

Sit At Jesus' Feet

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[0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 10, we'll be reading verses 25 to 42. On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

! Teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the law, he replied, how do you read it? He answered, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.

You have answered correctly, Jesus replied, do this and you will live. But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, and who is my neighbor?

In reply, Jesus said, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

A priest happened to be going down the same road when he saw the man and he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

[1 : 1 3] But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came to where the man was. And when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper.

Look, look after him, he said. And when I return, I will reimburse you for any expenses you may have. Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

The expert in the law replied, the one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, go and do likewise. As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

She had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?

[2 : 3 5] Tell her to help me. Martha, Martha, the Lord answered. You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.

Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her. Let's pray as we come to the word. Lord, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that you've preserved it for us in this book. We thank you that it is you speaking to us. So we pray now that as our pastor comes, you would cause us to hear it in that way, as your words.

Lord, give us wisdom on how we can apply it. Help us to humble ourselves before it when it goes across the grain of that remaining sin in our hearts.

And cause us to live it out in honor to you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, the new year does stretch out in front of us like this great unknown territory.

[3 : 38] We don't know what's in front of us. It's all dark, and we're going to be pushing back that darkness. Who knows what a day will bring forth? Well, we are going to find out, Lord willing, what this year holds.

There's so many different possibilities and options and things for us to do in 2019. So much that we could do. But if we keep on with that pioneer image, you want to pick the most important thing.

If you're new on the frontier, you want to pick the most important thing to do, the most vital thing. And so I want to ask this evening, what is necessary in 2019 in your life?

The things that you have planned. Maybe you're making resolutions. What is the absolutely vital resolution that you need to make in 2019? Before anything else, Jesus tells us in this passage, Martha, Martha, Martha, Martha.

Here's the one thing you need to do in 2019. Sit at my feet and listen to me. And that sounds wonderful, doesn't it, dear Christian?

[5 : 00] Where Jesus says, of all the things that you can do and all the things that you do need to do, in it all, sitting quietly at my feet.

Just do that to start. Close to him. Focused on him. That sounds so good. To have the world, we sing it, to have the world grow strangely dim.

I have a pair of noise-canceling headphones that are worth every penny that I paid for them. And they don't totally block out every single sound, but they do take 20 decibels right off the top.

And with some background white noise playing, they take almost everything off, everything. So it quiets everything down.

I love wearing them. I love wearing them because I can focus. I love wearing them because all the things going on in my house are not distracting me. I love wearing them when I can be at the library.

[6 : 07] I can be in my own little world. And that's what Jesus is saying to us and was saying to Martha in this passage. There's all this noise, noise, noise.

All these demands. Some of them legitimate. All of our to-do lists. And I'm just like you.

My heart gets pushed and pulled by different things. And sometimes I can be drowned out. The noise can drown me out.

And drown Jesus out. Until I'm getting more and more frantic. And in this passage, he's like taking those headphones and he's putting them on my ears and saying, Now listen, this is the most important thing.

Just me and you. Listen to me. While I teach you. That's it. Sit at my feet and listen. And so that's my New Year's resolution.

[7 : 07] For 2019. It's to be a Mary. To sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him. To not lose my focus. And I hope that will be yours.

And so we want to look at this passage. And just look at some of the lessons that it teaches us. There is something. Just this little section about Martha and Mary. That is so familiar.

And so comforting. And so porny. And at the same time. This passage is one that sticks with people. Because it's right where we live. Pastor Paul preached about something that is amazing.

And wonderful this morning. This is where we live though. There's no miracle. There's no amazing mind-blowing sermon.

It's Jesus with his friends. At a friend's house. Having a dinner party. And things are going along. And then there's an argument. There's a fight. And there's hurt feelings.

