

# Jesus Changes Everything: for Mary and Martha

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well friends, welcome to another short time of worship here from Buclew, where we're continuing to look at some of the encounters Jesus has with various women to see how his grace changes everything today. The familiar story perhaps, for some of us anyway, of Martha and Mary from Luke chapter 10. But before we get there, I'm very much connected to the theme of that, we're going to read Psalm 119 verse 9 to 16, then pray and then we'll get to Luke 10.

I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees. I will not neglect your word. Let's pray together. Lord our God, this is a wonderful picture from your word of the value, the life-giving value of the Bible, of the word of God for our lives. We thank you that through reading your word, we can discover your way for us to live, your way that is good and pure and life-giving. That it would keep us from straying from your commands. Lord, that the more that we read, the more our appetite is whetted to discover you and your truth and your plan of salvation.

So that you would give us that same heart that would be seeking you with all our heart. That we would hide your word in our hearts, that we might not sin against you. That our great desire would be to be taught by your decrees, by your laws, by your gospel, by your promises. That we would rejoice to be followers of Jesus and his word. That that would be our great treasure. That in the middle of our busy lives and schedules and timetables and pressures, that we wouldn't neglect your word. Because we would know that in your word we find life. And so as we think about those themes today, we ask that you would help us to reflect on our own lives and to reflect on the value of listening to Jesus and being taught by him. We pray in his name. Amen. So we're going to turn now to Luke chapter 10.

And we're going to read, we'll actually read from verse 25 to verse 42. But we'll be thinking about the Martha and Mary story. So let's hear Luke chapter 10. Verse 25. 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 neighbour as yourself.

[ 3 : 3 0 ] 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 neighbour? In reply, Jesus said, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by 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, and when he saw the man, 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. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was, and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, poured on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have. Which of these three do you think was a neighbour 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? Tell her to help me. Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is

better, and it will not be taken away from her. So this is what I want us to think about together, the need to be listening to Jesus in a crazy busy world. Time. Time is the one resource we all get an equal share of, 24 hours every day, but doesn't it so often feel that we never have enough? That's why we speak in the West of being time poor. We may have lots of resources, but time is the one that often feels so pressurised.

We feel a constant time pressure. There are bills to pay. There are deadlines to meet. There's family schedules to keep up. We have to eat and sleep and exercise. There are phone calls that come. There are emails to be responded to. How do we fit it all in? I can't remember where I came across it, but I find it really helpful to think about a triangle and to imagine our day, our 24 hours in that triangle. So we have work life and we have social life and we have spiritual life, and our 24 hours are fixed. We can't expand. We don't have a superpower. I'm going to have a 30-hour day. Our 24 hours are fixed. Our time is fixed. So if we expand one of these, others shrink.

And we've got all these pressures and they're pushing and they're pulling. And for Christians, one of the pressures that we face, perhaps one of the temptations that we feel, is for our time with God to be squeezed out, to make room for the other things that we see as essential. Perhaps we begin to see that in Martha's story. For every Martin Luther of the world who said, you know, I am so busy, I must spend the first three hours in prayer. Or Brother Lawrence, who learned to practice the presence of God. So whether he was washing dishes or cleaning shoes, he was praying to God and enjoying fellowship in the hustle and bustle of life. For every one of those, there's hundreds of us who find ourselves on the treadmill of life and we're working and we're serving and we're doing and it's fast and it's exhausting. And it can often be hard to find time for God, for Jesus and his word. So today we have this simple but powerful family story. We've got Martha. She's crazy busy at the tasks of her hospitality. And remember, hospitality is a good thing. And we've got Mary and she's sitting at Jesus' feet. And we hear Jesus and his views.

[ 7 : 41 ] Mary chose the better portion. So we need to think about that. Martha, she was busy preparing a feast, but Mary, oh, she was already enjoying a feast from Jesus and his word. So our purpose today is quite a simple one, really. But it's so vital for us as Christians to remind one another that the Christian's first priority, our first priority and amongst all our priorities, all our to do, is to be listening and worshipping. And so we need to think carefully for ourselves how that fits into our crazy busy lives. And I want to connect that with discipleship in the church. You know, we are called to be disciples. We are called to be followers. We are called to be listeners and doers of God's word. I am especially sort of to build on what we were saying midweek about our women's ministry team, recognising that priority that Jesus says that women learn from God's word, that men also, that we're all learning from God's word, that we're sitting at Jesus' feet, as it were.

