

Sit and Listen

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 September 2025

Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0 : 0 0] We can turn back to our reading in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10. We're going to look at the end of this chapter where we read of Mary and Martha and how they had Jesus in their home and how they engaged with him, and especially as we see Mary engaging with him.

In verse 39 it says, this is Martha, she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened. To his teaching.

She sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. Well, last Sunday we had what we called Back to Church Sunday.

It was a new season beginning in terms of Sunday school resuming after the summer holidays, and many things just starting to start back after that break.

And we were looking at the Gospel of Luke last Sunday morning here as well. We were in chapter 14. And Back to Church Sunday is very much about an invitation to come.

[1 : 0 6] To come and hear the Gospel. An invitation to come. As we saw it in chapter 14, it was talking about a banquet that was prepared. It was a parable that was being told.

And how invitations went out to come for everything is now ready. And that's the way we see it with church when we come to church. When we come to hear the Gospel is to come and hear about a man who has done everything for us.

Who has prepared everything for us. A banquet has been prepared for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. So we are to come. But what is it that we are coming to?

And why do we come? Why do we keep on coming? It's not just about coming once. But it's about keeping on coming to Jesus. And living in light of him and his ways.

That's what we want to think about this morning together. Not just about coming to church. But what we're coming to. And why we need to keep coming back to it as well.

[2 : 0 7] Some of you will be able to remember a TV program called Jackanori. It ran from 1965 right through to 1996.

Over 30 years. And what it was, as I'm sure if you remember it, it was somebody coming to share a story from a book. To read a story from a book.

And it was just there to encourage people to be interested again in coming to read for themselves. To set up an interest in hearing stories and reading books themselves.

You had to sit and listen. What we sang in Psalm 34 is very like that as well. Where the psalmist says in verse 11. Come hear my children.

Gather round and listen to my word. There's this invitation to come and listen. And the psalmist says, And I will help you understand how you may fear the Lord.

[3 : 0 3] How we are to live for the Lord. What both these things have in common. Whether it's thinking of Jackanori or thinking of the psalm. Psalm 34.

It's about stopping what we're doing. And coming for a time to sit. And to listen. And that's what we have a great illustration of here with Martha and Mary.

The passage before us. Just a few verses. Verse 38 to 42. But it's so important for us. And you almost see it as well in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

That's based on people being gathered around. And a lawyer. A man stood up and put this question to him. And so they're sitting. Listening to what Jesus has to say.

And what we see with Mary and Martha is that there is this importance of stopping what we're doing. And just coming to listen to what Jesus has to say.

[4 : 02] And so that's why it's important for us. Not just to come to church maybe once because we get an invitation. But to come because of what we see that we're coming to. We're coming to sit and to listen to what Jesus has to say to us.

So Jesus here comes to the home of Mary and Martha. And they respond quite differently.

Mary and Martha, they seem to have different priorities at this time. And the question would often be asked then, Are you a Mary? Or are you a Martha?

Are you one who just wants to come and sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his teaching? Or are you one who's busying yourself in good things? And is there a right answer?

Or should we be both? Because you see here, Martha wasn't all in the wrong. Although she was reminded what was important. And Mary was reminded too what is important.

[5 : 08] And we are reminded what is important. We are really to be both Mary and Martha. Busying ourselves in good things.

But not forgetting what is the main thing. And what our main priority is. That one thing necessary as Jesus describes it here.

The good portion which will not be taken away. So it's about coming to see the importance of listening to Jesus and making that time.

And so I want us to see just four things, four lessons for us here. As we think of the priority that Mary has here in coming. To sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen to his teaching.

That's what verse 39 says. And we can first of all think of focusing our priorities. Focusing our priorities. Focusing our priorities. We mentioned priorities last week as we were looking at it in Luke 14.

[6 : 08] When the invitation went out to come to the banquet, there were those who made their excuses. They got the priorities all mixed up. There was one who had bought a field and he wanted to go and see it.

