

Come Sit at My Feet

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[0 : 00] Have you ever found yourself in the midst of a large group of people? We're taking our way through the story of Jesus in Luke's gospel.

Luke tells us about a moment like this where things got awkward. We're in Luke chapter 10. Let me just read for you the first couple verses.

Luke 10 verse 38. 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. So Jesus and his disciples, they come to this village where this woman named Martha opens her home to Jesus.

And Luke just tells us Martha had a sister named Mary. We know from later on in the story, and specifically from the gospel of John, that Martha and Mary lived together in the village of Bethany, which was just about two miles southeast from Jerusalem.

[1 : 31] What's also interesting is that Bethany is the last stop on the highway coming into Jerusalem from the city of Jericho. And so that may explain why Jesus used the road from Jerusalem to Jericho in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which came right before this.

Jesus and his disciples, they might be traveling into Jerusalem for another of the annual festivals at this time, and just kind of doing ministry along the way.

We also know from the gospel of John that Martha and Mary have a brother named Lazarus. And Lazarus later gets sick and dies, and ends up being raised from the dead by Jesus.

We read about that later on in John chapter 11. And also in John 11, we read this. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

So Martha and Mary end up being very close friends with Jesus. We don't actually know from the gospel accounts when this connection happened, when Martha and Mary and Lazarus first met Jesus.

[2 : 42] Did the women meet Jesus through Lazarus? Was it in Jerusalem at one of the festivals? Was this the first time that Jesus met up with Martha?

Or was it just the first time that she welcomed him into her home? We don't know any of that. It's the first mention of Martha and Mary in Luke's account. Whatever it was, Luke tells us that Martha opens her home to Jesus.

She welcomes him and extends hospitality to him. Now, Luke doesn't waste any time telling us about this visit. And he really only highlights one moment in particular from this visit.

Something happened here at Martha's house. There was this tension in the house. This sort of awkward moment.

And the tension arises between Martha and Mary, the two sisters. And it has to do with what each of them is doing. And Luke tells us what they were doing.

[3 : 51] Martha 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.

So just try and imagine this for a moment. What would you do when 13 men show up at your front door? That's Jesus and his 12 disciples.

Well, you welcome them into the house. Come on in. You give them greetings. And then, if you're like Martha, the one who extended the invitation, you get right to work on the hosting part, right?

These 13 men aren't going to feed themselves. There's probably some rearranging of the furniture that needs to be done just to get everyone a place to sit in this first century home in this little village of Bethany.

And is anyone thirsty? Does anyone need a drink of water? And the list goes on. Luke says Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

[5 : 03] I don't know if you've ever felt like that when having a large gathering at your house. Have you ever had a moment like that? You can almost just imagine Martha scurrying around in the home trying to look after all these things.

And meanwhile, Luke says that her sister Mary is just there sitting down at the feet of Jesus, listening to him.

Let's flip over to Mary's perspective. Can you really blame her for wanting to just sit there and listen to Jesus? I mean, this is Jesus himself right there in her own living room.

And he's talking. We don't even get from Luke the details of what Jesus was saying. But whatever it was, Mary didn't want to miss a word. She just wanted to sit there and soak it in.

And this is where the tension begins to build. Imagine that you're Martha and you feel the weight of responsibility to host this large group of guests.

[6 : 12] And there's one person here who could be a real help to you, who knows the house, who knows where everything is. And she's just sitting there on the floor, listening to Jesus.

Well, that's fine for a few minutes. But then time begins to pass. And she isn't politely excusing herself and coming to help with all the hosting stuff.

You can imagine the frustration beginning to rise in Martha's heart. And maybe she just kept it quiet at first. She doesn't want to embarrass her sister in front of the guests.

And so she just, we don't know, just imagining. She keeps working harder, keeps going faster. Try to get all the things ready. Well, I imagine that all of them in the house could feel Martha's temperature rising.

And eventually it sort of comes to this moment where Martha just can't take it anymore. She's well past frustrated. She's in the anger zone. She doesn't even speak to Mary herself.

[7 : 23] But she speaks to Jesus. She came to Jesus and asked, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?

Tell her to help me. Well, if I'm Peter or one of the other disciples, I'm thinking, this is awkward.

Sibling conflict between two women over who should be doing house stuff. And maybe I'm even feeling a little guilty since my being here is causing indirectly this stress to Martha.

