

Luke 10:38-42

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[0 : 00] Our reading from the Bible today is from the book of Luke chapter 10, reading from verse 38 down to verse 42.

So Luke chapter 10 from verse 38 down to verse 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.

And 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's pray together as we come to God's word.

[1 : 06] God, our Father, we thank you that you have spoken. And we pray by your spirit now that you would bring us to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his teaching.

And we ask in his name. Amen. Well, I don't know about you, but for us, certainly one of the things we really miss most in lockdown is having friends coming over to our house.

There's something so intimate about being in someone's home. You get to see life as it is for that person. It's a place we can really be ourselves. And here in the passage we just read together, Luke brings us right into this family home to see more of what it means to follow Jesus.

Jesus is on his way here with his followers up to Jerusalem. And we read that on their way Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

And I just love how true to life this snapshot of their home is. You know, the busyness of getting dinner ready, sisters falling out, just a bit of busyness and mess and chaos.

[2 : 23] You know, it's so real. It's so familiar. You know, perhaps, since you've been spending so much more time at home recently, it's all a little bit too familiar.

You perhaps, you never realized how much you would miss being busy. Or maybe life feels busier than ever and you really miss having a place to unwind.

You know, the fact that we're not all together right now should remind us how much we miss being together as God's family to worship him together. You know, there are lots of things we rightly miss when we are stuck at home.

But Jesus here probes even deeper than the things that we miss into the things that we need. In verse 42, Jesus says to one of these sisters, You are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.

What do you need? It seems like such a simple question. But of all of the things that are maybe weighing on us right now, Jesus says there is only one thing we really need.

[3 : 29] And the best thing of all is that we don't have to wait for life to get back to normal to have it. To have what these sisters had in their home. Not stress and anxiety, but Jesus himself.

And to show us how very necessary Jesus is, Luke, shows us why it is that we need him. You know, it's hard to miss straight away, isn't it?

How very different these sisters are. You know, no sooner has Jesus walked through the door, but Mary and Martha go in opposite directions. Read verse 39 that Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

But Martha was distracted with much serving. You can just picture it, can't you? Martha run off her feet in the kitchen, five things cooking away on the hob, dashing out to set the table.

She's being pulled in every direction. And meanwhile, Mary has settled herself down right next to Jesus and is just caught up in what he is saying. You know, you can feel the tension just building in

the house, can't you?

[4 : 35] It's all too much for Martha. Why am I here doing all the work for Jesus when she's there just spending time with Jesus? It's so unfair.

If you've got siblings yourself, you know how easy it is for brothers and sisters to get under each other's skin. But I think there's more here than plain sibling rivalry.

Because notice who Martha's problem is really with. In verse 40, Martha is angry with Jesus.

You know, Martha's head, she was doing and giving so much for Jesus. And from the outside, it would have looked like that to you. But at heart, everything that Martha was trying to do for Jesus was actually taking her further from Jesus.

But surely, you know, we think serving Jesus, that must be a good thing. And it is. But who was Martha really serving? Yes, she thought it was for Jesus.

[5 : 46] But at heart, she's raging at Jesus. So in the end, her serving was not good. Because it was distracting and drawing her away from the ones she really needed.

Yet at the start of lockdown, lots of us thought we'd have so much more time on our hands. But in reality, life sometimes feels as full as ever. You maybe, at the time you'd normally spend with friends, has been taken over by work instead.

Or maybe if you're having to work a bit less, your family time has kind of come in to fill up those gaps. Or maybe in place of a social life, you turn to social media. You know, whoever we are, whatever we do, life has a habit of filling up with all sorts of things.

Because the truth is, the busyness isn't just out there. The busyness is in here too. Our hearts are full of distractions. You know, sometimes we see that most clearly when there's not much going on. You get anxious if we feel like we're not doing enough. Lockdown or no lockdown. Our hearts can be easily distracted by good things as well as bad things.

[7 : 02] From the one thing that we really need to be with Jesus. So how can we tell when we are becoming distracted from him?

Well, firstly, when we're not actually taking time to spend with him, taking his good news to heart. You, like Martha, we might be serving and helping and working and doing all kinds of good things. We might even think we're doing those things for Jesus. But if the rest of life is squeezing out that relationship, pushing out those times that we spend with Jesus.

Opening his word, coming to him in prayer. Just taking in who he is and his rescue of us. And in our hearts, we are distracted and drifting away from the very one that we need.