There was another who had bought five yoke of oxen and he wanted to go and test them. There was another who had got married and that was his priority at the moment. And you say to yourself, there's nothing wrong in and of themselves.

These are the important aspects of our lives. When we think of our home, our family, our work, all of these things, they're important. But it's about prioritizing what's right.

And we saw that the priority is not to get so distracted in these things that we forget about the importance of the gospel and about Jesus and about what he has done for us.

And looking at this scene in Mary and Martha's home as well, you see that there's a lot going on. Martha is busying herself.

[7 : 12] Jesus is coming. They're obviously a close family, a family who are close to Jesus. You see, when their brother Lazarus passes away, it would be after this event.

You see just how precious they were to Jesus. But Martha was concerned about preparing a meal and serving the guests. Mary was more concerned about being in the presence of the Lord Jesus sitting at his feet.

But you notice here just how he deals with Martha as well as Mary. And it's interesting when you see that when he came into the village in verse 38, a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

So Martha was the one who welcomed him in. Martha was the one who met him. So Martha had a good priority there as well. Come in, Jesus. Come into our home.

And that's a great thing for us all to think about in our own priorities, our own homes, our own lives, to welcome Jesus in as part of our lives. But it's not just to lose sight then of just who Jesus is and what's important about Jesus.

[8 : 23] It's not just about saying, well, I come to church and it's good to be among God's people. It's good to be here to enjoy fellowship and to enjoy tea and coffee and all of these things. That's good in and of itself.

But what we see is with Mary, she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. Coming to church is great.

But the importance is to come and hear and listen to what Jesus has to say. And to see where our priorities lie, to see just what is important in our lives.

Martha didn't make the most of having Jesus in the home. And for us, we could be the same. We don't make the most of being alongside God's people, about being under God's word.

Or all of these things, when our priorities are maybe different, when we're distracted and getting caught up in everything else, we can miss out on so much.

[9 : 30] If everything in our lives takes precedence over being with the Lord, then we're missing out on the heart of the experience, of hearing what Jesus has to say.

Even when we're busy in his work, and we can all be doing this and guilty of it as well. We can be busy in church life. We can be busy doing things in church life.

We always have to be on our guard that we don't allow that busyness to come between us and coming to have that time at the feet of Jesus. Of making that our priority as well.

So we have to get our priorities in order. It's not one or the other. Busyness or sitting. It's not one or the other. It's about both.

And how we can do both. But making sure that in the busyness of life, we have the priority of having time with Jesus as well. Because if we want to grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus, if we want to see the joy that he is able to bring to our lives, the peace that he is able to give to us, when there's so much that's crazy going on around us, then we need to spend time in his presence.

[10 : 47] Spend time in his word. Spend time in his word.

Spend time in his word.

Spend time in his word. Then secondly, we see here, when we do that, we feed our souls. We feed our souls.

Martha was worried about physical nourishment. About getting food here. About making sure that everybody was looked after in that way. But Mary was more concerned about getting her soul fed.

and that's a key for us as well. It's good to entertain people, to have fellowship, to have food together. All of these things are good, but to feed our souls in the midst of it as well. So even as we have our tea and coffee after the service that we seek to not just have a biscuit and a cup of tea, but to have discussion, to have talk, to get alongside one another, to know one another, to love one another, to feed our souls in that way. We were talking about spiritual things. We were talking about the Word of God. We were talking about praying together. We were talking about encouraging one another because in his presence we find that that is what the Lord does for us as we sit and listen to what he has to say to us. It feeds our soul. It nourishes our soul.

