

One Necessary Thing

Luke 10:38-42

December 22, 2019

In our study of Luke's Gospel, we, we have come here to a scene that puts the authenticity of Scripture on display. We see an older, very responsible sister, complaining about her younger sister. So no matter what period of time in history, no matter what culture, some things like sibling conflicts, well, they just don't change, do they? So you're going to find that section of Scripture recorded in Luke 10:38-42. This is an account by the way that is unique to Luke's Gospel, the story of Martha and Mary, who are hosting the Lord Jesus Christ in their home.

Setting the conflict aside for a moment, these two sisters, we need to realize that they welcomed Jesus into their home. So transcending the details of the account, which we're going to look at, we don't want to lose sight of the fact that these two believing sisters, Martha and Mary, they show us how to receive

the Lord Jesus Christ in humble worship and in obedient and receptive faith. In context, the author of this Gospel, Luke, he wants us to see how Martha and Mary's receptivity to Christ, in the context here, stands in contrast to the proud lawyer. The one, you remember we studied, who, who stood up to challenge Jesus publicly and put him to the test.

If you look back, if you're in Luke chapter 10, just look back to verse 25 for a moment. Luke 10:25 and following. It says that, "Behold, a lawyer stood up to put him," that is Jesus, "to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And he said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' And he answered, 'You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You've answered correctly; do this, and you will live.' But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor? Who is my neighbor?'"

So in answer to that self-justifying question, as you remember, Jesus told the story about the Samaritan, who showed neighbor

love. We studied that story, learning what loving our neighbor as ourselves looks like. And when we studied that, we noticed, noted how the lawyer completely bypassed the matter of loving God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind. Question is: Did he bypass the question because he believed he was already righteous in loving God in that way? Did he think that he had that down and there's no question about that because obviously he loves God perfectly?

Perhaps that's true, but maybe he felt it was just easier for him to justify himself in public by getting Jesus to define the word neighbor. Lawyers say that whoever frames the debate wins the debate. So perhaps he was doing that. He's framing the debate and trying to set it around some territory that he felt more comfortable in. Whichever it is, Luke intends to bring us back to this fundamental question about loving God with heart, soul, strength, and mind. He is going to make sure that we, the readers, grapple with this question and answer it.

So what does it look like to love the Lord God with all of our heart, all of our soul, strength, and mind? And to answer that

most fundamental question, Luke has given us this story at the end of chapter 10, this account, he's recorded this account of Mary and Martha. And the point that Luke is going to make, it's one that his Gospel has already made repeatedly, the story of Mary and Martha just merely illustrates this. But to love God is to receive the one whom God has sent. To love God is to receive the one whom he has sent. Or in other words, to be more specific, to love God is to receive Christ, to receive Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. To love God is to receive him. It really is that simple.

Back in Luke 9:48, Jesus told his disciples, "Whoever receives me receives him who sent me." So whoever receives Jesus as Lord, Jesus Christ as Lord, he receives the God who sent his son into the world to save sinners. And that's, that's really what he's saying here, which is why loving God is illustrated perfectly in this very precious little account. Take a look at Luke 10:38-42.

"Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to

his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. She went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.'"

Let me ask you something. If Jesus showed up at your house this week, how would you receive him? If you knew that he was coming to your house in person, in the flesh and walks through your front door and sits on the sofa in your living room, or even sits in your favorite chair, takes his place at your dinner table, what would you do? What preparations would you make if you knew that was going to happen? How would you get the house ready? What do you think would make Jesus feel most welcome in your house? How would he feel most warmly received? What would your hospitality look like?

For some of you, if you really think that through, and if that were really happening to you, obviously your mind is going to be flooded with details. If you start to imagine that even now,

you're thinking, Oh no! What would I do? You'd probably even feel slightly overwhelmed. So let me simplify this for you and just give you the bottom line. Here is what being hospitable to Jesus Christ should look like. Here is how you receive him well, make him feel welcome.

You listen to him. You listen. And that is it. That is how you make Jesus feel received. You listen. That's very simple. You listen to him and you listen intently. You hang on every word that he speaks. And that is simply said, obviously, but doing that is a whole other matter because listening is a profoundly intensive, deeply immersive discipline of the Christian life. It's a discipline of attention. It's a discipline of attentiveness. It's a discipline, really, of thinking carefully. And that's because biblically speaking, listening is not merely a function of your senses, that is the physiology of hearing. So vibrating air molecules called sound waves that pass through the auditory canal, they're converted into vibrations in the tympanic membrane. Ossicles of the middle ear becoming vibrations in the cochlear fluid, which are picked up by nerve impulses in the cochlear nerve and transmitted in the brainstem, processed, and relayed to the cerebral cortex of the brain and

where the nerve signals are then interpreted with individual meaning.