So let's look at the story together and let's draw some applications after that. So the story begins, in verse 38, where Jesus and his disciples arrive at Martha and Mary. So it says in verse 38, as Jesus and his disciples were on their way. And I think it's important for us to recognise the journey that Jesus is on. In Luke chapter 9 and verse 51, we read, as the time approached for Jesus to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. So he's on this journey towards Jerusalem, towards the cross, towards the resurrection, towards the return to the glory of heaven. And in that context, it makes listening to the suffering servant and to the saviour of the world all the more important. So Jesus and the disciples arrive. And what do we discover about Martha? In verse 38, Martha offers hospitality. A woman named Martha opened her home to her. It seems perhaps likely that

Martha is the elder of the two sisters, but she's certainly the hostess. And it's really important to recognise she does a good thing. We read it maybe just a couple of weeks ago, 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 9, offer hospitality without grumbling. We will see grumbling creep in, but it's a good thing. She's using her spiritual gift to serve. She loves Jesus and she expresses it by opening her home and offering him a meal. And that's a good thing. And then we meet Mary. And Mary listens and Mary learns.

Verse 39, she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. And don't miss this. Jesus has arrived with his male disciples, the 12 disciples, and here's Mary sitting with them.

[ 10 : 49 ] And this is striking both because most first century women were regarded as not worth teaching. It was one of the realities of the culture in which Jesus lived. Women were seen as of lesser importance and not worth investing in teaching and not worth having as disciples. And again,

it's one of those ways where Jesus is radically different. He gives honour. He gives dignity. He expects his followers, whether they're male or female, to be learners of him. So cultural expectations are being ignored by Mary because she's desperate to learn from Jesus, her Lord, her Saviour.

And those expectations are being ignored by Jesus because she is invited in to sit at his feet, to listen, to learn, to worship. We're back to Martha again in verse 40. What we discover of Martha is that she is distracted. Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

This is the crucial part. She is distracted. The good thing of serving, of hospitality, has turned to grumbling. She's looking at her to-do list and I suppose we can wonder, was it over the top? Was her hospitality extravagant? Was she expecting like a perfectly clean house and a wonderfully elaborate meal?

And in that context, she's seeing her sister slacking, as it were. And it's not just the meal that begins to boil, but Martha's blood begins to boil. She has been distracted.

[12:26] Busyness has created anxiety. Busyness has caused her to lose focus on loving and serving Jesus. And it's turned to self-pity. Lord, don't you care that my sister's left me to do the work by myself?

She interrupts Jesus in the middle of his teaching. Wants Jesus to intervene and to deal with this apparent unfairness. For Martha, she's thinking, well, my thing, sort of lavish hospitality, should be Mary's thing.

I'm serving, so should she be. And that leads to resentment. Tell her to help me. It's not fair, Jesus, that she's just sitting while I'm like busy with a hundred things and I'm dealing with pots and pans and washing dishes and cleaning. She's distracted from serving Jesus.

She's distracted from listening to his words. Somewhere along the line, Martha's attitude to hospitality has gone wrong. And Jesus recognises this. And in verses 41 and 42, Martha is lovingly corrected.

Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you're worried and upset about many things. Here's tender emotions. Martha, Martha, this is gentle love, gentle love. It corrects. You're worried and upset.

[13:40] Busyness has led to anxiety. Your life has got out of balance. You're slaving away. But you're not slaving away for what's best. Verse 42, few things are needed, or indeed only one.

Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her. Only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better. What's that better portion? The better portion is choosing devotion to Jesus.

To sitting and hearing his words of grace. To showing dependence on Jesus as a disciple. Jesus is not looking for a five-star meal from his followers.

Rather, he wants followers who will be fed by him. Fed by his word. That they will feast on his words of truth and life and love.

And so Jesus says, that's not going to be taken from Mary. She will continue to enjoy what is best and necessary in the life of a disciple, which is listening and worshipping.

[14:45] So there's the principle. Very simple story. But what's the application then? For crazy busy disciples?

For a crazy busy church? What can we learn from this family scene? For following Jesus, however we are wired. And however we find our life and our schedules now.

So remember this. Before we get into it. Jesus loved Mary. Absolutely Jesus loved Mary. And Jesus loved Martha. Absolutely Jesus loved Martha.

Jesus loves Mary types. Those who think and reflect and listen. And Jesus loves Martha types. Who showed their love by serving.