I'm also thinking about all the other times that Jesus has been called on to settle disputes between people. Martha calls on the guest of honor to direct her own sister to help her.

Now, if Jesus were just an ordinary man like me, this would be one of those moments where I pause and consider very carefully what I say next.

[8 : 41] You know, the last thing I want to do is take sides here between two sisters about the hospitality stuff in their own house. And if I don't watch what I say very carefully here, one of those sisters is probably going to be upset with me for the rest of the evening.

But Jesus is no ordinary man. He's not afraid to take sides. He doesn't live to please people. He just gently and firmly speaks the truth to everyone and anyone wherever He is.

And listen to what He says. In response, Martha, Martha, 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. Did Jesus, the guest, just chide, or even gently rebuke His host?

Yeah, He did. And it was probably somewhat humiliating for Martha in this moment to receive that word of correction.

[10 : 07] But then I'm sure as she thought about it and pondered it, she knew that Jesus was right. This is one of those reasons why Jesus is just so amazing.

This is the kind of person He is. He doesn't just tell people what they want to hear. He was a true friend. He comes over to your house as the guest, and He gently rebukes you as the host.

Who else does that? Let's also notice, though, Jesus does make it clear. He understands how she feels. He says, you're worried and upset about many things.

Maybe up until this moment, Martha had even been wondering, like, does anybody see the problem here? Does anybody understand what I'm feeling? Well, Jesus saw it, and He knew it.

He didn't say that that was right, but He did acknowledge it. And then we see this contrast that Jesus brings out here.

[11 : 21] Martha, Martha, you're worried about many things, but few things are needed, or indeed, only one. I think it's kind of obvious what Jesus means when He's talking about the many things.

That's the hospitality stuff. That's all the preparations that she's working on. But then, what does He mean by the contrast? What's the few, or what's the one that's really needed?

Now, why does He say at first, few, but then narrow it down to one? Which is it? Few or one? Well, let's wade into that a little bit.

First, there is a bit of a textual issue here. Most English translations simply say, say this, but one thing is necessary. You're worried about many things, but one thing is necessary.

There's a shorter variation. There's a longer variation. And truth be told, if you look back at the ancient manuscripts, there's several variations at this point. And scholars and translators, of course, they recognize this as a difficult textual issue.

[12 : 31] The evidence kind of leans in favor of the shorter reading being the original one, which is why most English translations just say this, but one thing is necessary or needed.

If the few things is part of what Jesus said, Jesus could be saying something like, Martha, Martha, Martha, you don't have to go all out.

Simple hospitality will suffice. We don't need extravagance. A few things will do. But at the end of this, I'm really at your place not for what you can do for me, but for you, to be with you.

And here we kind of notice, either way, Jesus seems to be shifting it away from hospitality and toward relationship with what he says.

The main point Jesus is making here seems to be that Mary has chosen what is better. There she is sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to his words.

[13 : 45] And she's chosen relationship over hospitality, over service. The one thing needed is not more activity for Jesus, but attention to Jesus.

In fact, I think we can even push it a little bit further than that. What does Jesus really want Martha to do right now?

You ever thought about that? What does Jesus really want Martha to do? Well, he wants her to stop being distracted and anxious and come sit down at his feet with Mary.

I mean, Jesus doesn't say this word for word, but I think it's sort of implied, isn't it? I came here to see you and to spend time with you and with Mary. Or to put it another way, if Mary has chosen the better thing, Jesus says it right point blank, then what does Jesus want for Martha to do right now in this moment?

Yeah. Isn't he inviting her? Come, Martha. Sit at my feet. Join us. Be with us.

[15 : 16] Be with me. That's all that's needed. I'm not going to make Mary go help you in the kitchen. It's her choice and she has chosen well.

And this is it. This is all we get from Luke about this visit to Mary and Martha's house. Just this short little conversation following this tension in the house.

Why is this here in the Bible? Well, it must be in Luke's mind and ultimately in God's mind it must be that there's enough of a lesson here to be learned.

Not just for Martha but for others who would read this as well. For us. And what is that lesson? What's that main truth in all of this?

I think very simply what Luke is showing what God is saying what Jesus is getting at and what Martha learned is that relationship with Jesus is the most important thing.

[16 : 31] Relationship with Jesus is the most important thing. Now there's a couple ways we could say it differently. We could use some of Jesus' own words.

Relationship with Jesus is the better thing. Or since there's only one thing that's needed relationship with Jesus is the best thing.

