

Finding Our Identity At The Feet Of Jesus

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being like Mary, choosing to sit at the feet of Jesus in devotion and surrender, rather than being distracted by worries and tasks like Martha. It highlights the significance of seeking the presence of God above all else, experiencing His glory and transformation in our lives, and allowing Jesus to obscure our problems with His presence. The message encourages a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus, where faith is focused on knowing His heart and being filled with His fragrance, leading to true evangelism through a life that reflects Christ.

Scripture: 1 John 2:6, Luke 10:38, John 11:20, John 12:1, Mark 14:3, Isaiah 26:3, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Psalm 27:4, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Devotion", "Intimacy with Christ"

Description

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Transcript

It's a joy to be here with you all. It's like visiting, for me, coming back to the Bay Area, I get to see my three brothers, all three of whom are here, and their families. But now, for us as a church, at River of Life, coming here and being with you all is like being sisters and brothers, a sister church, and you put it absolutely correctly, Bobbie.

I was thinking about this, we are doing the same memory verses, by the way, so in that sense also we are partnering exactly the same verses, and periodically we ask those who share, to talk about how this verse is applied in their lives. I believe this verse is perhaps, in my opinion, one of the verses that best epitomizes what it means to be a New Covenant church, this verse, this 1 John 2 verse 6. When we say New Covenant, I'm sure there's a lot of things that come into your mind when you think about New Covenant. But we are given a comparison, if you will, in the Old Covenant, and I'm sure you've heard a lot of messages on how the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant.

In the Old Covenant, I would use this verse that you've been memorizing, we've been memorizing, as an example of how the New Covenant is different from the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, if you look at the people of Israel, for example, there was something that they were looking forward to throughout their life, beginning with the time when they left Egypt, there was something very specific that they were looking forward to, and that was, we're going to get to the Promised Land. And all of them, despite the fact that all of the adults didn't make it into the Promised Land, because they had unbelief, despite that fact, they were looking forward to it.

Despite all of their complaints and grumbling and murmuring, they still had hope, we're going to get to the Promised Land. But you know what the amazing thing about that was? That was just a physical picture. What did they have throughout even that journey into the Promised Land? You know what it was? The presence of God Himself.

In the wilderness, when the waters were bitter, when there was no water, when there was no food, when all they had was manna, what did they have? They had God Himself. And this is why they missed it. They had God Himself right there.

A few people saw it, Moses saw it, and he interacted with God and says, I imagine Moses' dialogue with God a little bit like this, Lord, honestly, I don't care about the Promised Land. Milk, honey, I'm tasting a little bit of true milk and honey, I want that. And you see in Exodus 33 that He pleads with God, give me the real promise, your presence, show me your face, show me your glory.

And the essence of the New Covenant is this, not that, give your life to Jesus, He will take you to heaven, and you will have a Promised Land there, because that's what they had in the Old Covenant. The glory of the New Covenant, come to Jesus, and you can have heaven now. You can really have the presence of God now, right now, in your midst, in your marriage, in your home, with your children, in your workplace, wherever you go, outwardly it might look like the exact opposite of milk and honey, but the reality is God will be there in your midst.

Not, oh what a wonderful, wonderful day, day I will never forget, when I was given a hope that one day I will go to heaven. Said, how will you sing that hymn? I hope not. Unfortunately, even though many Christians sing the hymn the right way, they don't live it that way.

Oh what a wonderful, wonderful day, day I will never forget, heaven came down. Glory fills this, my soul, and the Christian life, as described in that verse, the one who says he's a Christian, that's how the Living Bible says it, says, you know what, for me heaven is right here and now, and it's getting better, and better, and better, and my sanctification and my growth in this life is really about me experiencing more of heaven. Recently, the Lord's been giving me this picture that I want to share with you, maybe it will be a help to you.

What do you expect the transition through the pearly gates, which I'm just using that term because that's what people say, I don't think they're pearly or anything like that, but what will be the transition from death into life? Will it be miserable, earth-focused, loving money, defeated, all of a sudden heaven, a big leap as it were, like a pole vault into heaven, or will it be like the Bible promises us, day by day, from glory to glory, to glory, to glory, to glory, so that on your third last day on this earth, which most of us on this earth don't know what that is, you're just three days away from heaven. On your second last day, you're just two days away from heaven, not outwardly in any way, your hair is more gray maybe, your skin is more wrinkled maybe, your body is more frail maybe, but your inner man has grown, and grown, and grown, and grown,

and on your second and your last day, you're just one day away. This is the reality, this is how that verse speaks to me, and what it does for me today is like, Lord, I don't know, I might meet you tomorrow, and I wish I could do so many things different in all the years I've lived up to this point, but given this hope that I say I abide in you and I ought to live as you lived on this earth, and I ought to walk as you walked on this earth, I pray that from today, from this moment, I will experience the joy of getting closer, and closer, and closer to Jesus, every step, not like a pole ball.