And by caring in a practical way. It's not a judgment on different temperaments. That's not the point of the story and the contrast between the two sisters. But it is a lesson that whoever we are and however God has designed us to be, time and devotion to Jesus and his word is absolutely essential.

[15:49] Because here is Jesus on the road to save his people. To die in our place for our sin.

To bring us atonement. To bring us peace with God. To bring the gift of salvation. To give the gift of eternal life. To give the hope of eternal glory. As he will return to the glory of heaven. He's going to bring eternal life to his people.

He's going to build his church. He's going to pour out his love. He's going to send his spirit. He is the one we need to listen to. We all have a desperate need of Jesus and his word. Mary understands that.

Martha needs to re-understand that. So by way of application one. Most basic. We should all be learners. I don't know if you saw that recently the G7 countries made a commitment.

That they would all sort of invest money in providing for the educational needs for an extra 40 million girls who would be in poverty.

[16:52] And otherwise wouldn't have the chance to go to school. The priority of education and learning. Do you know. And for women as well. And for girls. And that matches Jesus. Principle and priority doesn't it.

We can very much say that Jesus in his own day raises the bar for women. It's against Martha's expectation. Mary should be in the kitchen serving. And it's against culture's expectation. Where women were regarded as relatively unimportant. As Darrell Bock puts it. Grace that comes from Jesus knows no boundaries of gender.

Our need then whoever we are is to learn from Jesus. To recognise that we are all theologians. We all have a set of beliefs about God.

Things that we discover from God's word. And we need to embrace that reality. And we need to grow in our learning. In our knowledge.

[17:55] In our theology. Here's one way to think about it. I just started reading a book by Kevin Van Hooser. About discipleship.

And he makes the really interesting point. He says even to answer the sort of fundamental question that Jesus asks of his disciples. Who do you say I am? To answer that sort of well from the Bible. Well we need to know the identity of Jesus. We talk about Christology. Who is Jesus? That he is both fully God and fully man. To answer that we need to understand why the cross.

We need to recognise the problem of sin. Leading to the need for the cross. We need to understand what the death of Jesus achieved.

In terms of atoning for sin. And removing sin and its guilt. And giving the gift of salvation to those who put their faith in Jesus. But to answer that question.

[18:56] Who do you say I am? We also need to understand the Trinity. But not that we'll ever fully understand. But to know that there is one God. Who eternally exists in three persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We need to know about creation. That Jesus is the agent of creation. That before creation. Jesus existed in that eternal fellowship. But he then entered into his creation.

There are so many truths that we need. And we need to learn. If we're to understand who Jesus is. So that we might serve him well. So this is a call from Jesus.

To learn. To be hearers and doers of God's word. And that's why our discipleship groups matter. That's why our women's ministry matters. That's why our women's Bible study is so important.

To understand that learning and growing together. In God's word and in prayer. Builds strong disciples. And builds a strong church. And that's what God wants.

[19:57] God wants to establish the church as the new Israel. The new people of God. A new holy nation. Who are worshipping and serving and representing him. And if we're going to do that. We need to be learners of Jesus.

So practically. Think about your diary. Think about your timetable for this week coming. Is that priority reflected in your calendar.

In your diary. In your timetable. And if not. Something needs to change. Because our best portion. The portion that Jesus wants to give. Is that we would feast on God's word.

And the truths of God. And that would equip us to love. And to serve. And to live our busy lives. For the glory of God. Following on from that.

Our second point of application. Is that devotion to Jesus. Loyalty to commitment to Jesus. Is the foundation for service. Whoever we are.

[20:55] Now. Perhaps you have done. One of the many personality tests out there. Enneagram. Or any of the others. And you found out where you fit. On the spectrum.

And a whole list of. Different. Sort of assessments. Of temperament. And personality. We are wired differently. By God's design.

And so we read the story of Mary and Martha. And we discover Mary's chosen. The better portion. This is not. Sort of a judgment. On sort of all of life. You know. This is not a call to life. Of reflection. And meditation. Over service. This is not saying. Monastery good. Mega busy bad. It's not that. But we do need to hear Jesus. When he says. Only one thing. Is needed. Is necessary. And maybe the setting. For this is helpful. So. Earlier on. In Luke chapter 10.

[ 21 : 52 ] Jesus sends out the 72. And they are. They are busy. Serving him. And they are preparing the way. For his arrival. In these towns and cities. And then we meet the good Samaritan. The good Samaritan story.

