

The Priority of Worship Luke 10:38-42

I. INTRODUCTION – RR

A. *Coming Home*

1. I enjoy travel; it's fun to just get in the car & drive.
2. When we take a vacation, like visiting new places, seeing new things.
3. But as much fun as it is to travel, I love *coming home!*
 - a. After being gone for a couple weeks, can't *wait* to get home.
 - b. There's just no place like home.
 - c. Everything is so *familiar* & that brings a deep sense of comfort.

B. *Familiar Ground*

1. This passage is *familiar* to many of us. We've read & studied this story many times.
2. Its lesson is a simple one, but no less important for its simplicity.
3. It's likely you'll not hear anything new or revolutionary in the message today.
4. But I invite you to come back with me to this familiar story & refresh yourself anew with it.

II. TEXT

A. *Set The Scene*

1. Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus were good friends of Jesus.
2. We don't know when or how their friendship began, but the gospels make it clear that there was a deep bond of affection between them all
3. They lived in the little village of Bethany which was just over the hill a couple miles from Jerusalem, and Jesus frequently visited them.
4. The way the gospels describe these three, you get the impression Martha was the leader, the most outspoken and assertive.
5. She's the one who invited Jesus home.

B. *Vs.38-49*

³⁸ Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who

also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

1. As was typical for the time, this home likely had 2 rooms;
 - a. A larger main room that the main entrance entered into,
 - b. And a smaller storeroom & kitchen attached to it.
 - c. The main room would have been just large enough for Jesus, the disciples & Martha's little family to gather in.
2. Having left their sandals at the door, they were all sitting on the floor in the main room, resting after a day of travel and ministry in Judea.
3. Parked at Jesus' feet is Mary, Martha's younger sister.
4. Once the disciples finished arranging the mats they were sitting on and loosened their sash-belts a bit, Jesus began reviewing the day's lessons & imparted new gems of valuable wisdom.
5. Mary listened in rapt attention, hanging on every word.

6. Martha however, was taking care of business.
 - a. She'd invited Jesus to her home and it was her duty to provide the hospitality.
 - b. So she busily ran around making sure everyone had a mat.
 - c. She arranged their sandals in neat pairs; men are so sloppy!
 - d. She laid their staffs in a neat stack in the corner.
 - e. Then she hurried into the kitchen to start a meal.
 - f. Even though Jesus was a dear friend, He was an honored guest, so Martha felt the need to make, not a simple meal, but a *feast*.
 - g. So she started preparing, thinking about how much fun it was going to be to give the Lord this meal.
 - h. As she worked, she could picture it, when it was all done and she would finally set the food before He & the disciples.
 - 1) They would all dig into the common bowl.
 - 2) The sounds of delight and satisfaction would rise from a dozen throats.
 - 3) Jesus would look at her across the room and wink.
 - 4) And all the work would instantly be worth it!
 - i. But as the real work of preparing the meal set in, and the image of Jesus' appreciation dimmed, Martha realized something – Where was Mary?

- j. Martha thinks to herself, “Mary’s place is here with me, helping with this meal.”
7. So she pokes her head around the door to see where Mary is & what she’s doing.
 8. There she is sitting right next to Jesus, enjoying His teaching.
 9. I wonder how many times Martha walked to that doorway & tried to catch Mary’s eye.
 - a. I wonder if she knocked a few utensils together, making sounds of busyness, hoping Mary would get a clue & come help her.
 - b. No matter what she did, Mary remained oblivious.
 10. Finally, exasperated, Martha came out of the kitchen, threaded her way over to where Jesus was and rebuked Him.