And I believe this, my dear brothers and sisters, my dear friends, that even if you made a mess your whole life, but God laid a hold of you this afternoon or sometime, and you said, I can't do anything about the past, but today is the day of salvation. Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart, believe him, and you could get, you could allow the Lord to so fill your heart with that faith, and you don't even know that tomorrow you will be in his very physical presence, but your heart was filled with such faith for what God could do with you, broken, messed up person that you are today, that he could flood your heart with the spirit of heaven in 24 hours, and get you ready to meet Jesus tomorrow. That's the faith I have.

Lord, I don't know if it's one week, one month, one year, 20 years, 30 years, I don't know, but I have such faith, because today is the day of salvation. Today, if I hear your voice, I'm not going to harden my heart with unbelief, I'm going to believe that from now until whatever that end point of my life is, you will complete your work of transformation in my life. In a sense, I think that's what happened to the thief on the cross.

He had seconds to live, and he knew it, but he had such faith for those last few seconds of his life. I mean, imagine the regret, I'm sure all of us have dealt with regret. Imagine the regret that this thief felt as he hung there.

He can't even begin to set things right in his life. Talk about a hopeless hitting a bottom. It doesn't get worse than being nailed to a cross where you can't even, your hands are so nailed in, you can't even do anything to show love anymore.

When your hands are tied and your whole body is pinned down, what will be the response of your heart? Will it be belief? Lord, maybe there's hope for me yet, he looked over to Jesus, and Jesus said, oh yes, there is. There's hope for you, you can't do one thing right, because your hands are pinned, your legs are pinned, and you're about seconds away from your last breath, but you can do one thing right, that is have faith in the Son of God. This is what Paul says, see, we shouldn't have this mentality only when we are about to die, right? This is what Paul said, 2 Corinthians 5, let's look at that verse first.

If we can be like this thief who is dying and recognizes he has a few seconds to live, and all I can do is believe, then, since we are not actually crucified, since we do have eyes and tongues and hands and life and money and homes and cars and jobs, since we have all of those things, what shall we do? We shall live as that thief on the cross, as it were. That's exactly what Paul says, 2 Corinthians 5, verse 14. This was your verse from last week, right? Because it was ours, verse 15 was.

The love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died, and he died for all that they who live, they who have the ability to speak and eat and play sport and have jobs and earn money and sing and gather together and feel fellowship, they who live should live like the thief on the cross, should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf, et cetera. Therefore, verse 17, if any man is in Christ, he's a new creature. He doesn't live like everybody else in the world, he lives like a man crucified on the cross who says, Lord, remember me, Lord, remember me.

So that's how that verse, 1 John 2, verse 6, speaks to me. I'd like you to turn to Luke chapter 10, I'd like to talk about Mary, and again, a story that you've probably heard much about, I'm probably not going to say anything new, but I hope it's something fresh, it is fresh for me this morning. Luke 10, verse 38, as they were traveling along, he entered a certain village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

Notice who it was that welcomed Jesus into their home. It was the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, but it was Martha that welcomed Jesus into her home. And she had a sister called Mary.

Something strikes me right there. There was something significant about Mary. She was known as Martha's sister.

You know, oh, you're so-and-so's friend, you're so-and-so's brother, oh, you're so-and-so's husband or so-and-so's wife. Second step, this is Mary, Martha's sister, oh, yeah, we know Martha, oh, you're Martha's sister, oh, great, good to meet you. She had a sister called Mary who, moreover, was listening to the Lord's word seated at his feet.

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. But the Lord answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things, but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. A very short story, and I've heard a lot of people talk about this, having a Mary spirit, having the spirit of Mary, and heard a lot of explanations of what it was that Jesus meant when he said, one thing is necessary, and Mary has chosen that, and I think if I was to ask you, you could all come up with at least a handful of what that actually means.

