



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Troubled, Anxious, and Distracted (Luke 10:38-42)

JUNE 14, 2014

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In the previous account Jesus had been asked the following question by a teacher of the law. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The narrative discloses that the reason for this question was not a deep concern about the inquirer's own salvation. This question was a test. The inquirer sought to see if Jesus' understanding of the Mosaic Law aligned with the traditions and teachings of the religious establishment. Jesus' response and teaching about the "Good Samaritan" exposes this man, and reveals the inherent danger of seeking God for his blessings rather than the pursuit of a relationship with him. What began with valuing God's word and taking seriously his teaching ends in a painful conclusion; the impossibility of man being able to live up to God's standards. This man was simply called to fully obey what he knew in his heart to be true; however when he was held accountable to this criteria, he responded with evasion. He understood it was not possible to live according to God's word and merit eternal life on the basis of his own actions. Jesus does not reduce this expectation; man is expected to offer a wholehearted love and devotion to God from which flows a love for one's neighbor. When we find we cannot meet this requirement, a humble person sees the need for grace, but the proud manufacture a type of godliness that reduces obedience to a more manageable portion.

Jesus utilized the Parable of the Good Samaritan to radically redefine love for one's neighbor. The author now shifts his attention to the first of the two great commandments mentioned by the teacher of the law. In this subsequent section of Scripture the definition of a wholehearted love and devotion to God is given. Luke does this by examining a family who had become friends with Jesus, specifically by the comparison of two sisters - one named Mary and the other Martha. Jesus had his fans, foes, and then his friends. The fans like you, the foes do not. The things that is similar between the two is they both choose you. On the other hand, you choose your friends. So this family becomes friends of Jesus in which their relationship is special and unique. He loves them, he cares for them and they care for him.

As we consider this well-known account we find Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and Martha distracted by much serving. It is tempting to view Martha as bad, and Mary as good. Yet it is Martha who opens up her home to Jesus and his companions. She was not an atheist, nor a godless woman. She loves Jesus and is attentive to his needs. The problem that the author is seeking to depict is the corrupting nature of works-based righteousness. When we tell the Martha's of the world to be like Mary, this does not help because all it does is put one more thing on their to do list. As one preacher said, "I need to read, pray, and choke Mary!" Martha's actions suggest that her value and worth was based on what she gives Jesus, the service she can render to him. Instead Jesus helps Martha see that the good portion that she sought to give to him, was in reality, something she receives from him. By seeking and finding Jesus first, an individual is able to continue with him in all he does. For by starting with him, he cannot be taken from them.

Luke 10:38-41 – (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. (39) She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. (40) But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

(41) "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, (42) but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

A WELCOMED FRIEND

He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him – When Jesus spoke to a would-be disciple concerning the cost of following him he said, "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). Jesus did not have a travel itinerary in which his next lodging location was scheduled in advance with an estimated time of arrival. Jesus traveled to the towns and villages and taught his disciples to stay in whatever house welcomed them. So Jesus and his companions arrive unannounced at the town where Martha lives, and she welcomes them with warmth and hospitality into her home. Just how large this company that traveled with Jesus is uncertain, but earlier in this gospel he has already sent out seventy-two disciples to the various towns and villages. It might be fair to estimate a group of fifty to eighty people unexpectedly showed up at this house and needed something to eat. There was no warehouse store where she could go to buy large quantities of food. In this moment, for Martha, all the details flood in. How many of us would be somewhat stressed out if Jesus showed up to our house, let alone under these conditions?

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. – At this point things have not yet gone off the rails for Martha. She is the reason that Jesus is resting comfortably in her home, and Mary has the ability to sit at Jesus' feet listening to what he said. This would not have happened without Martha's initiative. Now, in this account, we are introduced to Mary and we see the difference between the two siblings. In general, sisters in particular are just different. Older sisters are more like Martha who have things nailed down and organized. Mary, on the other hand, is more like a butterfly. Wherever the winds blow that's where she is going. She is more contemplative and would gravitate toward silence and solitude, prayer and fasting. For her, it is all about a full heart and her desire for Jesus to teach, serve, and encourage her. She wants her heart filled up by Jesus.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS (SESSION WEEKS) AT 8:00AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING
STAFF, LOBBYISTS & LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS (NON-SESSION WEEKS) AT 1:00PM, ROOM 315 MAIN CAPITOL

Pennsylvania

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GIVING JESUS THE BEST

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made - While Mary is concerned with being, Martha's main concern is with doing. She is works based and is active and driven. Martha is all about a full schedule, she can never sit down or stop because there is always something to be done. While Mary is worried about being in the presence of God, Martha is in the kitchen, working, in order to prepare presents for God. She is not enjoying his presence, but is creating presents for him. Even though Martha is a mature believer and a godly woman who is portrayed in the rest of the gospel doing some encouraging things, the weight of this moment gets to her and she snaps. This opportunity that she envisioned fails to meet her expectations. What could have been has become a nightmare, and it will only get worse.