- [8 : 08] And there's angry words. I'm sure it's not like this at your house. I'm sure in the last few weeks it's been perfect. But sometimes at my house things happen like this. People are supposed to be working.
- Supposed to be doing a job. And they end up not doing it. And they come to me. And I'm hardly Jesus. But they come to me. And they say, Well, so-and-so is not doing what they're supposed to do.
- Tell them to help me. And of course they don't come to me with a peaceful tone of voice. Seeking reconciliation. And seeking, Oh, Father dearest. I'm concerned about my brother or my sister's soul.
- I think they're in the grasp of self-love. And we need to go rescue them from their sin. I wish it was like that. I sought reconciliation. But they won't listen. And so we must go together and help them.
- It's like Martha's house. I'm sure it's like your house. There's lots to do. The house needs picked up. The table's still not set. The potatoes need mashed. The turkey needs carved.
- [9 : 13] The rolls still aren't in the oven. We don't know where the cranberries are. Someone has to go to the store. There's noise. There's lots of noise. There's lots of hubbub. We're a napkin short. The chairs are in the garage.
- And there's someone not doing what is expected of them. And Martha is trying to get everything around. And there is Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to him.
- And I can imagine that Martha has probably cleared her throat, you know, and done one of these numbers to get Mary's attention a few times. And nothing seems to have worked.
- And she sees Jesus almost indulging Mary. Jesus seems to be oblivious to what is going on.
- And Martha's getting angry. And so she blurts how she's feeling. And I know you've been in situations like that where someone says something awkward or embarrassing at a dinner party.
- [10 : 11] And everyone kind of stops and listens. What will Jesus say to Martha's complaint? Now I want you to think.
- What was everyone expecting Jesus to say? If this was happening at your house, what do you think you would expect Jesus to say?
- Well, probably everyone expected Jesus to say something like, oh, sorry, Martha, Mary. You should go help.
- You should go help your sister out. We can talk later. That seems reasonable and sensible. Especially in that culture, it was a woman's responsibility to make sure these things were taken care of.
- But that's not what Jesus said. If he would have said something like that, then this little section in our Bible probably wouldn't even be here.
- [11 : 14] Because it would have just been a normal domestic event and very little to teach us. But this is one of those places where Jesus turns our expectations on their head.
- What is normal on its head? A couple chapters before this, someone says, come. Jesus says to this potential disciple, come follow me.
- And the man says, well, I have to bury my father. And Jesus didn't say, oh, that makes sense. Go do the funeral. Or whatever.
- He said, let the dead bury their own dead. Another person, come follow me. Just let me say goodbye to my family. And Jesus replied, no one puts his hand to the plow and looks back as fit for service in the kingdom of God.

Jesus, your mother and your brothers are outside waiting to talk to you. I'll tell you who my brothers and my mother, my sisters are. It's those who hear the word of God and put it into practice.

[12 : 20] In the passage that we had read for us, Jesus says something shocking and surprising. He puts the Samaritan as the good person in the story. And it's one of those places that sticks.

It sticks with us. Jesus is first. Jesus has no problem saying I am first. My calling is first. My kingdom is first. My first family is not blood relations, but my spiritual family. Those who are like me who obey God's word. And that's what we have here.

Jesus is teaching us something that we desperately need to remember. Sitting at his feet, learning from him. With him speaking to us.

And us with two ears listening. Not speaking to other people. Not doing something else. But two ears listening to him is first. It was first then.

[13 : 21] It's first now. It's first in 2019. Now, there might be a lot of good things. There could be a lot of good things. There might be a lot of even very important things.

But listening to Jesus is the very most important necessary thing. The only absolutely necessary thing. And that's where Jesus put it. And what I'm saying is put it there in 2019.

I imagine many of you have lots of resolutions or some resolutions that you want to do. And what I am just saying is put that at the very top. That's what Jesus put at the very top.

Well, but let's step back and let's look again. Where did Martha go wrong? Where did Martha go wrong? And what did Mary do that was right?

And Jesus said was so right. Well, what did Martha do wrong? Well, it wasn't the fact that she was busy. It wasn't the fact that she was hardworking and Mary was not.

