

One Thing Needful

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[0:00] One thing is needful. One thing is needful. Luke 10, 38.

! And Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

But Martha was cumbered about, much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?

Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.

But one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

[1:33] The Lord Jesus came by and paid a visit and came to Martha's house. He paid Martha and Mary a visit.

And Martha gladly invited him in, in, into her house. Mary, her sister, sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

Verse 39. Martha had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

We read that Martha was encumbered. She was preoccupied. She was running here and there, frantically, trying to do this and that, perhaps preparing the meal or other things.

She was frantic, frantically working about. Verse 40. But Martha was comforted. Martha was comforted about. Much serving. And came to him.

[2:39] Here was Martha. She was, like it was, she was overloaded.

Burdened, flustered. Frustrated, hurried and worried. Sometimes we can get like that.

Can't we? Busy, busy. We read that Martha complained to the Lord.

And verse 40, it goes on and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.

I'm doing all the work around here. Tell Mary to help me. This was her attitude. Verse 41.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. Our Lord saw that Martha was anxious and upset.

[3:42] He says, but, verse 42, one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Our Lord was saying, Mary has chosen the one thing that was needful. The one thing that was necessary. The one thing that was important.

Mary had made the right choice. One thing is needful. And I'd like to sum it up in three principles you could put.

Three principles that show us how Mary's choice was the wise choice. And it's the wise choice for us too. And those three things are keep close to Jesus, value his words, serve spiritually.

Her actions show for us one thing needful. And let's consider these three principles each in turn.

Number one, keep close to Jesus.

[4:46] Draw close to God. Our brother shared, draw near to God. Draw near to God. Draw nigh to God.

What did Mary do that the Lord said was the one thing needful? Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

It speaks of that tender communion. It speaks of that relationship, that fellowship with God. I know Brad loves to talk about that. And it's a precious thing, isn't it? That relationship with our God.

It's where the rubber hits the road, isn't it? How is that today? One thing is needful. That relationship, that closeness to Jesus. Keeping close to Jesus.

It speaks to me of communion, of fellowship, of that closeness with God. And we see in Mary that example she sets for us to keep close to God, to seek after God, to know his presence.

[5:50] The word talks much to us about the presence of God. We see that right through the scriptures, don't we? As the presence of God came in the burning bush.

As the presence of God came in the tabernacle. As the presence of God came in the temple. As the presence of God came as Christ himself tabernacled and dwelt amongst us in human skin and came to visit us.

And the word talks much about God's presence. As David has said, Psalm 140. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name.

And the upright shall dwell in thy presence. Friends, brothers, sisters today. Don't let anything come between you and the Lord.

Don't let anything come between you and the Lord. Dwell in his presence. You know, someone was telling me today how they've got a faulty battery.

[6:51] Could be the terminals aren't. There could be maybe this corrosion there. It's just not making contact. We can get that like that with God, can't we? Where we've got to get the emery paper out and make those terminals nice and shiny again.

Get in contact with God. Don't let anything become a barrier between you and God. Dwell in his presence. Make that your aim. As Mary was commended for this. Jonah did the opposite, didn't he? Jonah did the opposite when he tried as hard as he could to run away from the presence of God. In Jonah 1 verse 3. When God called Jonah to go there, Jonah went there.

He rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord. He went to Joppa. He found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare thereof. He went down into it to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Jonah didn't want to go where God sent him to go. He found a ship going in the wrong direction. Don't do a Jonah.

[7:51] You can't do it. He will track you down. He knows where you live. Don't do a Jonah.

Stop running. Stop running from Jesus. And start running to him. Start running to him. Get back into the presence of God.

Like Mary. She sat at his feet. She was in his presence. And there is life and joy and fulfilment there.

As David expressed it in Psalm 16 verse 11. He praises God. Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fullness of joy.

At thy right hand are pleasures forevermore. Of course we know life isn't always filled with happiness. It's not about happiness which is based on happenstance.

[8:55] What happens to us. But on that joy that is deep within. That joy that Jesus gives. Get back into the presence of God.

What's stopping you? The word says neither give place to the devil. Sometimes the devil will cause that breaking up.

That diminished contact. That faulty connection. That barrier between us and his presence. The presence of our saviour.

Let nothing come between you and your saviour. Keep short accounts with God. Don't let anything come between you and your Lord.

Linger in God's presence. Let's marry deep. Take time with him. Cut off the distractions. You know sometimes my wife likes to turn off the phone.