When you slow all that down and you consider all that goes into God's gift of hearing, that we can hear and interpret, enjoy every single note of music, when we can understand words that are spoken to us and appreciate the meaning of each word, to enjoy sounds of nature, wind in the trees, the songs of birds, lowing of the cattle, and all the rest, what a miracle is the gift of hearing. When the Bible talks about hearing, when the Bible speaks of listening, it's not just, it's, it's assuming that entire process of the physiology of hearing, but it goes further. Biblical listening involves moral reasoning. It involves spiritual processing because it deals with spiritual understanding. It deals with things like theological meaning and ethical application.

So that means that it involves in the will, volitional decision-making, which then produces the fruit of moral and ethical behavior, which is all defined by the standard of Holy Scripture. So biblically speaking, hearing from God must be

combined with obedience to what you hear from God or else it's called deafness, it's called being deaf. Biblically hearing is not just a physiological function, hearing is a moral process. And good hearing is evidenced by outward behavior, which is righteous and compassionate, just, and merciful, really lining up with the standard that God has said in his Word.

And that is why Jesus said back in Luke 8:18, Take care, or take heed, how you listen. Jesus is calling us to think carefully about how we listen, to, to consider carefully how we're processing and to see that it works its way out in obedience. Because everything, everything that's important, everything in your life, in, as, as in your eternity, the fate of your mortal soul, everything that matters at all period. It all hinges on how you hear, on how you listen.

So for those who listen in faith, that kind of hearing brings a never-ending stream of life-giving truth into the heart, instructing the mind, giving blessing, giving eternal life. But for those who don't listen well, for those who listen with doubt or suspicion or unbelief, that kind of hearing, it shuts off the

truth, it silences the call of God's saving grace and it ends in eternal death. And that's exactly what Jesus meant, Luke 8:18, again. "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

So that's what we see in the simple story before us here in Luke 10, end of Luke 10. Two sisters, and both of these sisters have ears to hear, which you can see because they both received Jesus with believing and receptive hearts. One sister becomes distracted. She become, she comes into some element of danger here of losing sight of really what's the best thing. And so Jesus has to gently correct her and redirect her, putting her focus back on the one thing that's necessary.

So as we listen in to this scene, this conversation, we all get to learn a lesson from Jesus about the one necessary thing. And that is really my hope for all of you, that you really do think about this for yourself, that you refuse to become distracted in your life as we get into a new year, that you simplify what it means to be a Christian and to live as a Christian by listening

well to Jesus Christ. Because that really is God's intention for you is to receive his beloved Son.

And the way to receive Jesus Christ, as we just said, is to listen to him. And this story really does show us how to listen to him and to listen intently, exclusively, and devotedly. So to listen intently, exclusively, and devotedly, those are the outline points for the passage before us. So if you're taking notes, here's point one: Receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior means you listen intently with rapt attention, listen intently with rapt attention.

To see this, notice the believing reception here in verse 38. It says, "Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village." As they went on their way; Jesus entered a village. I mentioned that Luke is taking up the question that the lawyer neglected. Namely, what does loving God with all one's heart, soul, strength, and mind look like? And as he introduces the story here, he's connecting with the larger context of Luke 10. Back in verse 1 of Luke 10, the Lord appointed 72 others. He sent

them on ahead of him, two-by-two into every town and place where he himself was about to go.

And now, here's Jesus and his disciples, they're on the move again. They're going through Judea, cities, towns, villages, little tiny hamlets of people living cloistered together. He's visiting any of those where the messengers were received whom he had sent before him. So what does a positive reception look like? Look back at Luke 10, verse 5 and this is what Jesus himself said about a positive reception.

He says, "Whatever," you, "whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' If a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

So when Luke tells us here, "As they went on their way, Jesus entered a village," he wants us to see the connection back here to Luke 10, this earlier part of Luke 10. This scene here of Martha and Mary, this is a receptive village. It's an unnamed village at this point, but we know by comparing Scripture with Scripture this is the village of Bethany. It's the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. It's located about two miles east of Jerusalem, situated up on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

Bethany was recently visited, evidently, by two of the 72 messengers that Jesus had sent out. We can tell it's a receptive village. The home of Martha and Mary is a believing home. They listened to the Gospel that was proclaimed by the visiting missionaries. They believed it. And now they are about to receive an even greater honor, a personal visitation by the Messiah himself.

So as verse 38 continues, it says, "Jesus entered the village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house." The name Martha is Aramaic. It means lady or mistress, and that is

exactly here how she is portrayed. She is the mistress of the house. She is really acting as the head of the household here. She's the one responsible for managing the affairs of the home. Most likely she is the older of the two sisters. She's clearly a competent level-headed woman who knows how to manage things. She knows how to get things done.