But secondly, and maybe more subtly, we can tell we're distracted from him when our lives, including our service, basically becomes all about us.

[8 : 05] You, Martha was outwardly serving, but her words tell a different story, don't they? Inside, she was self-pitying and defensive. Because her gaze wasn't fixed on Jesus, her work was turning her gaze in on herself.

And that happens to us all when we think we can get by without Jesus. We kind of carve in on ourselves. That's what the reformer Martin Luther, that's how he describes our sin.

That instinct to make it all about us, instead of coming to Jesus and drinking in his grace. When we're distracted from Jesus, even our serving becomes self-serving.

So here's maybe a question to ask at home or online this week. What in your life currently threatens to distract you from Jesus?

I personally have found this passage extremely challenging this week, as it's shown me my own heart. You know, Martha maybe seems like quite a complicated character, but she's no more complicated really than you and I.

[9 : 13] Your hearts are deceitful and easily distracted. This is why we need Jesus. And thankfully, that is exactly what he came to give.

Look with me at the way that Jesus responds to Martha in verse 41. 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. You, Martha, would have been so ready to hear Jesus side with her and send Mary away to help.

But instead, Jesus refuses to send Mary away. In fact, he says that Mary has made a better choice than Martha by choosing to be with him rather than to be anywhere else or doing anything else.

In fact, Jesus would rather Martha stopped and came to be with him too. You know, I don't know about you, but of these two sisters, I find Martha much easier to relate to than Mary.

[10:17] Your hearts go out, don't they, to this overworked, underappreciated woman. And it's so easy to see ourselves in her shoes. But I don't think that's an accident. God knows that we are often more Martha than Mary.

So what does he think of us? Well, see what Jesus says here. He doesn't affirm us in our sin, nor does he condemn us and belittle us.

Though we see instead he speaks to our busy and heavy and anxious hearts with kindness and compassion. Martha was so wrong to think that Jesus didn't care about her.

Though you can hear it in his voice, the way he says her name, the way he gently sympathizes with all the things she's stressed about. Jesus cares deeply for us when we are running ourselves into the ground.

But his compassion is really seen in the fact that he calls us to stop and to come and be with him. Martha saw all the things that she was doing as being so necessary.

[11:23] She needed to keep on top of things. She had to work and serve. She had to give it everything she had. Jesus says that those things were not necessary.

The surprise for her and for us is that Jesus didn't need her to serve him. Though Jesus says elsewhere that he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom to many. Jesus says here there is one thing that is necessary. And that is that we are served by him. Jesus was there to serve these sisters, not to be served.

So Jesus calls Martha to stop trying to give to him, but to come and share in this good portion. You may be, if you're not a Christian, this is possibly the very opposite of what you think the Christian faith is all about.

You often, faith is seen basically as lots of doing and giving money and good works. But Jesus says that following him is actually about us receiving what he came to give and relying on what he came to do.

[12:35] That's what faith in Jesus is. It's a personal relationship with God. We trust him with our lives and he gives us new life.

To be honest, in our lives as Christians, we can often send out completely the wrong message. A few years ago, I went with a few guys to walk the West Highland Way, 96 miles in five days.

So we set out with our bags full of all our gear. You're not realizing at the time that we could have just thrown the bags in a van, which would have taken it all to the next stopping place for us to pick up.

So 21 long miles later, we came to our senses, we ditched the bags and we carried on with only what we needed. And suddenly the walk that had been so heavy and grueling the day before became so free and so light.

You walking with those bags of stuff was not the way to do the walk. And that's true for us spiritually too. How often do we go on carrying a sense that we need to bring our own efforts as we walk with Jesus?

[13:48] It's exhausting spiritually, mentally, even physically. But that is not the right way to do the walk with Jesus. He doesn't call us to bring our baggage, our works, our performance, our efforts.

He doesn't need that stuff. So often we needlessly carry the sense that we need to do things to be right with Jesus. But Jesus says all we really need is him.

He gives us a right relationship with God. He repairs our relationships with each other. He restores our soul. So we can ditch the baggage of needing to work for our own rightness.

Because Jesus clothes us in his perfect righteousness. We can't improve on his perfection. So we receive his perfect righteousness as a gift.

Jesus calls us to himself not to wear us out with more things to do. But to give us himself. So that we will find our fullness and completeness in him.

[15:00] That fullness is what we find when we stop standing where Martha is. And come and sit down where Mary is. In the presence of Jesus.