[9:54] That's sometimes what we have to do isn't it? Sometimes what we need to do. And just spend that quiet time. Now how easy it is.

We've always got the phone on us haven't we? We're always getting pestered. As we could think of it. But sometimes we just need to linger in his presence. Cut off the distractions.

And the Lord wants to develop that close relationship with us. As Enoch had. Of Enoch it says that he walked with God. Wouldn't it be good to be walking in step with God?

To walk in his steps. To follow after him. To walk with him. Alongside him. David cried in Psalm 63. O God thou art my God.

Early will I seek thee. My soul longeth for thee. My soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh longeth for thee. In a dry and thirsty land.

[10:51] Where no water is. My God. Early will I sink thee. My soul thirsteth for thee.

My flesh longeth for thee. Will you be a Mary or a Martha? Mary sat at Jesus' feet.

In other words she was close to him. She was close to his feet. That's the sense of it here. She sat close to his feet. She sat at his feet. She sat by him.

Close to him. And so the Lord said to Mary and Martha. That Mary has chosen that good part. How close are you to the Lord?

I know I need to ask that of myself. How close am I to God? Make that honest self-assessment today.

[11:54] How close am I to the Lord? Do I speak to him? Do I spend time with him? Do I pray? Do I pray for the lost?

Do I care about what he wants for me? Do I seek after God? Or is he somehow secondary?

Not the focus. Just something I fit God in. In between everything else in my crowded life. Martha missed out.

She was too distracted. Too distracted to keep close to Jesus. So number one. Keep close to Jesus.

Keep close to him. Number two. Value his words. Value his words. While Mary sat at his feet. She heard his word.

[12:51] She could hear him. And she hung on his every word. Can you picture it? As she's sitting there. Close to him. Alongside his feet.

And she's listening. She was tuning in. And tuning out. Tuning in. And tuning out. Tuning in to his word.

And tuning out to all the other voices. All the other things. Tuning in wanting to hear his voice. There are many voices we can turn to.

As we know. What the media tells us. It's not always edifying is it? What you hear on the TV news. It's quite sad isn't it?

Off times. Yet. Tune in. And hear his voice today. Mary chose to hear her master's voice. What about us? Are we a Mary?

[13:49] Or a Martha? Cut off the distractions. And value his words. As Mary did. Think of how can we value his words.

I know I was encouraged today to see a sister highlighting in her Bible. Highlight those things that God speaks to you.

Get a highlighter. Underline things. Mark things. Mark your Bible. And your Bible will mark you. Mark your Bible. Don't be afraid to mark your Bible.

I know my dear wife Julie. She's got a Bible that it looks like she's scribbled all over it. Because she's been devouring it. And highlighting this in different colours and different markings and different symbols and different underlinings.

Because she wants the Bible to mark her. She marks her Bible. Mark your Bible. Esteem his word. Honour his word. Treasure his word.

[14:51] Sink his word. As Job said. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. I know there's some people that have got the kind of slogan.

No Bible. No breakfast. They'd rather have their Bible than have their breakfast. If push comes to shove. They'd rather open the pages of their Bible. If they've only got time for one or the other. To have their Bible. More important than their breakfast. That was Job's attitude wasn't it? I've esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

It's more important than my meal. That I have a feed for my soul. And as Peter said. John 6.68. And the context is. John 6.66.

Many forsook him and fled. And Jesus said. What are you going to do? And Simon Peter answered him and said. Lord. To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

[15:51] He's got the words of eternal life. There's many voices. But we must tune in. To the Master's voice. As the psalmist said. Psalm 119. Verse 103.

How sweet are thy words unto my taste. Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Who likes to have some honey on their bread? Now his words are sweeter than honey.

Sweeter than honey. And Psalm 119. 127. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold. Yea, above fine gold. It's more precious than that 22 carat gold or whatever.

Those gold ecks you've got hidden away in the safe at home. I'm sure lots of you have got that. No, it's more precious than any gold you can acquire. It's more precious than any gold necklace. Any gold ring.

More than any fine gold. Is the word of God. It's precious. And I love it. Jeremiah said. Thy words were found. And I did eat them.

[16:51] And thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. The word is the joy and rejoicing of our heart. That was the spirit of Mary. Let us be like Mary.

Like Mary. She sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. Let us value his words today. Let us spend time in the word. Meditate upon the word of God.

We believe in meditation. Not transcendental meditation. Where your mind just goes into some vague fog. And you utter some words repetitively.