“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.”
 11. This is curious – why didn’t Martha approach *Mary*?
 - a. Maybe because she knew her sister well enough to know that it wouldn’t have done any good.
 - b. So she approached Jesus, thinking that if **HE** told Mary to help, she would.
 12. But look at her words, **“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?”**
 - a. “Don’t you care about me?”
 - b. Ever wonder about that? Ever ask that question of God?
 - c. Does it ever seem like you’re working hard, doing the right things, busting your tail,
 - d. But it’s unrewarding & no one seems to notice or appreciate you?
 - e. Though there’s lots of people around, you feel terribly alone?
 13. If you feel that way, be careful, because you’re walking in Martha’s footsteps.
 14. Notice what’s happened to Martha.
 - a. She’s gone from a right desire to open her home to Jesus,
 - b. To a concern that her guests are comfortable,
 - c. Then to an admirable desire to serve the Lord,
 - d. Followed by anger & frustration with her sister,
 - e. And now to a doubt about the love of God.
 15. And being in this place of doubt, she settles on the completely wrong solution –

“Therefore tell her to help me.”

16. *Her* solution is for Mary to join her in the kitchen.

17. Jesus has a *different* solution to Martha’s need.

C. Vs. 41-42

41 And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

1. It would be easy to jump to the conclusion that this teaches us devotion is more important than service. It doesn’t.
2. Jesus told Martha she was worried and troubled about *many things*
 - a. Martha wasn’t only concerned with making the meal & playing the part of the good hostess.
 - b. Oh no, she wanted to be at Jesus’ feet as much as Mary, it’s just that she thought that could only come, *AFTER* these other things had been done.
 - c. She knew the proper etiquette for entertaining in the home.
 - 1) She’d read Emily Post & Ms. Manners
 - 2) Welcome your guests, get them settled.
 - 3) Offer them a refreshment
 - 4) Have the meal
 - 5) Then enjoy some polite after dinner conversation.
 - d. Martha was all for the after-dinner talk, but Mary’s lack of assistance was slowing things up,
 - e. And besides, Jesus wasn’t waiting till after dinner for the conversation.
 - f. While Martha was busy *preparing a meal* by herself in the kitchen,
 - g. Jesus was *servicing a feast* in the other room.
3. Martha thought the answer to her need was assistance from her sister.
4. Jesus made it clear that her sister was already fulfilling the *real need* – and that was to *listen to Him*.
5. Listen – Of course the time would come when they would need to eat.
 - a. And according to the custom of the times, it would be Mary & Martha’s task to make the meal; a meal they would make for

Jesus & His men.

- b. But *before* they began to work *for* Jesus, they needed *HIM*.
- c. They needed to renew their fellowship with HIM, *personally*.
- d. Then & only then would their *service* be empowered by the right fuel = love for Him.

6. Look at what Luke says in v. 40 . . .

But Martha was distracted with much serving.

7. All her work was only a distraction because she'd lost sight of the goal, the object of her labor, which was Jesus Himself.
8. If she'd *begun* at Jesus feet, sitting alongside her sister Mary, then her service in the kitchen would have been *undistracted* because it would have been a labor of love.
9. Even if no one helped her, her service would be a delight because it was for Jesus.
10. But as it was, because Martha put the work *before* Jesus, she lost sight of Him, and burned out.

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Priority of Worship

1. This passage does not teach us that service is *less important* than sitting at Jesus' feet.
 2. Rather, it teaches us that sitting at His feet and waiting on Him, taking time to enjoy simple fellowship with Him must come *before* our service.
 3. And work for God that isn't fueled by such fellowship will end up being a distraction, unrewarding, frustrating, and a cause for complaint.
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4. The title of today's message is "The Priority of Worship"
 - a. I don't mean, the Priority *IS* Worship. I mean, what comes *BEFORE* worship.
 - b. And by worship, I mean *all the service* we render to God,
 - 1) Our praise
 - 2) Service
 - 3) Our whole life of walking in holiness before the Lord.
 - d. True worship is much more than when we sing songs at church
 - e. It's the *offering* of our *entire lives* as *living sacrifices*.
 5. But all of that must come out of a humble & quiet sitting at the feet of Jesus, simply enjoying Him.

6. What we do *with* Christ is far more important than what we do *for* Him. ^[1]

B. Spending Time With Him?

1. Where was *joy* that day in the kitchen or the main room?
2. Where was *frustration & disillusionment*?
3. Which is the greater mark of your life this morning: Joy or frustration?
4. Are you spending time at Jesus' feet? [Explain]

^[1] With a nod to Jon Courson