Not that there isn't goodness to the other things but relationship with Jesus is the best thing. And I think when we hear that we kind of know that in our hearts, right?

Or we could bring in that other word of Jesus. Relationship with Jesus is the only thing truly needed. But one thing is needed.

Relationship with Jesus is the only thing truly needed. And when I say it that way I think, that's a little harder to accept sometimes, isn't it?

[17 : 36] Do you feel that? What about this? What about that? Don't we need those things too? Part of me wants to defend Martha a little bit here.

Somebody's got to look after supper or we're all going to be really hungry. And that's true. But honestly, what do we need more?

The meal or to be with Jesus? In fact, God really kind of answered that a long time ago.

Back in Deuteronomy 8 verse 3, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. There is something even more essential to life than even the food we eat. And it's our relationship with God. And specifically that part of our relationship where we listen to God's word. Where we listen to the words of Jesus.

[18 : 47] If you have to choose between food and Jesus, one fills your belly till tomorrow. The other fills your soul. and your heart and your mind with life and with light that lasts forever.

One is the food and drink that after eating we get hungry again. We get thirsty again. Jesus offers us living water and the bread of life and says that it will quench our thirst and satisfy our hunger forever.

forever. I'm reminded of these words from John's gospel. John 6 verse 35 Jesus declared I am the bread of life whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

or maybe we could frame it this way the very son of God God in human flesh is coming to your house this evening.

what's better that you put out a fine spread of appetizers and refreshments and cook him a fine meal and offer him the best and most comfortable stay at the cost of being with him or that everyone goes hungry and gets parched by the end of the evening but you enjoy several hours of close relationship with Jesus listening to him talking with him heart to heart I think when we put it that way we kind of all recognize that it's true relationship with Jesus is the only thing truly needed it is the better thing it is the best thing the one thing if you've been exposed to the Bible or Christian teaching that truth probably comes as no surprise you're probably thinking yeah we've heard this a lot even just last Sunday the religious lawyer who talked with

[21 : 09] Jesus knew that this was the truth he knew that the greatest commandment in the law was to love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind and strength he too knew that relationship with God is the most important thing but as we saw with him last week in the passage just above this it's possible to know this truth and yet not actually respond to it we have to go beyond just knowing it we have to respond to it relationship with Jesus is the only thing truly needed it's the better thing it's the best thing it's the one thing but along with that truth comes an invitation from Christ to you and to me again what did Jesus really want Martha to do it's implied in his answer isn't it drop all the worries and the frets and leave those distractions and come and sit at my feet be with me just imagine for a moment that you were

Martha and Jesus said these words that we just read to you will you come will you sit at my feet will you come and do this better thing that Mary has chosen would you do it would you just drop all the preparations and do it how would you respond to Jesus I think it's the same invitation to Martha that Jesus gives to all of us today come sit at my feet don't worry about all those other things come be with me come listen to my words now there is one thing that's really different from then to now Martha had Jesus physically present in her home in flesh and blood and so we know exactly what the relationship with Jesus meant for her back then but 2,000 years later some things have changed the story goes on

Jesus dies he rose again from the dead he ascended into heaven and right now he's sitting in heaven at the right hand of God until that day that he returns we also know that not long after he ascended into heaven he sent his spirit to indwell us to live inside of us and so relationship with Jesus for us today it looks really different than it did back then for Martha and Mary he doesn't come to our house he doesn't sleep in our guest room and we can't just physically sit at his feet like Mary did now we talk to Jesus by prayer and his spirit living in us hears our prayers in that sense we actually have one thing better than Mary and Martha had we can talk to Jesus anytime now we don't have to wait for him to come over to our house wherever we are at any time we can pray and Jesus hears us but now how do we sit at his feet and listen to him