So when Jesus arrives here with his entourage, she is the one responsible, then, for receiving them. She's responsible for showing hospitality on behalf of the home. She's responsible for preparing and serving the meals, taking care of the room and the board. And that is no small task when a dozen or more hungry men show up, some of them fishermen. They expect to eat, right?

So they hadn't come without notice, hadn't shown up without any warning because, after, as we just said, Jesus sent out the 72 as an advanced party to allow people to prepare to receive him. So ever since those missionaries departed and they understand their place on Jesus' itinerary, Martha's going to be busy at that point in making plans and preparations and getting ready and all the rest. So Martha here received Jesus, head of the

household, she welcomed him into her home and that is not just hospitality.

We need to understand that in context, this is describing faith. She is a woman who believed. She is, Martha is a true believer, and she has received Jesus, not just being polite in Middle Eastern hospitality, but she has received Jesus as the coming Messiah. She's listened to the missionaries. She has believed the Gospel of the coming kingdom of God and she has received him as her king. In fact, we should probably see here that Martha is leading, led her whole household in faith.

In, in verse 39, it says, "Martha had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." So here's Martha's younger sister, Mary, who's also a believer, as well as their brother Lazarus. He's not in the scene here, but we understand this from other texts, John 11 especially. Lazarus, as well, a believer. This is a believing home and they're all worshipers of Jesus as the promised Messiah.

You're not going to see this in your ESV translations and probably some other translations, as well, in English. But the Greek text of verse 39, it has a conjunction in the sentence there that's not translated in, in a number of English translations. So the literal reading there in, in the, according to the Greek is, "Martha had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet." So Mary also sat at Jesus' feet. So we'd say also, in addition to whom? Mary sat at Jesus' feet also listening to him teach along with her older sister, Martha.

So both sisters are really pictured here in believing devotee, in believing devotion to Christ. And it, it really is important to see that because we need to see Martha in the proper light. I think a lot of times I've read and heard sermons preached on this text. Martha kind of gets a, a bum deal. She's the, she's the distracted one and Mary's the devoted one. And you know, so we talk about two contrasts there, distraction, devotion and we just make nice, easy fine, or nice, easy broad lines, I should say, not fine lines, but broad lines between the two and say, don't be a Martha, be a Mary. And that preaches really well.

But I think we need to see a little bit more nuance here because Luke is really trying to tell us here, he's very clear saying that both Martha and Mary are both devoted to the Lord. They're both sitting at Jesus' feet, learning, as, as disciples. Both are listening to him teach. So if the translation you're using does not have that word, also, it's okay to write that in in your English Bibles. That's totally fine.

Martha and Mary, they are disciples. They're worshipers and it's evident in their posture here. And it, Luke is clear to point out that they're sitting at the feet of Jesus. And that's, that's almost like code language for Luke when he says, "They're sitting at the feet," he is, he's telling us that they're acknowledging his Lordship. We see this over and over in the Gospels and particularly in Luke that people who are falling at Jesus' feet, they are worshiping him. And he accepts their worship, too. He, he lets them fall at his feet and worship. He does not deny that. He does not push them away like, you or I would do.

So to take a place at the feet of Jesus, to humbly listen to him, to quietly worship at his feet, that is what God intends for us to do. It is, it really is the proper response to the Lord of glory, to worship him by falling down at his feet.

Christ died to bring us to God. Christ died to make us worshipers, true worshipers, worship, worshipping God in Spirit and Truth. That's what you see here. That's what we see Martha and Mary doing here is worshipping.

And yet, we are about to see a difference between the two of them, between the more active Martha and the more meditative Mary. When Luke tells us that "Mary listened to his teaching," the verb tense tells us that she is continually listening. It's a continuous action. In other words, Mary kept on listening. She's pushing away, disregarding all distraction. That's Mary.

Not Martha. Martha doesn't have that, such a verb used of her. By contrast Martha becomes distracted. She loses focus. She starts to miss the point. And that takes us to a second point in our outline here. Receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior, receiving him as the Christ means we listen to him intently. That's point

one. And then point two, it means also we listen exclusively without any distraction. Point number two, we, when we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, it means we listen to him exclusively without any distraction.

This is illustrated for us by contrast in verse 40. "But Martha was distracted with much serving." Interesting verb there. The word distracted, it's *perispao*, and it literally means to be pulled around. It means to be dragged all over the place. You ever felt like that? Can you understand what it's like to *perispao*-ed, to be dragged all over the place? You're serving a house full of guests. Have you ever felt pulled from one corner of the house to the other, especially if it's your cousins, and nephews, and nieces, and they're drawing on crayon on your wall and all the rest?

You're going from one place to another trying to put out all the fires, to pick up spilled plants, and all the rest, right?

You're caught in serving this, you're caught between several sets of competing expectations. You're, you're like a pinball

bounced all over your own house. Smashed from pillar to post. That's the verb that's used there.

