.

And she and they're inviting Jesus to to spend time with with them. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus feet and heard his word. Now it's interesting that the story has three characters in it.

Jesus, Mary and Martha. But of the three Mary doesn't say anything. She is silent in the whole story.

So the story really happens between Jesus and Martha. Mary is there. She is in fact the subject of the story.

And yet somehow she doesn't she doesn't say a word. And so she had a sister called Mary who sat at Jesus feet and heard his word. Here's the key to this passage.

She sat at Jesus feet. This is a common saying in the in the old times for someone who would be the disciple of a rabbi or a teacher. Remember it speaks about Paul that he that he learned at the feet of Gamaliel.

Gamaliel was his rabbi. Gamaliel as far as we know never became a Christian. But in Judaism he sat at Gamaliel's feet.

This implied two important things. The first is obviously the physical dimension that they would physically sit at the feet of the teacher. The teacher remember would sit down when they were teaching formally.

The teacher would unlike today. Today it's through the reverse. When we teach in a formal way we tend to stand up like I'm standing up now often behind a pulpit.

Those days if you were going to teach in a formal way and obviously there's a lot of informal teaching going on in in fellowship and just in discussions and those kinds of things. But when you were going to make a formal declaration declaring the truth and the doctrine you would generally sit down. And the disciples would sit at the feet of the of the teacher.

So she's physically sitting at the feet of Jesus. And Martha is running around doing doing her thing. But there is another aspect of this that we need to understand and that is that there is a spiritual dimension to this idea of sitting at the feet of a teacher.

By sitting at the feet of the teacher she is declaring her submission to him. She is listening to him. She is receiving what he is teaching.

She is regarding him as her teacher and therefore in a position of authority. And obviously this would be true of Jesus but this would be true of any other teacher at the time. And I cited the example of Gamaliel.

Now you say well what's the big deal about that? Well the big deal about that is that the teacher-disciple relationship or the teacher-learner relationship of necessity requires the submission of the learner to the teacher. You say well what's the big deal about that? It seems pretty obvious. It seems like common sense.

And yet one of the problems that we have today is that those who are teachers of the word are often teaching people who regard themselves at the same level as the teacher or at a higher level. Not that they are but they think they are. They think they know stuff and they will argue and debate and contradict whatever the teacher has to say.

Now you remember that the the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees was that kind of relationship. The Pharisees never sat down at Jesus' feet. The Pharisees looked at him face to face at his own at his same level and they contradicted whatever he was teaching.

That is much of the spirit that has come into churches today. That Christians will submit to a teacher or a pastor in word only. But they feel that they're in a position to criticize and to judge everything he says.

Now remember that there is obviously the example of the Bereans in the book of Acts that Paul says they were or Luke says that they were more noble or noble-minded because whatever Paul taught they

examined that against the Scriptures. Now that is that is good and that is valid. We must examine whatever we're taught against the Scriptures.