Jesus talks to us now by his spirit through the written words of God through our Bibles maybe I'll say it this way you might think differently about it but there's a way here that Mary and Martha had it a little better than us they got to see Jesus face to face and sit there and listen to him for us it's different Jesus is in heaven and we come to sit at his feet through a book we have to open it we have to read it we have to meditate on words that he has already spoken in the past but as we do he speaks to us through these words in the present that's what relationship with Jesus looks like for us today prayer is how we talk to him and meditation on his written word is how we listen to him and yes that isn't the way that I probably that we would prefer it to be we would rather it be face to face

wouldn't we voice to ear but Jesus said that this is how it's going to be in another parable he told the disciples how he is like a king going away to be crowned and who will later return but we his servants are kind of left in the meantime to serve and to await his return he as we heard earlier in the service has gone to prepare a place for us so that we can be with him but for now we wait for him to return and so our relationship with him it's very different but even though it's different I don't think it changes the invitation of Jesus to us he invites us all come sit at my feet listen to my words draw near open the Bible I will speak to you and it might feel weird at first to try and have relationship with God with Jesus through a book especially if you're not someone who really enjoys reading and never have but there's a different kind of reading we can read for relationship I still remember the days before FaceTime and video chat were a thing we did this thing where we used to write letters first it was hand written delivered by the postal service then it was type written then it was email have you ever received a precious personal letter a letter of relationship from someone [28 : 18] I mean usually that sort of thing happened when two people were separated after I graduated from Bible college there was this summer where Jen and I were dating but not yet engaged we just started our relationship in January and I really wanted to marry Jen I was already sold but you got to go through the process you got to you know take your time and she was off having an adventure in Morocco on a missions trip and I was sitting at home worried that she was going to start feeling called to go be a missionary in Morocco meanwhile I felt God calling me to be a pastor in North America well that month that she was gone felt like forever to me I didn't hear from her while she was gone the relationship was distanced I didn't know what she was thinking or feeling and how this was going to work itself out in the future and then one day this handwritten letter came in the mail and it meant the world to me

I didn't just read it to get information about Jen the words on the page were her speaking to me and I treasured those words I would have rather been with her in person but her words on the page were better than nothing that's how we must relate to Jesus right now while he is away God has written letters to us through the centuries we have them all recorded in different kinds some of the words of the prophets some are actual letters accounts of what happened things that he has said things that he has done revealing who he is to us some are instruction about how to live others are just telling us about the things he has waiting for us in the future the things he's promised even if reading for other purposes isn't our thing this is relational reading where it can be do you hear the invitation of

Jesus to come and sit at his feet have you been like Mary just enjoying his words often soaking in everything God has to say as you open up your Bible throughout the week or have you been like Martha of late distracted by the many things too busy to find time to sit down and be quiet and open up his letter and read it are you making time throughout each week to be with Jesus to talk with him to listen to him does what Jesus said to Martha bring conviction maybe your priorities are out of order have you been neglecting the one thing needed for the many things do you need to change how you structure your mornings or your evenings or your days or your weeks so that you have that time guarded and protected to sit at the feet of

Jesus now I know it's easy to hear those kinds of questions and think yeah I need to do more and then jump right back into the busyness and distractedness of life and forget it all and so I want to offer a couple practical helps that really can make a difference one is this little yellow book it's called before you open your Bible nine heart postures for approaching God's word I got two of these they'll be on the mailbox table at the back you could read one of these heart postures in less than five minutes and just encourage us about how for relationship with him it gets us thinking and then we can jump into our reading and meet with him so that's available and if we need to order more we can order more Bible reading plans are also helpful sometimes that decision of where do I read becomes a barrier well the plan can help you know well just go to the next spot keep carrying on with where you were and and with those don't worry about falling behind most of them are laid out to get through the

Bible in a year don't worry about falling behind just pick up wherever you left off just like you do with a friend and last maybe maybe it's really just the motivation maybe Jesus invitation is enough to bring you near today but you feel like you just need!

[33 : 50] more reminders of how important it is to spend time with Jesus throughout the week I want to encourage you to spend some time in Psalm 119 it's got 22 chunks in it eight verses each and the whole focus of Psalm 119 is the value of God's word of what it is to us and let God convince

you and motivate you to draw near and listen the more we soak our minds in that truth the easier it gets to just cast aside the other things the distractions and just focus come and sit at Jesus feet so those are three things in closing relationship with Jesus is the most important thing but we need to draw near we need to come we need to engage in it with our hearts father in heaven pull us closer to you draw us in as only you can do lord we confess and we admit that often we are so easily distracted we go all over the place we do all sorts of things we get interested in new hobbies and things but we really only have so much time in our lives and it is precious it is a gift and we can enjoy some of those good things but let's not miss the most important thing lord that's what we ask is that you would draw us close to you so that we are with you and that our relationship grows stronger and sweeter day by day i pray that that would be the truth in our individual lives in our corporate life as a church that we would be known in our community as a people who love you and who love your word do that work in us we pray in jesus name amen