And the word serving, is the verb, or the word *diakonia*, which is where we get the word, deacon, from. And it refers to service in general, it can refer to that, or ministry. Here in this household context, though, it has the more limited or specific meaning of meal preparation. *Diakonia* is like meal serving, serving meals, serving tables. This is a reference to table service, to hospitality, to preparing and then serving food to hungry guests.

So the problem we need to see here is not in the fact that Martha is serving, that she is doing the deacon work, you know, of serving tables. Serving guests had to be done. Martha's responsible for that. That's not a problem. The problem here, though, is two-fold. First problem, in being distracted and second, by much serving, by much serving. So being distracted on the one hand, and much serving on the other one.

Service without distraction, service without too much expectation is not only possible, but it's right and righteous and good. So Martha, you need to understand, she has kind of brought this upon herself, this state of being distracted with much serving. She has planned way too elaborate of a meal, or something like that. Way too, way too many details, too many expectations. She's set too high of a standard for herself.

Can any one of you admit doing this? You bring stuff upon yourself because you just planned way too much and now everybody in your life is going to feel your anxiety, right? Martha has driven herself, here, to distraction, and now she is thoroughly intent on dragging everybody else into it. Martha's self-imposed expectations, they're all for a good cause, right? She wants to show honor and respect to the visiting Messiah. That's not necessarily a bad thing. But with these self-imposed expectations and they're all churning, churning on the inside of her, she's become a driven woman.

So Martha leaves her place at Jesus' feet. And she starts hustling and bustling about. She's making sure everything is

happening just so. She's following the preset plans that she has in her head, the expectations that she's already set in her mind and she is no longer at peace in her heart. She's no longer quietly listening. She's no longer there receiving Jesus' life-giving teaching. You can just imagine how this goes.

Martha gets up to execute her carefully laid plans. Mary stays put. She's still there sitting among the disciples. She's there hearing the blessed truths of the Gospel, the kingdom of God, namely, she's hearing how God is holy and Israel has not been holy. She knows that this is the Jewish Messiah, the One promised of Isaiah and all the prophets that, that would come to save his people from their sins.

And God has repeatedly called out to Israel, get, be, graciously giving Israel the law of Moses, a standard of grace and, and favor that they can follow and, and serve him. And yet, they've abandoned the law. They've become like all the other nations around them. They've committed sin upon sin upon sin. God sent prophets. God sent prophets. They said, Kill the prophets. Get them away from us. Prophecy peace to us. Don't ever prophesy in

that sin stuff anymore. And so God has finally, after they've killed all his prophets, he's finally sent his own Son. And they're getting ready to kill, as well.

But that is going to be the very, the very act that God uses to save his people from their sins. As Jesus the sinless Messiah, the sinless Christ is put upon the cross, and he takes upon himself the sins of all who would ever believe. All who would ever trust in him. He takes upon himself in his own body those sins and God punishes him instead of all of his people, all of his believing people. And he pours out his wrath. And he expends all of his wrath for those sins.

And then, Jesus dies, bearing the penalty for, the just penalty for all those sins. He's buried in the ground. He's raised from the dead, third, three days later. He's, he's ascended into heaven bodily, where now he makes intercession for his people. This is the message, something along these lines, weaving together prophecy upon prophecy upon prophecy from the Old Testament.

That's what Mary's hearing. She's hearing the most gracious, glorious fulfillment truth of the kingdom of God and she is just with rapt attention she's listening. She cannot peel herself away, not to serve a bunch of sandwiches to a bunch of fishermen. Those who repent and believe, they are those who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and they're seeing and hearing what prophets and kings long to hear, long to see, as it says in Luke 10:24. But in the unfolding plan of God through history, they were not privileged to see and hear.

And Mary, though, just, just a small believer, little tiny believer in the middle of this massive redemptive plan, she is hearing what prophets and kings wanted to see and didn't, didn't see, wanted to hear, didn't hear. So she's hearing this good news. She's privileged that she's sitting here with this Messiah right in front of her. And she realizes according to Luke 10:20, that her name as been written in heaven. She is a registered citizen of the kingdom of God. Her name has been permanently engraved in the stone of the eternal record.

So while Mary is listening with rapt attention to Jesus' teaching, we can picture Martha walking by, right? She's got her hair pulled back. She's got her sleeves rolled up, apron fastened around her waist and every time she walks by, she's peeking in and she looks over at her sister and she's just sitting there. She's just sitting there. Again. I just walked by. She was sitting there before. Now, I've walked by again and she's just sitting there again. Doesn't she notice?