[14 : 25] That was not the problem in the situation. Some people in the early church or even in the medieval church, they looked at this passage and they said, Well, now there's obviously two different kinds of Christians.

There are those who just sit around and contemplate. They're the monks, the nuns. They don't have active lives outside in the world. No, the better life is this kind of life where you just sit and listen and think.

Everyone else might be called an active, busy life, concerned with lots of things. But Jesus says it's better to withdraw and to just spend time with him.

That's the best life. Now, that's what they thought. But that wasn't that isn't the point. That wasn't the point. Mary wasn't a better Christian than Martha. Martha, yes, made a mistake here.

We all do. Martha makes a mistake here. But it wasn't in her busyness or in her hard work. After all, Paul said to the Thessalonian church, Make it your ambition.

[15 : 31] So this is you want a resolution. You want a goal for your life. You want a goal for 2019. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, to work with your hands.

Mind your own business. Work with your hands. What he's saying is, is there stuff for you to do? There's work for you to engage in, and you need to be engaged in that.

So don't go messing around with other people's stuff. Stick to your own. Stay busy with your own hands. So, and even the passage on the Good Samaritan is teaching us that we need to be neighboring other people, looking out, doing good for them.

Now, Martha and Mary were both Christians. They were both dear saints. They were both wonderful believers, but they were different in personality, and different in how they expressed their love and their honor to Jesus.

There was nothing wrong with Martha wanting to make a nice dinner for Jesus and his disciples. That's love in action. That's love in action.

[16 : 42] Martha was an active, busy person. I just think of when Lazarus died and Jesus is walking. Martha is the one that gets up and leaves the morning, the funeral, and she goes and meets Jesus, and Mary stays behind and waits for Jesus to get there.

Martha's an active, busy person. This is her house. Jesus, she loved Jesus. She loved his disciples. She wants to serve them, and so that's what she's doing. She wants to give him the very best.

Now, Mary, on the other hand, we don't know very much about either one of them, but she seems to be a different kind of Christian. She loved the Lord.

She wanted to honor him, but the way she thought about it was, here he is. He's the most important person. I want to listen to him.

Martha said, I don't get very many chances to show hospitality. That's what I want to do, and I want to do a good job. Mary, on the other hand, didn't think that way. She thought, wow, here's my chance to listen to him, and I'm going to do that.

[17 : 47] So Mary and Martha were different. Were either of them wrong? No. It was both love. They're different people, different personalities, different gifts, different spirits, but they both loved the Lord.

They loved him a lot. Now, there's a lesson there for us, because just because someone is not like us, just because someone is not like us, with the same priorities, the same ideas, the same things, the same reactions to events and opportunities and possibilities, it doesn't mean that they are less than us.

It is easy for the Marthas in the Christian church to look down their nose at the Marys, to think that they aren't as spiritual, to think that they don't love or believe as much, but that isn't always true.

It's good to be a Martha, but not everyone is like that. There are Marys in Christ's family bought with the same blood, loved by the same dying love, or bought with the same blood, loved with the same undying love, but they're different.

So we need to be careful. We need to be careful with our judgment. Only God can judge the heart. Only God can judge the heart. Anyways, it wasn't busyness that was the problem.

[19 : 14] You see what it was. All that busyness, all that work had distracted Martha. Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

It wasn't the fact that she was busy. The problem was that all that preparation had her heart. It caught her attention and her mind, and that became her focus.

That became all of her attention. So the word distracted in this passage, it means like pulled away. Or dragged away. Can good things, even our Christian service, drag us away from Jesus Christ?

This passage is saying that's a possibility. That our hearts, perfectly good things, can so engross us, or become so important to us, that we lose sight of the one whom we are serving.

And we lose connection with Jesus Christ as we're trying to serve. We can be busy serving the Lord, but our hearts are in the service instead of with Jesus.

[20 : 24] And I think that's where Martha went astray. She lacked, she lost track of Jesus. And in the midst of the service, the hospitality became about her.