Perhaps it means, well, you should start today by reading your Bible and listening to God, which is good, and a lot of other things like that, that every decision we make must come out of listening to Jesus' voice. It's more important to worship God first and then serve him, Jesus said in Matthew 4, and a lot of these things, but I've been meditating a little bit more on what it was that Jesus saw in Mary, that he commended her for, and the first place I went to as I thought about this more was actually in John chapter 11. Now, there's three incidents where we read about this Mary, as far as I can remember, and I'd like us to quickly look at those three incidents where we see this Mary, there are different Marys mentioned in the Bible, but this Mary, the mother, the brother, I mean, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, as far as I can tell, is mentioned in three distinct situations, and the first one we just saw, where Jesus comes into their home and she's sitting there at his feet, here's another one, in John chapter 11.

At some point later on, her brother dies, you know the story, Lazarus is her brother, and we'll pick up the story in verse 20, after Lazarus has died, Jesus has been told that Lazarus was sick, he delays his travel a little bit, and then he comes to Bethany, where this family is living, and he's on his way, Lazarus has died at this point, he's about four days dead, and then here's where we pick up the story, verse 20, John 11, verse 20. Martha, therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet him, but Mary still sat in the home. Martha, therefore, said to Jesus, so Martha runs out to Jesus, he's still outside the city, I think, and Mary's at her home, Martha runs out to meet Jesus, she's excited, she's the fly by the seat of your pants, kind of hard on my sleeve type of person, a little bit like me, actually, and she says, Martha, therefore, said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you. And she, look at Martha's faith, she's a woman of faith, too. She really believes, I think, deep down, that Lazarus can come back to life somehow.

Verse 23, Jesus said to her, your brother shall rise again. And she's thinking, okay, yeah, I believe in the resurrection. One day, all of this world will end and Lazarus will rise again.

That's what she said. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on that last day. And Jesus said to her, no, that's not what I'm talking about.

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? And she said to him, yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, even he who comes into the world.

That's a very interesting spiritual conversation Martha had. And the picture I got as I was reading this story was of many such spiritual interactions I've had with Jesus myself, analyzing scripture and thinking, yeah, this is what it means. And I imagined this conversation between me and Jesus, peer to peer, as it were.

If Jesus was standing next to me, I would engage with him, maybe sit down and say, let's have coffee, Jesus. Let's sit down and you tell me and I'll tell you, and we'll have this relationship of interaction. It's a little bit of what Martha had.

Now we'll skip down to when Mary finds out that Jesus is here. Verse 30, John 11, verse 30, now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. The Jews then who were with her in the house and consoling her, that is Mary, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

But when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw him and fell at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. It's very interesting to me. This is what struck me when I read this a few weeks ago.

What is the difference between what Mary said and what Martha said? Compare verse 21 with verse 32. Martha says something in verse 21. Mary says something in verse 32.

What's the difference? Exactly the same. That's what struck me about this. Martha says, Lord, verse 21, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Mary comes to Jesus and says, verse 32, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. What was the difference? I'll tell you. The difference had everything to do with where Mary was when she said it.

Where was Mary? At Jesus' feet. This is the thing I want you to see about Mary today that I've been exploring. I'm on this journey.

I may not communicate it as effectively as I would like, but I'm exploring this a little bit more. What was it that Jesus said Mary has chosen that one thing? It was her posture. It was the place that Mary chose, more than even her listening.

What I've seen in all the three incidents that are recounted about Mary is every time you see Mary, you see her at Jesus' feet. Every time you want to find Mary, you look for Jesus' feet, she'll be there. This is what stands out about Mary.

The difference for me is a little bit like this. I imagine Martha maybe interacting with Jesus. Rachel, come up here.

I want to demonstrate this for a second. Sorry to put you on the spot, but imagine this is Jesus, and this is Martha standing here, and who's giving ... I don't know if you would hug him or whatever, but she's like, Jesus, if you had come earlier, or let's just say, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. She's interacting with him, but you know where her eye is really? In a sense, I feel like she's looking past Jesus to the grave.

Her eye is still on the problem. Lord, my brother over there, he's in the grave, and you could have fixed that problem. Lord, I'm running out of money, or my child is sick, or Lord, how are you going to fix that problem, or I'm struggling with this sin, and my eye is there while I'm interacting with Jesus.

The difference with Mary was Mary was like this. She's on her knees, and she's ... In fact, I even pictured her almost being down like this, where her vision of her problem, her vision of that thing that she's approaching Jesus for is obscured, in fact, she can sit down now, by Jesus standing in the way. This is more than just a cute idea.