"Lord, don't you care ... Tell her to help me!" - Being overcommitted and distracted by all the details she goes to Jesus and asks. "Lord don't you care?" Ouch! What happened to Martha's heart was that she became resentful. This is the danger of a works-based relationship with the Lord. Outwardly everything looks fine, an individual is worshipping and serving, while inwardly they are seething. You feel self-righteous and judgmental because, from this perspective, it appears that you are the only one who is responsible. No one cares as much as me; it is all up to me, and the unimaginable happens. We start bossing God around. "Don't you care? Jesus, if you would just do what you are told, I would have it all knocked out! I have the plan!" Mary is sitting there singing songs and memorizing verses and we think, hey, that is not going to get the job done. What has happened is that Martha nominates herself for something that Jesus never called her to do. How many Christians are burned out and frustrated because we are doing things that Jesus never called us to do?

We live in a Martha world and work in a Martha environment. And be warned, if we do not get this in hand, it will corrupt our hearts and lead us away from the Lord. It is tempting to never disconnect, whether it is on our days off or late into the night we work, work, and do more work. And what happens? We are troubled, anxious, and distracted. This leads to all kinds of difficulties, from stress and anxiety, to depression and bouts of anger. It is because we have embraced the rules of a fallen, sin-filled Martha world. God has built this world to be a Mary world with Martha moments. The truth is, you will never get everything done that is on your list. And if Jesus is last on your list, you will never get to him. Only by worshipping God before your work can you worship God in your work. What does God need in this world? Does he only need smarter, more talented and capable people who can perceive every wrong option in order that the ills of society may be solved? This is not what the gospel declares. The God of the universe came

to earth to identify with man in his weakness, to suffer, and to die because the issue is not outside man, but inside in the corruption of our hearts. God does not need another savior of the world to plug every hole and meet every need. The job has already been taken. What God desires is for you to spend time with the true Savior of the world, so that by knowing him you can begin to reflect his glory in all he has given you to do.

RECEIVING WHAT IS BEST

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered - Martha blew it, she chose the wrong things and then wants the Lord to get onboard with her plan. We have all been there, but no matter the greatness of our failures we are met by God in grace. Jesus responds with the warmth and tenderness of a father with his little children. In this we see the power of identification. Jesus came to earth to share in our self-inflicted suffering and pain. On the cross, when Jesus suffered for us he was honoring justice. But when Jesus suffered with us he was identifying with the oppressed of the world. All life-changing love entails an exchange, a reversal of places. Like parents for their children, to love them well, you must decrease so that they may increase, you enter into dependency so that eventually they will experience the freedom and independence you have. But here is the Great Reversal. God, in the place of ultimate power, changes places with the marginalized, the poor and oppressed so that they may be lifted up. In this situation, Jesus meets Martha in her failure, weakness, and rebellion to help her seek the good portion, that which will never be lost.

Few things are needed ... Mary has chosen what is better - Jesus is the good portion. Jesus is saying to Martha, there are a lot of good things that can be done, but there is one thing that is most important. Compared to everything else on her list, their combined importance is not as important as getting time with Jesus. Martha is seeking to give Jesus the good portion, the best food and accommodation. But Jesus said that he gave Mary the good portion because she spent time with him and learned from him. This is the danger of works-based righteousness, a salvation based on moral effort. Sin and evil are self-centeredness and pride that lead to broken relationships. But there are two forms of this. One is by being very bad and breaking all the rules, and the other is by being very good and keeping all the rules and becoming self-righteous. With the second one you end up trusting in your own goodness rather than in Jesus for your standing with God, You are trying to save yourself by serving Jesus. When our sense of worth is built upon our spiritual performance, as a type of resume we present to God and the world, any failure to live up to this standard leads to despair. There may be many things we want to do for Jesus, but only one question matters. What would Jesus have us do?