But it cannot be on the basis that we're trying to find something that the teacher has said that we can contradict him on in order to reject everything else he says. Now what I mean by that is let's go back to the example of the of the lawyer in the previous two weeks that we we looked at the Good Samaritan and the and the lawyer. The lawyer was listening to what Jesus says he's he says who you know Jesus says who's what are the commands and he says love the Lord love your neighbor as yourself and Jesus says now go and do it and immediately his response is well who's my neighbor you see there's an argumentativeness oh yeah maybe you're right on a technical level but because I feel condemned by the word or I feel convicted by the word now I need to find an argument that will that will discount everything that he has said now if Jesus gave the wrong answer he would be able to go away justified in himself and say well Jesus is not a valid teacher because he was wrong on this point for example if Jesus said that the greatest command is that you should have no other gods before me which is the first command so if Jesus gave him that answer he knew well enough that that was in fact not the answer that the answer was that you love the Lord your God and that it was not one of the Ten Commandments but that it was the principle that underlay or on which all of the commandments and so that is that is the typical kind of teacher or relationship between the teacher and those who are not really teachable they're not really interested in learning over the years I've had to develop a sense of whether someone is looking for the truth or not if they're not looking for the truth I'm not going to waste my time now it doesn't mean that I'm always right and and I fear there are times that I make a mistake both ways but if the person is not interested in the truth it's a total waste of time in fact the book of Proverbs says don't correct the fool because if you correct the fool he's going to turn against you and he's gonna he's gonna use whatever you said to him to beat you up and so Jesus did the same thing you'll see that Jesus gives these Pharisees very short answers he speaks to them in parables he doesn't get into details with them because he recognizes that they are not teachable they are not sitting at his feet they're simply standing at his own level trying to contradict what he says but here is Mary and there is no sense in which she is trying to contradict Jesus there is no sense in that she is sitting at his level or standing above him and it's interesting that it seems that Martha does stand above Jesus we'll get to that but she's sitting at his feet she is submitting to his teaching she is submitting to whatever he is he is saying to her and and you know it's easy to submit to the teaching whether it comes whether it's coming through a preacher or whether it comes through our reading of the Word of God or the reading of a book it's easy to submit to those things when they please us when they're when they're what we when they're affirming us but when they contradict us and when they correct us we don't like to hear that and so sometimes in fact the the the the preacher is is good and and and I've seen this over the years in physically in in in the congregation but particularly on the internet that someone will follow you and they'll they'll say we we really love your teaching and and on and on and on and on until one day you say something that rebukes them and suddenly you're the worst thing on the face of the earth and the same people who liked your stuff before and who wrote nice comments on before now suddenly write the most terrible comments because they didn't they didn't like the message well in fact as a teacher it immediately tells me that we hit the mark that that the shoe fits if you will or the cap fits they're not going to wear it but we have spoken the truth so she is sitting at Jesus feet and she is hearing his word she's hearing his word now remember how many times we've spoken in recent times and we see this all over the Gospels we see it all over Paul's writings all over that there is a hearing and there's a hearing he who has ears Jesus says let him hear and so obviously and I'm not going to preach that whole message this morning but obviously there are those who hear but they don't hear it goes in one ear goes out the others and it makes absolutely no impact it makes absolutely no difference but she is hearing his word she is

receiving his word she is obeying his word and so she heard his word now there's another aspect I want to touch on in this in this verse and that is that the majority of commentaries emphasize the fact that she heard his word and emphasize the aspect of intellectual learning in other words Jesus is expounding whatever he is about the kingdom whatever he's talking about and she is hearing the word and so the application then is that we must hear the Word of God and of course that's right but there is another aspect to this she is not just hearing the Word of God but she is in a relationship with Jesus Christ you see you can hear not in the proper way but you can hear the Word of God you can read the Word of God you can listen to the preacher you can listen and watch YouTube you can read Christian books but not be in a relationship with Jesus Christ it's simply an intellectual thing it's a mental exercise but it is not a personal exercise Mary is not just sitting there learning information but she is in a relationship with Jesus she is she is submitting to him she is worshipping him in her heart she is worshipping him in her obedience she is loving him and and in fact you'll see later on that she is one who anointed his feet with the fragrant oil and so she her hearing is not just a cerebral thing is not just an intellectual thing it's her whole self physically she has put herself at the feet of her master her heart is loving him her spirit is worshipping him and her mind is taking in whatever Jesus is saying we need that kind of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ unfortunately some people as we've spoken in the past have got into all sorts of airy-fairy touchy-feely stuff which is which is ungodly and unbiblical and purely emotional but then there are others who've gone to the other extreme and much of Orthodox Christianity today is simply an intellectual exercise there is no heart in it as we spoke about a couple of weeks ago there is no spirit in it it's just a dead knowledge of the Word of God no she is in a relationship with Jesus she is loving him she is hearing him she is receiving from him it's it's a two-way it's a two-way relationship and folks we need that kind of relationship with Jesus you remember the Church of Ephesus and we speak often about the Church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation the first of the seven churches in chapter 2 simply because it is a model or a type of church that our kind of church and those who would generally be listening to my kind my videos easily fall into and that is that they had everything in order but they had left their first love their doctrine was good their practice was good but there was no love in it they were not sitting at Jesus feet they were not loving Jesus they were not receiving from him personally and so there's a need in for us to be sitting at Jesus feet and of course that's the lesson of this of this passage now if we get to verse 40 there's my favorite word but but in other words here's Mary she's sitting at Jesus feet she's hearing his word but Martha that's a terrible statement but Martha was distracted with much serving Mary Martha obviously was an A type personality we would call it today she was all about things and achievement and doing and goals and and there is room for that I'm going to come back to that what what she does is not bad but the problem is the spirit with which she does it that's the problem and I'm going to come back to that but but she's she's she's fussing about the right kind of food she's rushing off to the marketplace probably buying something she's she's getting all the pots ready she's getting the meal ready and she's cooking and carrying on and and and of total focus is on the stuff that she's doing now she's doing it for Jesus she's not doing it for herself or for some other friend who's come to visit it's for Jesus they loved him he was he was important to that family so in a sense we can say she is a believer but she's distracted and folks here is one of the lessons that Christians need to learn and that is that if the devil cannot tempt us into sin if he cannot scare us away from the the the protective care of the Lord Jesus then he will distract us as long as he can get us to not be involved with Jesus we can be involved with the church and I quoted the Ephesian church they were involved with church stuff they were involved with discerning the difference between true and false apostles that they were involved in in holiness they were involved in all of these things but they were distracted from their first their number one love Jesus was not number one in their in their life and for those preachers who may be watching it's very very real that preachers particularly fall into this trap that they get