You can imagine Martha maybe signaling to her sister perhaps silently. You know how women do, silently mouthing words. They do that to their children. And they do that to their sisters that they're angry with, right? In ways that only women can communicate and understand, interpret with each other. Gritted teeth, you get over here. That kind of thing. So if Mary noticed her sister at all, she's probably thinking, Hmm. Get up, serve my demanding sister, Martha, and her elaborate plan and miss this? Are you kidding me? I'm not going anywhere!

So Martha's impatience and irritation, it probably only cements Mary to the floor even more, right? Martha probably rolls her

eyes at first and then she starts to huff and then she puffs and then she just absolutely loses it right? And it's not pretty when she loses it. Look at verse 40. "She went up to Jesus and she said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve all alone? Tell her then to help me.'" Yikes!

Two verses earlier, Martha welcomed him into her house, sat at his feet. She's listening to his teaching. And now it's, "Lord, don't you care?" I mean, come on, right? I'm quite certain that whenever Martha thought back on this moment, pictured this scene, she could clearly see what was lost in the moment; all of her best-laid plans for her warmest hospitality and they're undermined by her arbitrary self-imposed expectations.

Several things to notice here in verse 40. First, it says, "She went up to him." Where's Jesus? He's sitting down. It's the posture of teachers at the time. A number of disciples, including her sister, Mary, they're surrounding him. So she's got to barge past them in the room in order to go up to him. So she's right in the front of the room making a scene here. The stated that she's in, that fire that's blazing in her eyes. It's

not a problem. She's not really aware of anything else at the moment. No one's going to get in her way.

Second, though, notice what she said. "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve all alone?" The phrasing in the original portrays this as quite manipulative. She's saying, and this is the more literal rendering here, "Lord, is not a concern to you that my sister," and then it's moved up to the front for emphasis, "all alone me she has abandoned me to serve tables." That's what it, that's how it literally reads. Really dramatic, isn't it?

The way she put the question, though, it, it, she doesn't really believe that the Lord has no care for her. That's not, that's not her fault here. She actually assumes that he does care. She presumes that to be true, but she clearly thinks his care ought to then conform to her expectations. That's the issue. So with her emotions here unchecked, not really thinking this through, she's literally trying to manipulate the Lord of glory into getting him to do what she wants done.

So the idea is, Lord, if you care, and I know that you do, it's almost like she's wagging a finger in his face. Then you will agree with me and you would not be happy that my sister has left me alone to serve. So she's trying to burden him with her own personal plans and expectation. Because obviously, if anyone should know what real hospitality looks like, what, what caring for guests ought to look like, well, the Lord should know, right? So what my sister is doing, that is not good.

Third thing, notice how she addresses Jesus here as Lord, but then she turns around and treats him like one of her servants. So it's, Lord, since you care that my sister has left me to serve all alone, and this is obviously a problem, let me give you a little direction on how you can demonstrate your care in this situation. Tell her then to help me. Aorist imperative there, summary command, very strong, very strongly stated.

So Martha, she's trying to leverage the weight of the Lordship of Christ, to use the sovereign authority of the king of God's kingdom to make sure her hospitality plans come off the way she intends. Again, yikes! Now before you condemn Martha, consider

yourself. Think about the times in your own life, think about all the times that your own agenda, not the agenda of the sovereign Lord of the universe whom you confess to be your Lord and Savior, but your own agenda.

And consider how often, almost without thinking that your personal agenda sets the course for your days, for your weeks, for your months. How your own agenda fills in your calendar. Think about how often our prayers superimpose our own expectations onto God's will, right? And when our expectations are unmet, think about how common it is to give way to the temptation that God doesn't care, how common to pray as if God's care should take the shape of our own plans and expectations, just as Martha did.

And I just want to point out, lest you cast stones at Martha, how much we're like Martha. I think, I think in this text, most of us are meant to feel the sting of what Martha did here and not to identify with, oh, well, I'm more like Mary. No, we're supposed to sit in the seat of, well I guess be wrapped in the apron of Martha here. So it's not wise for us to treat the Lord

like that, is it? The God of the universe, the Son of God who is our Lord and Savior, aren't his thoughts higher than our thoughts? Aren't his ways higher than our ways? So should he conform to us and serve to execute our expectations, which are so small, limited, trivial. Perhaps we should conform to him, carryout his wise and perfect plan.

So go easy on Martha in your judgment and turn the sights on yourself. Look more carefully and humbly at your own heart. Think about how often you've committed this sin. At the same time, don't let Martha or yourselves off the hook. Jesus does not let her off the hook. We shouldn't either. It takes us to a third point about his gracious correction of Martha. Martha's fretting and fussing, hustling and bustling, trying to meet an arbitrary set of expectations, a false standard and her mindset, you need to understand this, her mindset has led her to sinning against Jesus.