[13 : 11] 1 Peter. Peter speaks there about being chapter 2. Like newborn babies, we crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. There's to be this desire for the Lord, this hunger for the Lord so that we are growing up in the Lord and in our understanding of him. We are to feed our souls. How discouraging it can be when we face challenges and we've not fed our soul. We forget the Lord's promises. We forget the Lord's goodness. The phrase burnout is so common today because we live in a world where life is so rushed and so busy, where the world just thrives us to that 24-7 kind of mindset. It's all about being busy, busy, busy. But God gave us a day when we look at God's Word, when we come to it from beginning to end, we see the pattern that God has set for us. And in the beginning when he created the heavens and the earth on the seventh day, he rested. And he gave that to us as a creation ordinance, as we call it, to keep the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, set apart for this very purpose of gathering round, coming to sit around the Word of God and to listen to what the Lord has to say, to feed our souls.

So that instead of burning ourselves out, we are to be filling ourselves with the Word of God. Just like the two on the road to Emmaus, as they were walking along with Jesus there on the road to Emmaus, after his resurrection, Jesus appeared beside them and started to open up the Scriptures, it says, to them. And what did they say? Did not our hearts burn within us?

They weren't burnt out. They were put into flame. They were set aflame because they were listening to what Jesus was having to say to them. They were being given understanding about everything that had taken place.

Their eyes were opened to see him and to know him. And that's what we are to do as well, to seek to feed our souls, to nourish our souls, to make sure that we are coming under the Word of God together, whether it's on the Sunday or the midweek opportunities that we have, or whether it's by ourselves, in our own quiet time as well, to make sure that we have these priorities of feeding our soul.

Mary sat to listen to what Jesus had to say. And that's so important for us, to keep us going in this world. It's not just about coming to church once or occasionally, but constantly coming to sit at the feet of Jesus, to feed and nourish our soul for that one thing that's necessary, that good portion as he describes it here, to feed and nourish our souls in that way.

[16 : 26] Mary listened to what Jesus was saying. Martha was busy. Let's make sure that we're not over busy, but that we can make time to sit and listen to Jesus.

Third thing we see here is we can bring our cares to the Lord as well as we come to sit at the feet of Jesus. Martha was loved by Jesus just as much as Mary was.

You see that through these few verses, Martha welcomed him into her house. Martha was distracted with much serving. She wanted Jesus to have the best.

And then when she comes with a complaint in verse 40, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. Look at the way the Lord answers her, Martha, Martha.

He uses her name twice. Martha, Martha. It's like there's a gentle and a loving rebuke there. Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things.

[17 : 35] He's got a concern for her. And he's saying, really, Martha, bring your cares to me. She's busy, anxious, troubled, distracted here.

Who isn't? We all find ourselves in that way where there's so much going on in our minds, so many things that need our attention. We can so easily end up in this way that Martha is distracted in so many ways, anxious and troubled about many things.

And when we have Jesus there to bring our cares to. Somebody once put it like this, just a short statement. Beware of the barrenness of a busy life.

Beware of the barrenness of a busy life. Where we don't take that time to be with Jesus. Beware the barrenness of a busy life.

But Jesus is reminding us here that he is there for us to bring all our cares to him. Because the more we come to him, the more we see the power that there is in prayer.

[18 : 46] The more that we see the privilege that we have in knowing the one who has made the heavens and the earth and everything in them. That we have this God for us. And the more we learn of him, the more we see, well, everything I am anxious about.

Everything I am worried about. I can bring it to him in prayer. And he is able to give me that peace that passes understanding. We can bring our cares to him.

And there's so many scriptures that remind us of that. In Peter it says, Cast your cares on him for he cares for you. In Philippians 4 verse 6 it says, Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving.

Present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. We have a peace to be found when we come and cast our cares.

When we come to the feet of Jesus. There's the hymn, What a friend we have in Jesus. And it speaks into this kind of situation as well. About all the troubles that we have.

[20 : 00] What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh what peace we often forfeit.

Oh what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. So we have that desire put in our heart here as we have it to sit at the feet of Jesus and bring our cares to him.

The hymn goes on to say, Are we weak and heavy laden? Is that you today? Weak, heavy laden, burdened, distracted by so many things.

Cumbered with a load of care. Precious saviour, still a refuge. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Do your friends despise, forsake you?

Take it to the Lord in prayer. In his arms he'll take and shield you. You will find a solace there. There's this image there of just coming to Jesus with everything in our life.