distracted by the ministry and the ministry becomes everything or becomes predominant and Jesus becomes less and less important and that's the problem and that's that's why you have this word but and because her focus is not on Jesus and her relationship with him but it is on doing the stuff surrounding him her attitude is bad and that happens very easily when our focus is on the goal when our focus is on the things that we are doing and our focus is not on Jesus our attitude quickly turns sour particularly when others are not supporting us in the things that we are doing and so I can imagine the picture I can imagine Martha banging the pot lids and making a general noise and when she's walking past she's glaring at Mary she's glaring at Jesus and say no she didn't yes she did because she rebukes Jesus and she says Lord don't you care can you understand the severity of that rebuke if anyone cared Jesus cared if anyone had mercy and compassion Jesus had mercy and compassion if anyone loved Jesus loved he cared far more than anyone any human being had ever cared don't you care rebuking Jesus so that's how quickly our attitude can turn sour when our focus is on the stuff that we're doing and our focus is not on the Lord Jesus Christ the stuff needs to be done I'm going to come back to that but it needs to be done with a right attitude and it needs to be done on the basis of my relationship with Jesus not on the basis of my relationship with the stuff that I'm doing and when I speak about stuff that I'm doing whether that be evangelism or preaching the gospel or preaching the word as a pastor or as a minister or serving in a deacons capacity or serving on the board or serving in any form in the in the context of the of the of the church or in the in the ministry any of that stuff if it does not flow from a relationship with Jesus Christ it becomes a distraction and we say well look how busy I am I'm I'm doing all I'm praying I'm reading the Bible I'm evangelizing I'm going to church I'm doing all the stuff but in fact where's Jesus I remember early on in the book of Luke Jesus's parents had gone up to the Jerusalem for the feast and they're so busy with the feast and was celebrating and was with talking about all the wonderful stuff that happened in Jerusalem and they're on their way back home and and they're gone for several days when suddenly they say but where's Jesus you see they were so involved with the stuff and the things of God they were so involved in in talking about the feast and enjoying the feast and enjoying the fellowship of those who were traveling with them and in the process they'd left Jesus behind it happens so easily and so she rebukes Jesus and she she approached him and said Lord do you not care now Jesus is presuming it doesn't say specifically but we're we're understand from the from the context and from the culture that Jesus was sitting down in teaching Mary sitting at his feet Mary approaches Jesus does she come and sit down with Jesus well clearly not she's not in that kind of mood right now she's angry she's frustrated so where is Mary so Martha she's standing above Jesus Jesus is sitting on a stool or on the floor even and she's she's talking down at him can you imagine such a thing talking down to the King of Glory to the Lord Jesus himself and yet we easily do that in our prayers God why do you do this Lord why do you bless brother so and so but you're not blessing me Lord why are you using sister so-and-so and you're not using me and we rebuke the Lord because he's not doing what we want him to do you see her frustration was with her sister but she expresses it to the Lord Jesus Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone she's left me no she hasn't left you she's right there and she's doing what is important therefore tell her again can you imagine telling the Lord of Glory hey Lord you better tell my brother you better tell my sister and folk that is the modern way of praying is that we're telling God what to do people are being taught to command people are called to declare people are called to tell God what to do to hold him to his word and they're commanding God the sovereign God the sovereign of the universe and we dare tell him what he's got to do for us what he's going to do in the world what he's going to do in other people's lives you see Mary got it right she had to be sitting at his feet we're not in a position to tell God what to do I wish we could because after all we know far better what needs to be done than he does don't we but what arrogance Lord tell her to help me and Jesus answered and said to her Martha Martha you're worried and