Here is the one who serves. And who shows mercy. And so perhaps the question. Might come to. The readers of Luke's gospel. Perhaps it comes to us then. So. Do I need to be a super server? Is that what I need? And do I need to be excellent.

At showing mercy. In order to be. In God's kingdom. And Jesus is reminding us. That strictly speaking. The only thing that is necessary. Is listening.

To Jesus' words of saving grace. We cannot be. A follower of Jesus. Without hearing. The word of the gospel. And believing. To understand.

That we are saved. By grace. Through faith. Not. Of our works. But it's the gift of God. And Jesus has come to be that saviour. On the road. To the cross.

[ 22 : 47 ] To save us. And so. The one thing that's needed. Is the gospel word. It's the word of God. How is a person saved? It's not by us serving Jesus.

It's by Jesus serving us. And laying down his life for us. So then. In our crazy busy schedules. Serving kids. Of serving clients.

Of serving patients. Of serving colleagues. Of serving flatmates. Etc. Etc. Etc. We need. Devotion to Jesus. And devotion to his word.

That must be the foundation. Where we draw strength. From which our service flows. I like the way Paul Tripp. Puts it in one of his books.

That every day. We should be coming to God's word. Admitting our need. Of God. And his help.

[ 23 : 43 ] And his wisdom. We should every day. Be meditating. On God's grace. We should be preaching the gospel. To ourselves. Allowing ourselves. To bask.

In the love of God. In the sending of Jesus. To be our saviour. We should be daily feeding. On God's words. Because. It's as we do that.

That we find grace. To then share with others. And to serve others. And without that. We're going to start running on empty. We're going to be running on our own natural resources.

And at some point we will run dry. We will be distracted. From focusing on Jesus. And loving him. And then. We'll. Sort of fall into that pattern.

That we see in Martha. Of self-pity. Of resent. Of responding wrongly. To others. So moving from there. Application number three. The Bible would ask us to serve like Martha.

[ 24 : 43 ] With a heart like Mary. Because we are told to serve. To offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. So we are to serve like Martha. With a heart like Mary. It's really helpful.

I think. To recognise that. There is a significant advantage. We have over these systems. Often we think. Oh man. It would be amazing to be. Sort of at the time of Jesus.

And we could listen to him. And we could. Watch him. But what if we weren't in the same room. Or the same town. Or the same city. Then we wouldn't have that. Would we?

So our advantage. Is that we have constant fellowship. With the Lord Jesus. Thanks to the spirit. In our hearts. Bringing us. The knowledge. Of Jesus.

Martha and Mary. They had to be in the same room. To enjoy it. But now by the spirit. You can enjoy fellowship with Jesus. As you work. As you serve. Whether you're. Your desk at home. And whether you're able to.

[ 25 : 37 ] To go out to work. Whether you're. Sort of. Running to do the. The family shopping. Do the school run. Whatever it is. You can enjoy fellowship with Jesus. As you work. As you serve.

So it's not an either or. It's not what either. Serving. Or we're. Sort of enjoying fellowship with. With Jesus. It's a both and.

We're called to. Sit at Jesus feet. To enjoy time in his word. To meditate on it. To store up. His word in our hearts. So that we wouldn't sin. As Psalm 119 said.

But to store up his word in our hearts. So that we would. Rejoice in. The gospel. Rejoice in grace. And. We are to serve. As Jesus's hands and feet. I came across this from C.S. Lewis this week. He said. The church exists for nothing else. But to draw people into Christ. Christ. We can think about sitting at Jesus feet. Draw them into Christ. To make them little Christs.

[ 26 : 36 ] So that we then go out representing Jesus. Not being ashamed to bear the name Christian. Little Christ. For the sake of others. Serve like Martha.

With a heart like Mary. And so really to pull this all together. And to make this what I hope is practical for us. In our business.

Number four. Daily devotional time with Jesus is essential. I imagine a good number of people listening to this will feel time poor.

And will feel time pressure significantly and daily. And one of the things that we can do when we've got a huge to-do list. Is we can think Bible reading and prayer is another one of those on our to-do list.

Let me urge you to reflect and to reconsider. Bible reading and prayer is not another tick box exercise. It's not a duty. Rather it's an act of devotion.

[ 27 : 37 ] It's an expression of worship. We do it because we believe it is essential. It is life-giving. I need this to live and serve and love well.

To understand that the antidote to so much of our anxiety. Is to spend time with God and his word. To reset our focus when we find ourselves distracted. From Jesus.