I tell you this, I realize that for the majority of my Christian life, Jesus has been a means to the solution of my problem. Jesus has been a He will fix, even, for example, the promise in John 1, you shall call his name Jesus because of what he will do for you. It used to be that I say, okay, all those people in the faith movement, they talk about you shall call his name Jesus because he will heal all your sicknesses, he will give you a million dollar jet, he will give you lots of fancy clothes and all that, okay, I'm not as bad as them.

But now I will call his name Jesus because, you know what, I don't want to be defeated by that lust, I don't want to have that other thing, I want to be a little bit more patient, I want more of me, a better me, because my wife tells me, you're kind of irritable to be with. Okay, Jesus, solve my problem so that I can have a good marriage, and you shall call his name Jesus. Yes, he will do those things for you, but increasingly, I am on this journey to have Jesus so close to me and my posture being such that Jesus obscures my problem.

Yes, he will solve my problem, but I can't see anything else except that. The world talks about being visionary. I've been thinking about this word also, visionary, you know, visionary leaders, visionary churches.

Martha had a vision of what Jesus could do, and you could say that was faith. Lord, you could raise this person from the dead, and by our standards, we might say, wow, that's powerful, man, you really believe Jesus can do that? Yeah, absolutely. It's quite a different thing to have the kind of faith that says, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

And you look at Jesus' response. Jesus doesn't enter into dialogue with Mary. He did with Martha.

He says, you know, I'm the resurrection and the life. Jesus, verse 33, when Jesus saw her at his feet, face down, he, it says, was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled. A couple of verses later, you read, he too wept.

I wonder if then, I don't know, I don't want to read too much into this. I wonder if what caused Jesus to weep was to see such faith. The faith that says, I have a feeling Mary was saying, Lord, honestly, it's not even about Lazarus.

It's about you, and it's about you and my coming to a relationship with you where I can know your heart in why you would allow this man to die. Why would you allow this circumstance into my life? I don't understand it, Lord, but rather than me, you're fixing my problem. Will you show me your heart? That's what I see in Mary.

More than the solution to the problem, knowing the heart of God. This is what Mary had. Jesus commended her for that.

The third instance where you read about Mary is the next chapter, John chapter 12. Jesus comes back to Bethany sometime later, and this time he doesn't come to their house. This is after Lazarus is raised from the dead.

He comes to another house, the house of a man named Simon, who was a leper who had been healed from leprosy. Chapter 12, verse 1, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made him a supper there, and this is Simon's house.

We read about it, I think, in Mark 14, you're told. This wasn't Mary and Martha's house and Lazarus' house. This is Simon the leper's house, also in the town of Bethany.

But guess where Martha is still? In the kitchen. They made him a supper there, and Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. So there's Lazarus next to Jesus, having an inner dialogue with Jesus.

There's Martha in the kitchen doing her thing. So, where's Mary? Mary, verse 3, she's like, Jesus is coming. I gotta run to his feet as quickly as possible.

Jesus is coming? Yeah, save a seat for Lazarus over there, he's a big star because he's the one that's raised from the dead. And everybody wants, you know, we read in another place that people came because they're like, I gotta see Lazarus, man. Jesus, yeah, he's cool, but Lazarus, I wanna touch his hand.

This was a guy who was once dead. Now he's alive. I wanna see Lazarus.

And Martha, she's preparing the food. There's Mary. She's not invited to sit.

She's not invited to have a conversation with Jesus. But I think in Jesus' mind, he's like, I know where I can find him. Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfumed pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. And you know the rest of the story. This is the essence of what I'm saying.

Now, Jesus calls you to be a part of his body, the body of Christ today. Which part of the body of Christ do you wanna be associated with? You wanna be one of those respected members in the church, near the head, maybe the shoulders. I'm closest to Jesus because of my position, been in the church for so long.

I do all these things for the church, and there's this hierarchy of things that we do. This is how the world assesses value. You're the CEO, okay.

Or you're the CTO. Ah, that's closest thing to the CEO, okay. You're the VP.

And then we bring this into the church. You know what Jesus is looking for? The MVP, if I could use that term, for Jesus, the most valuable person, is the one who has found his feet. Where is that? It doesn't mean sitting in the back.

It doesn't mean that you have some false sense of piety, religious humility. It just means, Lord, I'm about to go to this church meeting. It's about 1.15 now.