But no. Meditate on the word of God. In other words. Take some scripture. And read it to yourself. Over and over. Dwell upon it. Meditate on the word.

Memorise the word. As I've said many times before. Write verses out. Put them on a card. When you're at work. And you've got spare time. Here and there. Look at the word. And remember it.

[17:49] Remember it. Prompt yourself. Remember it. And tell. You don't need to look at the card anymore. Because it's in your heart. You've hidden his word. In your heart. Let us value his words. Like Mary.

Spend time in the word. Spend time where you can. To study. To get together with others to study. To get together with your wife. Your family to study. Get together. And read the word together. Pay attention to reading the word. Come where the word's being read. Come where the word's being preached. Come where the word's being faithfully taught. And so we see we should value his words.

The Bible was the first book ever to hit the printing press. And the man who printed it. Johannes Gutenberg. Was recently voted. I'm told. The most important man who ever lived.

In the past 1,000 years. Johannes Gutenberg. He printed the Bible. The German Bible. On the printing press. Many, many years ago.

[18:48] He was voted the most important man. So have lived. In the last 1,000 years. The word is valuable. The word has soul cleansing power.

John 15 verse 3. Our Lord says. Now you are clean. Through the word. Which I have spoken unto you. No other book can clean you. No other book can clean you.

Brothers and sisters today. Mankind has direct access to God. And. He speaks to us still. Not through some airy, fairy, vague. And uncertain words of men.

But in his sure word. He speaks to us still. Through these powerful pages. Our Lord Jesus says. It is the spirit. That quickeneth. That makes alive.

The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you. They are spirit. And they are life. These words are spirit. And they are life. Treasure them.

[19:44] Eternal life is the theme. Of these words. And by its truth. We can be converted. In Psalm 19 verse 7. The psalmist says.

The law of the Lord is perfect. Converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure. Making wise the simple. These words have soul converting power. You know.

We can use lots of words to witness. But use the words. That God has given you. It's perfect.

Converting the soul. For the one with a believing heart.

And the words of the Bible. Are God's direct revelation to mankind. There's great benefit. In treasuring these words. Psalm 19 11. Moreover. By them is thy servant warned. And in keeping of them.

There is great reward. The Bible is greatly rewarding. Thy word is true from the beginning. And every one of thy righteous judgments.

[20:41] Endureth forever. Do we really value his word? Someone said this. A preacher put it like this. I know of no other single practice. In the Christian life. More rewarding. Practically speaking.

Than memorizing scripture. No other single exercise. Yields greater spiritual dividends. Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper.

And more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will change. Your mind will become more alert. And observant. Your confidence and assurance. Will be enhanced. And your faith will be solidified.

He's speaking about memorizing the Bible. Again I've offered it to some. Some have taken me up on this. I can give you a list of some recommended verses. There's many you can have.

There's some 100 maybe to start with. And others as well. Now if you'd like a list of some suggested scriptures. That you'd like. You'd like me to suggest to you.

[21:38] To memorize. I can give you that. See me at the close. So number one. Keep close to Jesus. Number two. Value his words. And number three.

Serve spiritually. Serve spiritually. Here's another principle. That jumps out to me. As to the difference between. Mary. Mary. And Martha. Martha.

She was incumbent about. With much serving. As one person. Put it. As the understanding is. Behind this incumbent about. She was running around in circles.

That was the kind of sense of it. From some. Scholar of the Greek. Running around in circles. And oh she's. Running around. Chasing her tail. Oh. I just can't keep up.

Running here. Running there. Running around in circles. She was incumbent about. With much serving. Just frantic. And it's almost as like as well.

[22:36] She was bragging on. About what she was doing. And she got angry at Mary. Who to her. It seemed like she was doing nothing. Yet who was.

Giving the spiritual service. The spiritual service. Mary was serving the Lord Jesus as well. The difference was that.

Mary's. Was a spiritual service. Will we serve like Mary. Serve spiritually. You know. I was walking by the church.

And happened to come across someone. Of late. Who comes now and again. And I said. What have you been up to? And he says. I've been praying. And reading my Bible.

I haven't seen him in church. For quite a few weeks. But yeah. We can look at that. I can think about. Some such person. And think. Well. They're not here.

[23:37] They're not serving God. But they may be. They may be reading their Bible. More than I do. But. He's not got a full time job. He's. He's spending time.

Praying and reading his Bible. He's doing. The one thing needful. Isn't he? For Martha.