[21 : 03] And that he is able to give us that care and that peace. We come again and again and again to him.

The last thing we see here is we can find ourselves. We can find ourselves. Mary found contentment.

She found meaning, she found purpose at the feet of Jesus. Just the way Jesus puts it in verse 42. But one thing is necessary.

Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her. There's contentment. There's real contentment in coming to the feet of Jesus.

And to come to the feet of Jesus requires humility. humility. It requires humbling ourselves. When you look at the parable of the Good Samaritan, and you see it when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus as well, they have this question of what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[22 : 13] It's about the things that we are doing. Last week we were mentioning that religion is not what we do, but what is done. And what Jesus has done for us.

And the more we are at the feet of Jesus, the more that we see it is done. He has done all things for us. Everything is now ready. So humility is important for us.

And James Parker's got a book, Your Father Loves You. And in this book he speaks about the humility of Paul and how does an ever-increasing humility.

He speaks about three texts about how Paul describes himself. 1 Corinthians 15, 9, he says, I am the very least of all the saints. Then in Ephesians 3, verse 8, he says, I am the foremost.

I am the least of all the saints. I am the least of the apostles. It's the first one, sorry, in 1 Corinthians. I am the least of the saints in Ephesians. I am the foremost of sinners in 1 Timothy 1.

[23 : 15] And what's interesting is that each of these texts is like he's going lower as the years are passing. And that's the way James Parker describes it. He says, Humility and a passion for praise are a pair of characteristics which together indicate growth in grace.

Humility and a passion for praise. And that over the years you see Paul, he says, growing downward. And as he's humbling himself, his praise is increasing.

Just like John the Baptist who said, he must increase and I must decrease. That's what we find as we come to the feet of Jesus. We find ourselves.

We find our purpose. We find our peace because we begin to see more of ourselves and our unworthiness and all that we cannot do. But we see all of what God has done for us in Christ.

And we're able to give him more and more glory. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus here. It was a time of peace.

[24 : 30] But later on in her life, a time of trouble came when her brother passed away. But she was still able to come to the feet of Jesus and find in Jesus there the one who had power over all things, even death.

And so we find this promise of eternal life is found in Jesus. And it is real.

And that's what we come to hear about here. This is not Chakanori. It's not a fictional book. It's not just something that's made up.

It's given to us from God so that we can hear and fear the Lord and come to live for him. Mary found that meaning, that thing necessary, that good portion that would never be taken away from her.

Why? Because she came to the feet of Jesus. And that's why we are to come and to keep on coming. Not just to enjoy time together, which we do and we hope we do, but more importantly it's to come and listen to what Jesus has to say.

[25 : 55] Come here, my children, gather round and listen to my word and I will help you understand how you may fear the Lord. That's what we are to do.

just like Mary here. She sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. May we listen to his teaching that we may find purpose, meaning, peace and joy in the one who has eternal life to give us.

May he bless us through his word and may we keep coming back to it again and again, strengthened by it and for his glory.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you that you are one who is never silent but one who always speaks. One who has a word to say to your people every day of life, through every generation, through every experience.

and so we pray, Lord, for that desire of Mary to be ours as well, just as it's important to be a Martha at times, to be busy in many good things.

[27 : 09] May we also find the importance of coming to sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen to what you have to see. So guide us and bless us, we pray, for giving us our sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 25, the Scottish Psalter version.

Psalm 25, page 231. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 5. The tune is, Dennis, to thee I lift my soul, O Lord, I trust in thee, my God, let me not be ashamed, nor foes triumph for me.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise. Amen. Let me not be ashamed, nor foes triumph for me.

For me, for me, for me, for me. When the blood wait on thee, ye do to shame won't put in love.

[28 : 51] Let's cry in love. O teacher, ye, unto the redeemed thy truth, there is my teacher ye.

For thou art all that does, to me salvation send, and I upon thee all that live, expecting to attend.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.