I'm on my way to the church meeting. Where are your feet? Today, as I interact with this, your body, where are your feet? How in my thought life can I be near your feet? How can I pour out my devotion? Often, post-often, that will look like a discouraged, awkward, nerdy person that's difficult to have a conversation with, perhaps. And you could have a conversation with all the cool people and go away, filled up, and think, man, that was a great meal and great conversation I had with Jesus.

Like everybody else sitting at the table. What a great church service, man. The singing was good.

God spoke to me. Jesus said, but you missed my feet. And the purpose of my bringing you here today was for you to find my feet.

Then you would have interacted with me. Do you want to be associated with Jesus' feet? Sometimes, it's a smelly place. And that's the picture I'm getting here, that even Jesus' feet, because he walked on this earth and lived like us, lived as Jesus lived.

His feet were smelly and sticky, like Peter's and like Lazarus' and like all the other Jews around him. And Mary found that spot. I said, I don't care if this is smelly or not.

This is the feet of Jesus. That's where I want to be found. Mary gave everything she can.

You know what this means? Remember what Jesus said in Luke 10, we started there, right? If my vision of this world can be so obscured by my seeing Jesus, then the consequence of that, Jesus said to Martha, verse 41, Luke 10, verse 41, Martha, you're bothered and worried about so many things. I believe that the reason there's so much worry and bother is what Jesus said. Worry and bother.

Is your life characterized by worry and bother? It is sometimes for me, I'll be honest. And I hear the words of Jesus, Santos, the reason you're worried and bothered about so many things, that sister, she treats me a little bit like that. What will happen tomorrow? What's this all about? Worry and bother.

The reason for that is my vision of those things is not obscured by Jesus. Yes, I'm interacting with Jesus. Yes, I'm serving him.

I'm interacting with him like I was with Rachel, but I've got my eye on those other things. One thing is needful for us to find ourselves so lonely that all I can see is Jesus' feet and says, Lord, yeah, the problem's there. I'm aware of it.

But right now, all I see is your feet. I resign myself to you and oh, how much pleasure that will bring to Jesus. This is faith.

Do you see a difference in the faith that Martha had? She says, Lord, you can raise him from the dead. Do great things through me, through our church, through my home. And Mary's saying, this is my faith, Lord.

I lay him down at your feet. In Mark 14, you read that she was criticized by Judas. You can ignore criticism.

Don't you find that the criticism of people affects you? People talk about the way you serve the Lord and despise it. People think, ah, yeah, what good is that? You got up and shared something and you thought it was so rich. Ah, my God, I didn't get anything out of it.

Does that bother you if somebody was to say that? And you thought, man, I served with all my heart. I spent, I think it was about a year's worth of wages that it cost Mary to buy that perfume. You think, I gave this much, a year's worth to the church and all they did was just spite and says, man, you should have done a soup kitchen with that or something like that.

But Jesus commended her, made known of it. You see how even criticism of others we can be freed of if our vision of Jesus is obscuring. One last thing.

It says, John 11, I'll show you this. Very interesting when we read this story carefully. It says in John 11, verse 45, a few verses later, many therefore of the Jews, listen to this carefully.

This is right after the raising of Lazarus. Many of the Jews who had come to Mary and beheld what he had done, believed in Jesus. Many of the Jews who came to Mary and beheld what he had done, believed in him.

And this, think about it, this is evangelism at its best. This is evangelism at its best. I mean, the ones who came to Mary as it were, her being around Jesus was what spoke to them.

When you seek to evangelize to the people you interact with, what is it that you will ever evangelize with? Is it we have the right doctrine? We have the right way of doing church or we're a new covenant or will it be? Jesus has rubbed off on me. I've been at Jesus' feet and whatever Jesus smells like and feels like in a spiritual way, you will see out of me. Mary had spent so much time with Jesus that when she went around and to those who were willing to believe, they said, it smells like Jesus.

Is this how we want to build the church? Jesus has rubbed off on me. And when we build the church that way, we will build the church that will, against which the gates of hell will not prevail. There's a hymn.

You may sing it. I wrote down the words here. Listen, bless me, oh my savior, bless me.

I think a lot of Christians pray this prayer. Bless me Lord, bless me. It goes on to say, as I sit low at thy feet, oh, look down in love upon me and let me see thy face so sweet.

Give me, Lord, the mind of Jesus. Keep me holy as he is. May I prove I've been with Jesus, who is all my righteousness.

You know the name of that hymn? Anybody? It's called Sitting at the Feet of Jesus.

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