Her service became a chore. Let's serve God. Not out of obligation. Or duty. But from the heart. As Mary did. As Mary did.

Serve the Lord. Not looking at others. And what they are doing. Or not doing. It's between you and the Lord. Each one of us. Have to give account. Of ourselves to God.

Not about numbers of meetings you attend. Or not attend. But it's whether you're sitting at his feet. Hearing his word. You know. If you don't come tonight at six o'clock.

[24:32] Don't turn the TV box on. Please. If you can't get here at six o'clock. Don't turn the TV box on. Sit at his feet.

And hear his word. Amen. Sit at his feet. And hear his word. We understand. People can't get to every meeting. But sit at his feet. And hear his word. Make a point of that.

You'll be blessed. Serve the Lord. Not looking at others. What they are doing or not doing. But. What are you. Where are you at? That's what matters.

And our doing and being for God. Must start with our knowing him. Our knowing him. Daniel 11.32. The people that do know their God. Shall be strong. And do exploits.

Know him. And you can serve him. Know him. Serve the Lord responsibly. Springing from your love to him. Willingly. Gladly. Don't look at others.

[25:29] At what they are doing or not doing. And judging them. We can all get critical. I'm inclined to be critical. I'm inclined to look at people and think. They are not doing as much as I am doing.

God knows what you are doing. God knows what you are doing. And God knows what I am doing. And your service must be unto him. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Serve the Lord freely and cheerfully. Someone was sharing with me. How the Lord is impressing on them. To give something to God. They are not making a show and dance about it. They are not

here to put their.

You know. To make a big show of it. But God is moving them to give something. There are people here who are giving. Sacrificially. Not blowing a trumpet about it. You are just faithfully doing it unto God.

There are people who have given very sacrificially. To help people in this church. They are not getting any praise of men out of it. But God sees doesn't he? God sees what you do. Let's be like Mary.

[26:31] And sit at his feet. Hearing his word. Hers was a spiritual service. She was whole hearted. She was led by the Lord. For Mary it was her relationship. With the Lord that mattered first and foremost.

And her eye was on him. Her ear was on him. Her actions were spiritual. Didn't look like she was doing much. Sitting down at his feet. But she was doing what God wanted her to do.

She was doing what Jesus praised her for. She was resting in him. She was relying on his strength.

What about us? What motivates us? Some are motivated by title or prestige.

That's the wrong motive, isn't it? Some serve begrudgingly. Have to be asked. Or prompted.

Some who serve complain and judge. Or look down on others who they consider are not serving.

We all have to give account of ourselves to the Lord.

[27:33] And it's about that spiritual service. It's about your heart.

It's about are you being a Mary? Not a Martha come, but about rushing around, running in circles. And probably getting nothing really spiritually done.

Or will you be ministering unto Jesus as Mary was? Hearing his word close to him. With a heart attuned to him. Friends, brothers, sisters, we've all got a mission.

We've all got a mission. We've all got something. God's motivating us. He's calling us to do. Let's do it with the right heart. Our service must be spiritual or it's in vain.

Serve God in a way that makes him glad. So you'll get praise from him. Those unseen things that you do. He sees them. He sees what you do.

Serve because you love God. The love of Christ constrains us. It drives us. It compels us. We serve because we love. The Lord was pleased with Mary as she waited on him.

[28:38] Mary served the Lord in her attentiveness to him. Her devotion. Her love. Her listening. Her heart's obedience. Yet Martha's service was powered by her own energy.

She was running on empty. Grudging. Striving. Over busy. Critical. Self-centered. Are you a Mary? Mary? Or a Martha?

Is serving God not meant to be a privilege and a joy? The gladness that naturally springs out of your heart? Or is it something that has to be forced?

It's a drudgery. And somehow you think it might merit more of heaven because of it? None of that. It should be none of that. It's our privilege and gladness of our soul.

I look at the men and women who are in this church. The quiet achievers. The quiet heroes of this church.

[29:36] Mandy and Margaret. Hazel. Others. Attending to the catering. Just quietly getting on with it. Picking up the town. Taking the cups and saucers.

Many others we could name. That's spiritual service. Isn't it? Serve him in humility. I saw Pastor Adam.

Some weeks back. Clean up a messy spill. Of one of our children. One of our delightful children. And the father got anointed in the process as well.

But Pastor Adam put himself out. And he just quietly got on with it. Praise God. He just quietly got on with cleaning up. With what needed to be done.