To be in his word. To take his promises as true as the answer to our self-pity. To remind ourselves of grace.

When we find resentment building up. Whatever your timetable. Whatever your temperament. How will you. How will I.

Build in time. For God's word. And for prayer. For listening. And for worship. We have times. We have times. That we set aside.

[ 28 : 39 ] Together. Sunday morning. Sunday evening. Will you make those a priority? Community groups. Women's Bible study. Different discipleship opportunities.

Take them. Sit together. With your brothers and sisters in Christ. To grow strength. Together.

Together. In understanding. In applying God's word to our heart and life.

And when you're alone. Find the time. Find the times. Regularly. To be sitting as it were. At Jesus feet.

I love the advice. That a lady called Abigail Dodds. Gave this week. In an article. Young mum. You can read the Bible.

If anybody has crazy busy schedules. It's young mums. I don't know if you saw the story about the mum from Mali. Who had nine kids. Wow. But young mums.

[ 29 : 35 ] Mums. So much pressure. And the chaos of parenting. When does a mum get time with God? Maybe you're not a young mum. But in your particular chaos. How will you find time?

Well here's the good advice from Abigail Dodds. Be flexible. And be consistent. Be flexible. Learn to use the gaps well.

You and I know as much as we're busy. There's also moments where we have downtime. Where we do have time to make choices about how we use our time. Use that time to invest in reading God's word.

Pray. Be flexible. She says. Delay those lesser duties to prioritise. Time with Jesus as life-giving necessity.

Those dishes can wait. Meeting with God and his word can. Find the time. Find the time. Find the times that work for you. Perhaps that might mean getting up that little bit earlier.

[ 30 : 36 ] Going to bed that little bit earlier. So you can get up a bit earlier to spend time reading the Bible before the busyness of the day begins. Be flexible. Be flexible. But also be consistent.

Recognise.

We need to recognise we need God's word. Appetite. Sometimes, I guess, when we think about food. Our appetite grows before we eat.

But when it comes to the Bible, it's different because our appetite comes as we are reading. Saw this today. This week, rather. Reading the Bible with someone.

And we read a bit. And then it's like, well, have we got time to read some more? Our appetite was growing. And we need to build our life around this foundation habit.

We would understand, as Jesus says, this is the best thing that we can do. So if you find today, you think about your life, that you're crazy busy.

[ 31 : 38 ] Let Jesus' words both challenge you and encourage you. Let's read them again. In verse 41, as he speaks to Martha, Martha, Martha, you're worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, but indeed only one.

Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her. Fight distraction to be with Jesus. Let's pray briefly.

Lord Jesus, we pray, thanking you for you showing us and reminding us of the priority of spending time in the Word of God, spending time in prayer to meet with you.

We pray that you'd help each one of us to be learners, to devote ourselves to reading and studying and meditating on your Word for when we serve, for how life is busy, that we would have that flexibility, but also consistency to be feasting on your Word.

May it do us good. May it be transforming us as a whole church as we are learners of the Lord Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen. And now we'll finish with the hymn, Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God, and then Psalm 1, the whole psalm.

[ 33 : 05 ] Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God, Breathe new life into my willing soul.

Bring the presence of the risen Lord to renew my heart and make me whole.

Cause your Word to come alive in me. Give me faith for what I cannot see.

Give me passion for your purity. Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within.

[ 34 : 29 ] May your joy be seen in all I do. Love enough to cover every sin.

In each thought and deed and attitude. Kindness to the greatest and the least.

Gentleness that soars the path of peace. Turn my striving into works of grace.

Breath of God, show Christ in all I do. Holy Spirit, from creation's birth. Holy Spirit, from creation's birth.

Giving life to all that God has made. Show your power once again on earth.

[ 35 : 46 ] Cause your church to hunger for your ways. Let the fragrance of our prayers arise.

Lead us on the road of sacrifice. That in unity the face of Christ will be clear for all the world to see.

Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk.

Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk.

foot of God, the wicked walk. Who does not stand in sinners' paths or sit with those who mock.

[ 37 : 06 ] Instead he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight.

He makes the precepts of the Lord his study day and night.

He prospers ever like a tree that's planted by a stream.

And in due season yields its fruit, its leaves are always green.

Not so the wicked, they are like the chaff that's blown away.

[ 38 : 18 ] They will not stand when judgment comes or with the righteous stay.

It is the Lord who sees and knows the way the righteous go.

But those who live an evil life, the Lord will overthrow.

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

No.