

**Luke 10:38-42**

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the LORD's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42 there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Today I'm going to continue with some of the profound lessons that we learn from Jesus as they are recorded in Luke. Jesus was doing his ministry of walking throughout the region, talking to as many people as he could, teaching those that were receptive, healing those that needed it, and fixing the broken religious establishment. He goes to a village that is the home town of two sisters named Mary and Martha. Jesus has basically four ways to teach us. Probably the most familiar to us would be his sermons. Through his sermons he teaches about love, grace, righteousness, God, the will of God, and the kingdom of heaven. He also uses parables as a form of teaching. These are metaphors which are used to show how one thing is like another. Jesus also teaches by his living example; the life that he lived, the action taken, the things he did, and the way he treats others. We are to follow what he says and what he does. We also learn from Jesus through real life situations that involve human interaction. Our Scripture today is from one of those real life situations.

Jesus is at the home of Martha where her sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to Jesus. These two women are prominent. We know this because they are named in two of the gospels while most women are unnamed. Let's take a look at Martha. She is the host. As such, she is responsible for everything. So, Martha is focused on utility, the duty and the work that needs to be done. She is diligent, active, and is working hard. She is providing a valuable service and she knows the importance of hospitality. She has a major responsibility to care for her guests and especially to provide a meal. This puts Martha in a position where her chores become an obstacle to her. These secondary matters distract her from hearing the Word of God. Her sense of duty prevents her from attending to the teaching of Jesus. Martha is so busy serving she does not get to hear the word.

It is the traditional woman's role to provide for her household. So, Martha's sister Mary is supposed to be helping out with the chores. The culture has distinct roles about what people do and women have to fix the meals. Mary is neglecting her duty. She neglects the traditional woman's role of help to provide for the hospitality. Mary is sitting at the Lord's feet where she would be expected to be if she were a man. Mary is taking the role of a disciple. This is because she is focused on the word of the Lord. She has devotion to the Lord's word. It is so important to her that she is violating social norms. This devotion to the word is not out of a sense of duty but an expression of love for God.

The Scripture provides us with an opportunity to address a lesson on conflict. The Scripture shows contrasting attitudes that compete with one another and create tension. Notice this. Both desire to do good. Both want what is best. Both are good people. Both want to please the Lord. So, why does the tension exist? Martha has a duty and her due diligence causes her to be stressed and this creates tension. Her objection is a serious and legitimate complaint. So, her

protest is justifiable. She asks Jesus to intervene in order to get Mary to help her. Virtually all of us would say something like "Mary how about you helping your sister like you are supposed to." The two sisters have different understanding of what is important. It is not that one is selfish or that one is lazy. It is not that one is trying to outdo the other. The contrasting attitudes come from an understanding of value. At the time, the highest value for Martha is service. The highest value for Mary is the word. It is a matter of spiritual discernment. The conflict originates from failing to understand the highest value. Who decides which one is right and which one is wrong? God decides. So, Jesus teaches the highest value is the word. Since they each have a different viewpoint of what is important, they have different behavior, contrasting attitudes, and priority. So, Martha appeals to Jesus for help. But what Martha is really doing is complaining instead of resolving the matter herself.

Now let's take the opportunity to learn from Jesus. Since Martha appealed to Jesus he gives her an answer. His response is a radical, new perspective. Keep in mind that Jesus knows the will of God and it is God that decides what is right and what is good. It is the word of the Lord that is the most important. Martha is worried about utility while Mary chose the word of the Lord. There is also a parallel between the contrasting attitudes of Jesus and the religious leaders. The perspective of the religious leaders is utility. Their thinking is that if the nation is obedient then God will intervene and free them from Roman occupation. The perspective of Jesus is no. God is about love. In essence it is about what God decides not what humans decide. The religious leaders thought the best way to serve God was through forced obedience. Jesus knows it is all about grace. So, their secondary matters distracted them from hearing the word of God. Their attitudes prevented them from attending to Jesus teaching. In actuality they ended up becoming an obstacle that hindered devotion to the Lord.

The contemporary lesson is a matter of how Jesus puts things in perspective for us. We know the importance of hospitality. We know the importance of all of the work that goes on behind the scenes to make this ministry work. Jesus teaches that the word of the Lord is more important. God determines what is right and what is good. God sends Jesus to the world to teach us. So, take the time to reflect and discern the will of God. Read and study the Bible and apply it in daily living. The one thing that stands out in today's Scripture is the priority that is placed on the word of the Lord.