troubled about many things the way that he uses the her name twice is with is with intensity and it's not with anger but it's with compassion and with love Martha Martha you're worried and troubled about many things and folk I believe that Christians today are worried and troubled about many things and yes we have many things to be troubled about there is the political situation there is the economic situation there's the job situation there's the covert situation there are loved ones that are sick of the virus and others that are in hospital we're feeling shut in because we can't go where we want to go we're worried about many things and folk those things are not necessarily illegitimate things they had to eat but remember Jesus could have made food just by his word but somebody had to prepare the food it was it wasn't important it was something that had to be done but it is not a priority and that was the problem is that Martha had her priorities wrong her priorities was the food and then Jesus Mary got her priorities right it was Jesus first and everything flows after that and folk I have no doubt that there is that every single one of us here this morning including myself are worried and troubled about many things but the answer is in Mary here's that word again but one thing is needed and Mary has chosen the good part which will not be taken away from her we are worried and troubled about many things but there's one thing we need and that is Jesus you say well how does Jesus fix my job situation how does Jesus fix my my concern about the political environment how does Jesus fix all of the things that I lie awake at night about maybe he doesn't fix them but you see the problem is where my focus is and you remember at the beginning of this year when we enter this whole terrible time of 2020 I spoke about Peter and Peter as long as his eyes were fixed on the Lord Jesus he was able to walk on the water he was able to deal with the adversity but the moment he took his eyes off Jesus and he began to look at the waves and at the storm and the wind he began to sink and folk if we are going to be worried and troubled about many things we will sink there's only one answer and that is to have our eyes fixed on Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith there is only one thing that will see us through and I have no guarantee that you will that you your job will ever come back again I have no guarantee that your family members will come out of hospital but one thing I have a guarantee about and that is that he is true and he is faithful and that he will sustain us even though I go through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil because your rod and your staff they comfort me and folk it doesn't matter how many troubles and problems we have our comfort is to be found in Jesus our joy is to be found in Jesus and I know it's easy to speak and it's a it's a hard thing to put into practice because we have to deal with the realities of the environment in which we're living right now one thing is needed I like that statement it's only one thing that matters and Mary has chosen the one thing and that is a relationship with Jesus Christ folk while we find ourselves locked into some degree or the other there is again and with something we said at the beginning of the year and I'm repeating again as we come to the end of this year we have an opportunity to focus on Jesus Disney is closed the theme parks are closed the movie houses are closed the gym is closed the restaurants are closed but Jesus is still open and we need to take hold of the opportunity that we have the time that we have before we start running around like chickens without a head again next year we need to use this time to sit at Jesus feet to learn from him and remember is not just learning things from him but my yoke is easy to learn of me because my yoke is easier my burden is light learn his spirit learn his attitude learn how he deals with dealt with adversity on the cross of Calvary learn how he dealt with the opposition that came as all turned against him and even his friends ran away from him learn not just about Jesus but let's learn from him as we have this opportunity and that she's chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her that relationship with the Lord Jesus that hearing him and hearing his word everything else can be taken from us we can lose our homes we can lose our jobs we can you lose our health we can even lose our physical life but we will never lose him because he is that treasure that endures forever and ever remember Jesus is in a different context that don't labor for things that are going to perish but labor for those things that are eternal and Mary is working