That's what happened in verse 40. You need to see that as sin. Martha sinned against Christ and that is, you just have to know when she recognizes it, she's mortified. It's, that's, that's

really troubling to her because that is the exact opposite of what she wanted to convey to Jesus Christ. She wanted him to, sho, know love, to know hospitality, to know her kindness, and care, and compassion, and feeding, and everything else, and this isn't what she intended. She started well. She was listening intently to Christ with rapt attention, just like her sister Mary was, but she stopped listening to Christ exclusively. This is our mistake, too.

She allowed unimportant distractions to carry her away. She let details take hold of her mind. And so Jesus very gently, lovingly, and tenderly, Jesus restores her. And this is point three. Jesus restores her, helping her to listen devotedly with singular affection. Point three, to listen devotedly with singular affection.

In verse 41, Jesus gently corrects Martha and in verse 42, he then redirects her anxious heart with just a word, a simple word of instruction. So first, look at the gentle, loving correction of verse 41. It says, "The Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,'" He repeats her

name. What is that? It does several things. It gets her attention, number one. Calms her anxious heart, but I think most importantly, it expresses tender affection to her. He's not angry; loves her. He says, "Martha, Martha."

It's like he, like what we, Melinda and I, our kids growing up sometimes we're trying to give them instruction and they're looking all over the place, looking at the dog over and the kid that they want to play with, and you just have to grab their little head and pull it over and say, listen, my son, listen my daughter, right? I don't know if you've ever done that as a parent, but Jesus is basically doing that verbally, here, with Martha.

So this has a calming effect even as it commands her attention and directs it to him. Then he immediately acknowledges the trouble, her troubled state of mind. He's not wagging a finger in her face; he's actually being very kind and acknowledging. He says, "You're anxious and troubled about many things." He's not affirming her thinking. He's not commending it. He's not saying

it's okay. He's just acknowledging it. He's letting her know he can see what's troubling her. He gets it.

And I've just got to say, as someone who teaches a lot and, you know, trying to hold people's attention and all the rest, this is just amazing to see Christ in action. He is occupied teaching a house full of eager, hungry learners, disciples. I mean, those are the guys you want in your class, right, the people who are like, Give me more, man, just give me all, give me thick theology books I want to devour. You know, and that's them. They're, they're ready to, to, to tear through theology and understand. So he's conveying these profound life-giving truths of the eternal kingdom.

And at the very same time, he's still cognizant of Martha's worries. He's still watching her. He's noticing her distracted frame of mind. He's attentive to her anxieties and frustrations. He doesn't belittle her. He's not minimizing anything. You just have to see, just a footnote here, that there is no one like him, is there? We're not like that. He is. We can grow, but he's like that. That's the way he is.

When God commends his chosen Messiah to us through the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 42, he actually highlights this characteristic of gentleness and tenderness. It says in Isaiah 42, "Behold, my," God is commending Christ to us. He says, "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations." And you think, justice, power, strength, exactly what we would think of the warrior Messiah, king of Israel and then he says this about this one in whom his soul delights.

He says, "He will not cry aloud and," will, "not lift up his voice; or make it heard in the street," so he's a quiet, meek tender person. And then this, "A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench, and yet, he will faithfully bring forth justice." So he's in the middle of this proclaiming, expounding, preaching, teaching powerful great truths of God's kingdom. He's feeding this room full of hungry disciples. When he's interrupted here by one of his erring children, he just stops and shows loving tenderhearted concern. He's compassionate toward Martha, even as he corrects her attitude, even as he redirects her thinking.

Again, think about your own correction of other people. And for us, it's mostly about just personal irritations. It's not, not about things that count or matter. Think about the way you correct, the way you deal with people. This, this always confronts me. He says, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things." To be anxious is the verb *merimnao* and it's represented as an undue concern about earthly things. It's, in Scripture, it's never commended, but always corrected. It's often condemned. And why is that? Because unbelief is always at the heart of anxiety. Unbelief is always there. Sin is at the core of an anxious attitude.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7, right in the middle of it, Matthew, chapter 6, Jesus corrects those who live with anxious thoughts and he tells them, "Do not be anxious about your life." And he tells them over and over. He says that in verse 25. He continues with that same verb *merimnao* over and over six times in just one paragraph. Don't be anxious about your food and drink, your body, your clothing, your life span, your future, none of that.

Think about our world that we live in and think about all the advertising that comes at us incessantly, just bombarding us. What do they all have in common? Those things: food, drink, body, clothing, health, the need to mitigate against a dark and foreboding future, all of that. We're bombarded with messaging that says, be anxious, worry, be disconnected. Here, here's the product. Here's the thing that's going to fix all that. Here's the pill that's going to take away your anxiety. Here's the next purchase that's going to make you feel better about the future, better about your present. All the rest.