An unpleasant task. He wasn't in the spotlight when he did that. But that was spiritual service, wasn't it? That was spiritual service. I see Brother Rukakuya or Joshua grab a vacuum cleaner sometimes and clean up after the church.

[30:36] That's spiritual service. That's spiritual service. That's spiritual service. Spiritual service. Spiritual service. They didn't get cajoled or harassed or volunteered by anyone else.

They just took it up. They just took up that that needed to be done. That's spiritual service. I see people coming to the Monday night prayer meeting straight after a long, hard day at work. And they haven't even got home to have their family meal yet. That's spiritual service. Serve God from your heart.

I see people giving cheerfully in so many ways. And no one knows but them and God. That's spiritual service.

All the quiet, unseen things that happen. When you're at home praying for us. When you're at home praying for this church. You're praying for the preaching. You're praying for the preachers.

[31:40] You're praying for the service to come. You're praying. That's spiritual service. God knows you're praying. Others may not even know what you're doing. God knows your heart.

God knows your capacity. When my wife Julie is suffering in her health. And she still wants to serve God. That's spiritual service. When you're serving.

And you know it's hard. But you want to serve. You've got a heart to serve. We don't look at others and think they are not serving the Lord. We answer for ourselves.

Each one of us. We answer for ourselves. And we do what we are able. And let's beware. I need to be conscious of this. Not to criticise anyone.

So think. Someone's not doing their part. Someone's not doing enough. Because if you're sitting at Jesus' feet. And hearing his word.

[32:34] You're doing the one thing. Needful. The one thing. Needful. And praise God for that. God knows. He sees that. We don't. We have to answer for ourselves.

So learn to serve the Lord on his terms. From the heart. After his heart. Willingly. With loving devotion. Not to be seen of men. Not to be praised of anyone.

Not to get any credit for heaven. But because you love him. Because you love him. Out of loving devotion. Not because you're badgered. Or cajoled.

Or made to feel guilty. But because you want to. You want to. Thank God for Caleb. Just running in. And running to the post of service.

Because he wants to do that. He wants to serve. That must be our heart. As Mary's heart. And use your gifts and abilities. Use what abilities you have got.

[33:32] And ask God to give you more abilities. You might think. Well pastor's suggesting I might do this or that. And well I feel a bit. Like Moses.

He said. I can't talk. Get Aaron to do it. You know. No. You might be the Moses. God might be talking to you.

And you might think. I'm not able. God can make you able. God can make you able. I thank God for our brothers and sisters. For whom English is not their first language.

There's many of those here today. My brothers and sisters. I'm still learning English. We all are. God can use you.

Don't put yourself down. God's able to help you. To stand for him. To help you learn. To help you to grow. To help you to be more able. Than you were before.

[34:31] More able than you thought you'd ever be. Because it's his ability. That's what we need isn't it. And we can serve as he helps us to. And in a way it's more blessed.

Because you're relying on him to help you. More than someone else might be. Isn't that true? When English isn't your first language. You've got to rely on God even stronger.

To help you. And that's where we all need to be. Where we all need to be. To serve the Lord on his terms. From the heart. After his heart. Willingly.

Find his will. About where he wants you to serve. How he wants you to serve. And our service must be directed. To his glory. To his glory.

Not that anyone pat on the back. Or they might be offended. Whatever the case. If it's to his glory. That's what matters. That's what must be our motive.

[35:28] His glory. To his glory. And use your gifts and abilities for his glory. Without him you could do. Zilt. Nothing. Nada. Nix.

Without him you can do nothing. But with him. With him. You can bear much fruit. Bear much fruit. So friends. Be encouraged today. To be real servants of God. Not as Martha running around in circles. Chasing a tail. Frantic and cumbered and flustered. But as Mary. Take time. To keep close to Jesus. Take time. To value his words. Treasure it. Mark it. Memorise it. Meditate on it. Feed your soul with it. Value his words. And serve spiritually. Let his spirit empower you. Let his glory be your aim. Serve spiritually. [36:26] And don't look at others to think what they are doing or not doing. But ask God for yourself. About the person in your shoes. What can this person do for God? And how can I sit more at your feet Lord? How can I listen more to your word? How can I serve you spiritually? Not like Martha. But to be led by your spirit. In what to do. In how to live. In what to say. In what to do. God will help you to do that. Pray for that person. In your shoes today. Let us pray. Let us pray.