Listening to his word. And taking to heart his message of grace and forgiveness. And new life. This is the one thing you and I need.

Lots of people have said that the lockdown has helped them to see what's really important in life. So I wonder where time with Jesus falls on your list of priorities.

You may be looking at the last few weeks or months. You can see it slipped right down the list. Or maybe fallen off the bottom completely. Or maybe it's right up there. You know battling in the top five or the top three.

Here Jesus says time spent with him is not on the list of priorities. Because it's on a list all of its own. The list of things that are necessary.

[16:00] There is only one thing on that list. One thing that is necessary. That we need to be with Jesus. So how do we do that?

If you're not a Christian. The way to come to Jesus is simply to listen to his message. And take it to heart. You as we've seen. Jesus says he came to serve us.

By giving his life as a ransom or a payment for many. You all the ways that we've ever turned away from him. And made it all about us. He's paid for all those times.

With his life. And now he calls us to come to him and find rest with him. He knows that we come with a lot of baggage. He knows that we create burdens for ourselves that we can't manage.

But in Matthew 11.28. Jesus says come to me. All who are weary and heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

[17:01] Like Mary. When we come and choose Jesus. The good portion. He won't ever send us away. As Christians. You know. We can find it hard to spend time with Jesus too.

So how do we do that? Well the answer is really. That we continue to listen to his words. And take his gospel to heart. We can sometimes think that Jesus is like the door.

That we go through to get to where we're going in the Christian life. But really Jesus is the beginning. The middle. And the end. Of being a Christian. We never stop.

Needing Jesus. But wonderfully. We will never be without him. He will never be taken away from those who choose him. So how does your life show off this reality?

You so often we can live. Kind of hand to mouth. Grabbing a breath here and there. Wondering where the strength is going to come from. For the next thing. But all the time.

[18:01] Jesus is with us. And he holds out himself to us. He is a feast in the wilderness. We don't need to starve ourselves spiritually.

We do need to come and spend time with him. Anytime we can open our Bible. Even on our phone. And take five minutes to read his words.

And just let it sink in. And thank him for what he said. Sometimes we can think of Bible reading and prayer as just another thing to do. Maybe we feel guilty if we have not checked it off on a certain day.

But spending time with Jesus isn't something we do for God. Or that we give to him. Though it is the way that he gives himself to us. We cheat ourselves over the best thing God gives.

When we are not coming to Jesus in his word. So here is maybe another question that you can ask at home or online during the week. How are you finding spending time with Jesus right now?

[19:08] If honestly you are finding it a struggle. Maybe you are not sure where to begin. You have even more reason to ask the question. And to talk about it. If you want to get in touch with love.

To speak more about that with you. Because we all need Jesus. The night before he died. At another meal with his followers.

Jesus would stand up from the table. Tie a towel around his waist. And start washing his disciples feet. They were shocked that Jesus would serve them in that way.

Peter says to Jesus. You shall never wash my feet. But Jesus says to him. If I do not wash you. You have no share in me. One thing we need.

And that is to be served by Jesus. Washed clean by his death. Can you imagine being served by this king of kings?

[20:08] Well this is something that King Jesus loves to do for all his people. Every day. Whoever we are. Wherever we are. So whatever you do this week.

Come and spend time with Jesus. Take to heart his gospel message of grace. And rest in his finished work.

For you. Let's pray together. God our Father. We thank you that you have saved us. From dead works.

To serve you. The living and true God. Father we thank you. For the Lord Jesus. We thank you. For his life and death. And resurrection.

That cover all our guilt and sin before you. If our trust is in him. Father we thank you that you don't call us to work for a right relationship with you.

[21 : 08] We could never do it. We thank you that you've provided a right relationship with yourself through your son Jesus. So Lord give us faith this week to trust him.

And to walk with him. As you've called us to do. Father pray for those who perhaps don't know you. We pray that by your spirit you'd give them faith.

Give them eyes to see the goodness of Jesus. That he is the good portion. And that you call us to come there and find rest in him. Father pray that you would strengthen our faith too.

Lord that you would help us not to rely on our own efforts. Not to be crushed under work or expectations of service and performance.

But that you would lead us back again and again to Jesus Christ. And that we would rest in him.

And be fed by his word. And be reminded of all that you've done for us.

[22 : 13] In him. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. I CAN'T■■■■■.

Maybe he's done. Hold on a couplex and again. Okay. And what about a good morning? And I was, like, bene at home.