Jesus says don't do that. This is why Paul actually in 1 Corinthians 7, he tells unmarried people, he says, "Stay unmarried." He says, he acknowledged in 1 Corinthians 7 that it's not wrong to be married, but he says, "I want you to be free from anxieties. I want you to be free from," married people, they're anxious about many things, worldly things, how to please a wife, how to please a husband. Their interests are divided between Christ and everything else in their life.

But those who are unmarried, they are able to focus on things of the Lord. They're able to focus on how to please the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit, so Paul encourages the unmarried people to find content, with being unmarried. Stay single, 1 Corinthians 7:35, for your own benefit. This is not to lay any restraint upon you, not to put you in a cage and make you feel frustrated, "but rather to promote good order and secure your undivided devotion to the Lord." That word that's translated as, undivided devotion" it's one word, it's *aperispastos*, that's and that's the very opposite of what Martha doing at this moment.

She is, she is *perispastos*. She is totally distracted. She has dragged all over the place with her attention focused on too much serving. She's divided in her interests. She's turned away from Christ. She's turned away from his teaching. She's become anxious about all the things she's not supposed to become anxious about: food, drink, too much serving. She's taken her eyes off of that simplicity of devotion to Christ. And now her soul is ill at ease and troubled.

So let me just put in a little caveat here. Unmarried people, it's okay to be married. I'm married. Many of us are married. We love marriage. It's wonderful. You can get married. I'm not saying that. I'm just trying to emphasize there's singlehearted devotion for Christ and that's what Martha has been distracted from, is singlehearted devotion so she's troubled. She's *thorybazo*. She's mentally disturbed. She is emotionally upset and agitated. She's in a state of turmoil. So her peace has departed from her. It's gone and she's become unstable, doubleminded and all the rest.

And so, in the face of Martha's inappropriate sinful attempt to manipulate Jesus, he has responded so gently. She's in, she's been in an unthinking emotional huff and she's registered an unjust complaint against her sister. Then she tried to leverage Jesus' authority to compel her sister to get up and march to her orders and notice his response. When he answers, it's not with harshness. It's not with reprimand or scolding. He answers by acknowledging her state of mind, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and trouble about many things," really about too many things. Distracted by the self-imposed expectations of service, anxious about many things, overcome to this troubled state of

mind, she's overlooked the point, the point of all of her hospitality.

What is it? Jesus is there. He's there. He's in her own home. In the flesh. The prophesied Messiah is in material form, human form right in front of her and she's missing the point. He's teaching the word of God, the very word that she loves, the very word she believes. And she's completely, her mind is elsewhere, right . So it is time for her to put away all distractions, set aside all of her human, small, trivial expectations and reduce the needs of service for the moment to the bare minimum. Because someone extraordinary is in front of her. And he is saying some extraordinary things.

So he says, "Martha, Martha, you're anxious and trouble about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Hospitality is a good thing, isn't it? But it's not better than Christ being present. It's not better than the teaching of the word of God. An excellent meal in a warm and friendly home in the company of friends and family, that is good. But it's not

the best thing, though, especially when Jesus is there, when he's in the flesh and when he's teaching the Bible. Who wants a Bible study with the Messiah? I do!

So those who recognize the difference between what's good, better, and best, that calls for wisdom, doesn't it? Those who are willing to sacrifice the good and favor the best, they are like those, they are those who, as Jesus says here, will never lose that good portion. Like Mary, the good portion will never be taken away. So what specifically won't be taken away from Mary? Well, Christ, the Lord, the hope of the Gospel and his precious word. That won't be taken away. That is the very treasure of heaven.

It won't be taken away from Martha either because she's a true believer. But what will be taken away from Martha are all the things that distracted her. All of the things that she counted as so important in the moment, gone. They're not gonna last. So her role as mistress and hostess, the burden of responsibility that she felt for hospitality, her responsibility to feed hungry guests, to serve food, provide comfort, clean the house, clean

up after everybody leaves, all the rest, none of that's going to last. None of that's going to be around forever.

Clean homes, nice things, comfortable furniture, all that's going to pass away. Education, careers, promotions, all of our human ambitions and interests, wealth, power, opportunity, all of that passes away when that trumpet sounds, right, When Christ returns. J.C. Ryle says, "Martha's mistake should be a constant warning to all Christians. If we wish to grow in grace, we must beware of the cares of this world. Unless we watch and pray, these cares will eat up our spirituality and bring leanness upon our souls. It is not open sin or flagrant breaches of God's commandments alone, which lead people to eternal ruin. Most often, it is an excessive attention to things which in themselves are lawful. We may go down to the pit of hell from the middle of lawful things."

That's a good warning, isn't it? Especially as we're in this section in Luke chapter 11:1-13, studying this matter of prayer. Generally speaking, it is not because of the pursuit of evil that keeps Christians from praying. Christians are not pursuing

evil, they hate evil. It's the pursuit of good things, like helping kids with schoolwork or answering emails or knocking out our to-do lists for the day. Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, laundry, laundry, all the rest, right. It's all that stuff.