on that which is eternal where one Martha is working on that which is temporal now I want to close by bringing the balance because unfortunately there are many Christians well not many but there are Christians who say well I'm not going to help with sitting out the chairs I'm not going to help with wiping down everything afterwards you know I'm just I'm sitting at Jesus feet yeah right this is not an excuse for laziness and fuck if if you let's just be very practical if you are spending the hour before we have to set up here in the mornings if you're spending that hour seeking the face of God you're excused from helping setting up but if you're spending that hour doing anything else then you better help us setting up it's as simple as that now remember I spoke about the context the verse 37 before we before the story begins Jesus the lawyer said to him Jesus who's the neighbor lawyer says he who showed mercy on him and Jesus said to him go and do likewise the whole interaction with a lawyer is about doing love doing it now he rebukes Martha for not for doing can you see that these contrasts are put together with a purpose because it doesn't mean that we don't do anything clearly we must do but we must do on the basis that we have first sat at Jesus feet if we're just going around doing stuff even if they are good stuff but it is not flowing from my relationship with Jesus it's a waste of time I hope I wrote yes I'd have got the other verse mark chapter 3 verse 14 and I believe that this sums up this passage and so you have to read the story of Mary and Martha together with the story of the lawyer these two stories are juxtaposed with purpose he appointed 12 mark chapter 3 verse 14 he appointed 12 that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach here is the crux of Jesus's time with his disciples of his calling the 12 to aspects that they might be with him for what purpose that they might sit at his feet that they might have a relationship with him that they might be Mary's but that's not where it ends and another one of my favorite little words and that he might send them out that they may become Martha's you see he chose them to be Mary that they might come to a place where they can be Martha but with the right attitude that they may be Martha with the right priorities where the ministry does not become everything where the evangelism and reaching the world doesn't become everything but Jesus is everything and you see this pattern right through the New Testament you even see it in the Old Testament remember in Acts chapter 1 the last words Jesus speaks to his disciples he says to them go to Jerusalem and wait until you receive the Holy Spirit then he says you will become witnesses to me in Jerusalem Judea Samaria the ends of the earth can you see those two things again go to Jerusalem and wait sit at my feet in Jerusalem even though I will have ascended sit at my feet in Jerusalem until you receive the power then go you see it's not going and then saying well I'll find time while I'm going to sit at his feet no you wait in Jerusalem until you are right with God you sit at Jesus feet until things are right with you and him until that relationship is so solid and so sound and so bound that even in the busyness of going of doing of obeying the relationship is not lost now I'm not suggesting and I want us to understand this is not this is not two phases in our lives where we say well I had that phase of waiting in Jerusalem or sitting at Jesus feet or being with him now I'm in the phase of going out we have to look at Jesus as an example and what does Jesus do he spends the nights sitting at his father's feet in prayer he spends the days going again the same thing over and over and over he's up in the mountain he's praying he comes down he's preaching these two things always must go together if you're just spending time in prayer unless God is specifically called I understand that there are some God is specifically called to intercession and to prayer but unless God has called you to that ministry specifically you cannot escape the doing and the going by saying I'm spending time with Jesus the two things run together you can't be doing and going and not having time with him and you notice that even during the life during the daytime Jesus at this particular at the same family as Jesus comes to Lazarus and Lazarus is is is dead Jesus looks at the at the at the morning of the crowd and he turns to the father the situation had become too intense for him and he recognizes this is not something I have to power through this is not something I have to preach that this is not something I have to do something I need to

turn to the father and he prays to the father again sitting at his father's feet that he might do the work of raising the dead even see that in the book in the cross remember we speak so much about Gethsemane and we understand all of the agony but why did he go to Gethsemane that he might sit at his father's feet that he might be equipped to deal with a cross the next day and yet the disciples fell asleep this is not an either or situation and I'm afraid that that's the way it's normally preached you don't be like Marcy be like Mary we need to be both but we need to get the balance right we need to get the priorities right it has to be Jesus number one and everything else flows from that father we thank you for your word we thank you Lord for the example of the Lord Jesus who lived in that constant relationship with you and yet at the same time was doing your will help us Lord to be those who are sitting and those who are going help us Lord to be those who are receiving and who are giving help us Lord to find a balance but in all of these things that it may never become about this become about the things that we're doing but it may be all about you that in the end you might receive the honor and the glory help us Lord to find the balance but Lord above all give us the grace to be doers of your word Lord even in spending time with you is something that we need to do and Lord oftentimes we don't do it even though we know it and so Lord we pray that you'd help us I pray that you'd go with us now keep us and protect us bring us together again safely in the week we ask this in Jesus name Amen

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