And you can tell, it had become about her, had somehow warped itself, because that's why she's so mad when Mary doesn't fall in line.

When Mary doesn't line up with Martha and say, this is what we got to do, and Mary says, yes ma'am, we're going, Martha is becoming angry.

You can tell how much she had lost track by Jesus by how she's talking to Him. She says, Lord, now what does that mean? It means, you're the master, I'm the servant, you're the honored one, and I'm here to do what you say.

That's what it means. But she says, Lord, tell her to help me. Lord, listen to me. Obey me. Do what I say.

[21 : 31] Her busyness had replaced Jesus. And you could tell just how she became more and more flustered, more and more upset, and impatient with not only Jesus, but Mary.

She's saying, I'm doing everything, and my sister isn't doing anything. I'm doing everything, and my sister isn't doing anything. And we have to do it this way. And we have to do it just right.

We can't serve Him on paper plates with plastic forks. We can't have Him with plain, we can't give Him just plain food. What is my sister doing? Everything Martha was doing seems so necessary.

Martha seems so necessary to Martha. If I don't do it, if I don't do it just the way it needs to be done, if I don't do it the right way, then everything will be ruined.

So how can you tell if you're serving Jesus, your heart's with Him, or your heart, or busyness has replaced Him. A lot of other things, maybe good things, have replaced Him.

[22 : 37] Well, look at how you're feeling. Jesus never demands that we become worried, or impatient, or flustered, and all upset in His service.

He's always much more concerned about our heart. Does He have your heart in that service? Is He connected to you? Are you connected to Him? true religion begins at Jesus' feet, humbly listening to your Master.

You can't imagine, you can't even imagine Mary talking the way Martha was talking. She wanted to learn. Well, so what can we learn from Martha?

Martha, well, it's easy for mere busyness to replace Jesus. In 2019, just like in 2018, and like every other year before it, there's going to be lots of things that are going to be pulling and wanting to drag us away from Jesus, listening to Him, staying close to Him.

And so, what can we learn from Martha? We can learn that we need to guard our hearts. even from the good things, let alone the bad things.

[23 : 58] Guard your heart. It's good to work hard for the Lord, but keep your heart at Jesus' feet. Now, what can we learn from Mary? What did she get right?

Well, Mary's heart was undivided. Martha's heart was completely scattered.

and a million pieces. Mary's heart is completely undivided. Give me an undivided heart that I might fear you. Martha was upset about many things. Mary's heart and mind were all on Jesus.

She is so focused on Him that she is oblivious to Martha. She's at His feet, listening to what He says. Her ears are open.

Her heart is open. She is ready to receive. She's at His feet. She's drinking up everything He has to say. You've seen a strong magnet come in proximity to a paper clip and that magnet just grabs a hold of that paper clip and just yanks it to it.

[25 : 05] Jesus was that magnet. And Mary came along and she was a paper clip and He caught her. She's trapped in His power.

Mary was all about Him. It wasn't about, well, I can do this for Him. That actually comes later. She's the one that anoints His feet.

And Judas is mad and Jesus says, she's done this for my burial. What she's done will be remembered forever.

So, there is a time for service in Mary's life. But in this moment, she wasn't thinking, this is what I can do for Him.

But it was first, I need Him. I need His words. I need to know Him. I need to be close to Him. Paul, who came after Mary in Philippians, was echoing her heart when he said, I want to know Christ.

[26 : 11] I want to know Him. I want to know about Him. I want to know Him. I want to be in fellowship. I want to be in friendship with Him. I want to be connected to Him. He says, everything else is rubbish.

And I consider it loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. So, everything else in my life, all the busyness, everything else is nothing compared to the glory of knowing Jesus Christ.

And so, in one way, in one glorious way, Mary didn't care about anyone or anything else except for Jesus. He had the first place in her heart.

And so, how did she show her devotion? It wasn't first in service, though that comes. And there's definitely a place for it, but it shows itself in her posture as a humble listener, a humble learner.