Let's not become distracted or so distracted by the good, but those things are good. We shouldn't become distracted by the good at the expense of the better or the best. So don't be like those who hear the Word of God, those people who go on their way and they're choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life and their fruit doesn't mature because they're taking too many vacations. Instead, "You seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

And that is what Martha needed to hear, that her heart might here be redirected to Christ, recalibrated of what truly matters in life to the only necessary thing. Listening to Jesus Christ with a, with a view to worship or the view to a submissive heart and obedient faith, that is what matters most to Christ. That's what makes him feel welcomed, hospitable, or that you're

hospitable. It's what honors him. It's what shows a receptive heart. It's what pleases him the most.

As J.C. Ryle puts it, "We need to make soul business our first business and think comparatively little of the things of this world." So what Christ counts as hospitality when it comes to receiving him is a heart to listen to his voice, to serve him, to worship him by humble submission and a zealous obedience. That's greater to him than the very best meal you could serve. That's better to him than the warmest home environment with the most comfortable seating. It's better than any gifts you might receive. Obedience is better than sacrifice, right? Contrition of heart and humility better than all sacrifice.

So whatever Mary's faults or shortcomings, and she had them, we know that, whatever they were, she seemed to know instinctively here that listening to Jesus, being intent on worshiping, obeying him, that is the fundamental way that one receives Jesus Christ. Single-minded, wholehearted, singularly devoted, that's what she was. And Mary, then is a model for all of us about how

to listen carefully and submissively and obediently. We learn from Mary's example because that is how we receive Christ.

So just to put a little epilogue on this story, did Martha ever settle her heart here? Did she listen? Did she learn to listen to Jesus intently, and exclusively, and devotedly? Did she receive the correction that Jesus gave and follow his instruction? You better believe it! And it's a good thing. It's so good to see her strengths come out, as well, in Scripture. Mary's testimony to Jesus is precious, but we could see hers here is a silent testimony, for the most part, in Scripture. She's quietly listening at Jesus' feet, worshiping and devotion. We never hear her speak here.

Less than a week before Jesus' crucifixion, it's the same Mary who's going to anoint Jesus' feet with the, an expensive perfumed ointment and she's going to wipe his feet with her hair. Again, her actions testify to a loving devotion, but again, in that context, we don't hear her speak there either.

By contrast, Martha does speak in Scripture. She's like a female Peter. Sometimes she's speaking when she shouldn't, as we read in verse 40. Other times, like Peter, what she says is profoundly important, theologically pinpoint accurate and so very helpful. And we all do well to take notice to that, to listen when she gives a verbal testimony of the truth.

There's another tender moment at a, at a later time, closer to Jesus' crucifixion, where her brother has died and Jesus is in town and she doesn't know it, but she's, he's going to raise Lazarus from the dead. But Jesus says to Martha in that moment in John 11:25, he says, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he die yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." He looks her in the eye and he says, "Do you believe this?"

And she said, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." Isn't that interesting because that is exactly what Peter said, isn't it? "Flesh and blood did not reveal that to her either, but the Father who's in heaven." So it looks like Martha and Mary both,

they both learned how to listen, how listen intently, exclusively, and devotedly.

What about you? How are you guarding your own heart? How are you protecting your own heart, your family, your home from the demands of false expectations that perhaps you yourself set on your home? Even good distractions, even good things that you must get done in your life, is it taking the place of the better or even the best thing? Do you set your heart to listen well and pay close attention to the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ? You, too, are going to experience all the joy, the blessing of the saving Gospel, find rest for your soul like Mary did at the feet of Jesus Christ. She chose the good portion which will not be taken away from her. And that's what we inherit, too, when we listen carefully.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this special text of Scripture, that this unique passage in Luke's Gospel that he records and no one else does and we're so grateful that you chose to insert this account into the record for our benefit because we are all, all of us, at times like Martha. We can

become so easily distracted by, by a lot of good things. But that list of good things can become so consuming and overwhelming, and we need your help to set aside the distraction, clear away the clutter that we might see our way every single day, to sit at Jesus' feet, to listen carefully to him, listen intently to him, exclusively to him, devotedly to him, so that we might have our souls fed through his lifegiving word.

We thank you so much for the Lord Jesus Christ, all that we learn from him, just watching him at work, watching him, hearing him speak. We're amazed and we're so grateful, Father, that you would send your one and only Son to die for our sins. What a precious, precious sacrifice. There's no one like him. We're thankful, too, that you raised him from the dead and his resurrection is our hope. We will follow him one day in resurrection and glory. We thank you for what this text has taught us. We pray now as you'd help us as we think more about applying this to our lives from day to day. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.