What did Jesus praise? That in all the things that she could have done, she chose to listen to Him.

[27 : 33] So, what did Mary want? What did Mary want in this moment? She wanted to hear His words.

She wanted to know Him better, to be close to Him. It was no mere academic interest. I've gone to college, I've gone to seminary, I've had lots of teachers, lots of professors in my life, and I listened to them, and I listened to them for their knowledge.

I didn't listen to them, I don't think, in any case, so that I can know them better and imitate their life. I didn't listen to them like my life depended upon it.

I didn't really care about them. I didn't want to sit at their feet and say, I want to know you, I want to be close to you, but that's what Mary wanted. I want to know Him, and everything else is nothing compared to that.

Even my service is nothing compared to that. So Martha was upset about many things, Mary had one thing. Martha was angry and out of sorts, Mary is completely peaceful and calm.

[28 : 55] She never says anything in her defense, and Jesus steps in and defends her. Martha, Martha. And you can hear, if you're listening, you hear the sympathy, you hear the gentle rebuke.

Martha, Martha, Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her. I'm not going to send Mary off to be angry and flustered with you.

She's chosen what is better and it's not going to be taken away from her. So, you have your resolutions, you have your ideas, your plans for 2019.

Do you know if you're going to be able to accomplish them? Do you know if you're going to be able to achieve them? Maybe it's something like I want to set aside such and such in my savings account.

Do you know that you'll be able to get that? Well, you don't know that. You can aim for it, you can hope for that. Maybe you have some other resolutions. I want to exercise this many days a week or I want to finish this program or whatever it is.

[30 : 02] You don't know if you're going to be able to accomplish that. You don't know if you're going to be able to achieve that. That resolution is not sure. But what Jesus is saying here is if you make sitting at my feet your one great resolution, you will have it and it won't be taken away from you.

You won't be able to, no one will steal it from you. I won't steal it from you, Jesus is saying. I won't make you go somewhere else, do something else. If you make knowing Christ, humbly listening to Christ in his word by his spirit, your great resolution, you will have him.

You will be closer to him at the end of 2019 than you were at the beginning if you make that your resolution. you will know him better. It won't be taken away from you.

Everything else is good in its time and its place. But with Mary, we should be saying, but give me Christ. He's the only thing my soul needs.

Everything else might be good and fine, but he's the only thing my soul needs. He's my living water. He's my true bread. He's my best friend.

[31 : 20] He's my Lord and my master and my savior and my friend. He's my breath, my sunshine, my all. And so that's the one thing you need.

So how do you press in? Well, you do what Mary did. You listen to his word. Listen.

active listening. Mary could only be with Jesus a few days in her whole life. Jesus didn't live in Bethany where Mary and Martha lived.

He traveled through. He spent time there. I don't know how many days he spent there, but on the whole, it was not very many days of her life. But you know what? This is the wonderful thing. Every morning you can spend and sit at Jesus' feet.

Every evening, every day, you can sit at Jesus' feet. Every morning, you can walk with him. You know, there are four gospels, four lives that you can live with Jesus.

[32 : 24] You can be there with him. You can sit at his feet as he preaches the Sermon on the Mount. Think of the disciples. They heard it once. You can hear it again and again.

You can walk behind him as he tells his parables. You can stand by his side as he heals the blind and the lame and drives out demons.

You can watch him look down and face his detractors, his enemies. This was not an easy life. He had challenges and he had difficulties and he had enemies and he had critics.

Well, how do you live with that? Well, you live with Jesus and he'll show you how. He'll show you how to do that. And you can go to the cross and see him dying for you. You have much more than Mary ever had.

You can sit at his feet and learn from him and walk with him. But you say, but Mary had Jesus in the flesh.

[33 : 24] If I could have that, if I could sit like Mary did, physically on the ground and Jesus talking, well, then that would be different. And I just want to say that you still have so much more than Mary did.

Yes, she had Jesus in the flesh, but you know what? You have the Holy Spirit. You have the Spirit of Christ. You can live with someone.

You can sleep in the same bed with someone. You can hold hands with someone and not know them and not be close to them. But we have the Spirit of Christ, and he takes this word, and he makes it real to us.

He takes it from mere letters and words and he puts it into our hearts. He makes it alive and vital to us. He takes the words of the page, and it's like we can hear Christ's voice speaking to us through that word.

No actual voice, but we can hear his voice. We can hear the tone of his voice. We can hear him as the Spirit takes his word and he gives it to us.

[34 : 36] you have so much more than Mary ever did. Sitting there. And so be a Mary in 2019.

I want to be a Mary. I don't want any distractions, anything pulling me away, nothing good, nothing bad, or anything else to pull me away from Jesus Christ.

And you know, I know that I'm going to have to cut some clutter out of my life. I'm going to have to cut some of that noise. Some of that noise we can do away with. And maybe you need to do that. Look at your life and say, you know what, I can't listen to Jesus and sit at his feet with all these other voices and all these other things going on.

So maybe to some degree you can get rid of them. I know that some noise we can't get rid of, but we can cut some of the clutter. And I already have some ideas. I wonder maybe you can think of some for yourself.

He's the one thing we need in 2019. that if we pursue, he says, you'll have and it won't be taken away from you.

[35 : 43] And then my dear lost friend, do you see what this passage is saying to you? I know you think a lot of things are necessary.

I know you think that I have to have these things. These things are vital. I can't be happy without them. I can't survive without them. I can't thrive without them. I know you're saying a lot about a lot of things.

But Jesus is cutting clean across that and he's saying there's only one thing you need. Only one. Not a hundred. That's what the world is saying.

That's what the devil is saying. Just one thing. You don't need a cell phone. You don't need a nice house. You don't need perfect friends. You don't need a perfect body. You don't need a perfect job.

You don't need a perfect spouse or perfect children. You don't need any of all that and any and all that trash that the world is offering you. Paul would say it's all garbage compared to knowing Christ.

[36 : 44] You need Christ. You need him. He's the way, the truth, and the life. You're not really living if you don't have him.

you have a shell of a life. To whom shall we go?

You alone have the words of life. Whose word pours life into me? His word does. So you're a plant love.

And your soul withers without him. Lost person, he's what you need. He's your salvation.

He's what you need. His love is better than life itself. You can live without anything and anyone else, but you can't really live without him.

[37 : 47] you can live without anyone and anything else, but you really can't live without him. And so don't go one more day without him.

Martha could have left their work, left all that distractions, and sat at his feet and been happy. And that's what I want you to do.

Leave all your works behind. Leave all the things that you're saying, I have to do, I have to do, I have to do. And get to Jesus Christ. He is inviting you. He's inviting you tonight.

Let's pray. Lord, we are up against a formidable enemy. We are up against three formidable enemies, the world, the flesh, the devil, and every single one of them is working alone and with each other to distract us, to pull us away from Jesus Christ and from his word.

So we feel our weakness. We can say, this is what I want to do. This is what I want to be. I want to be a Mary. I want to sit at your feet, Lord. I want to sit at your feet every day.

[39 : 04] I want a close, vital, humble relationship with you. We can say that, and yet, our enemies are so strong and we are so weak.

So please help us. Please draw us to yourself and attach us to your side. Prone to wander, Lord, we feel it.

Lord, please have mercy upon us and help us. Grow us. Grow us in our intimacy and our knowledge with Jesus this year.

For those who are lost, who are living the shell of a life, this so-called life, oh, Jesus Christ, come and powerfully invade their hearts and show them what they're missing.

Show them the depths of their need and their death and draw them with strong arms to yourself.

[40 : 15] Lord, do great things for us. You've done great things for us in 2018. Go on doing great things for us in 2019. And above all, draw us closer to yourself.

I pray this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.