

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

We come this morning to a very familiar story for many of us. We are in the final 6 months of Jesus ministry on earth, and He is traveling from place to place in Judea and Perea with the 12 disciples and the miracles of the first half of the book have been replaced with teaching.

He's in a teaching phase, almost like a crash course for the 12 apostles. Before, every time we saw Him it was about miracles and healings and the large crowd that pressed in on Him in the region of the galilee.

Now the concentration is on teaching. We entered that phase in Luke 9:51 where it says *that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem*. We'll see 10 chapters of Jesus teaching all the way to Luke 19 where He enters Jerusalem for the final time, seated on a donkey as the people place palm fronds in his path. The triumphal entry.

And Luke selects this little story as a transition into this next phase. The 70 have gone out to all of the villages and towns that Jesus will visit and prepared them, and have returned with joy. And Luke uses this colorful little story of an event that took place to use Jesus own words to tell us, there's nothing more important than what we're going to see in the next 10 chapters.

There is nothing more important than the telling forth, the preaching, teaching, expounding, expositing and studying the revelation of God.

In this lost, sinful, dark world, the revelation of God, the Logos, the words

that come from God are what brings salvation and life. God chose to reveal Himself with words. Communication of ideas. Information about God and who He is and what His attributes are that is hidden, impossible to know, unless He reveals Himself to us. Words and ideas about God, and about our lost sinful state.

Listen to Psalm 19 speak of all of the benefits of God's logos, God's words;

*7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*

*8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

*9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.*

*10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.*

*11 Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.*

These are the direct effects of God's Words for His people.

perfect, restoring the soul; sure, making wise the simple.

right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes.

clean, enduring forever; true; they are righteous altogether.

more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned;

In keeping them there is great reward.

Jesus believes Psalm 19. Jesus believes in the power associated with hearing and understanding and doing God's words, God's truth. He is exhibit A. And we're going to enjoy 10 chapters of Jesus expounding and teaching and

preaching God's word.

Any word that comes out of the mouth of Jesus; Is God's Word. He is the living logos, the Word, the communicator from God to us.

The writer of the book of Hebrews puts it this way;

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. Hebrews 1:1-3a

Jesus is the living walking speaking picture of the Radiant Glory of God.

And the Holy Spirit through Luke picks the most simple and colorful story imaginable to begin this section of teaching.

Mary and Martha show up here and again a couple of times in John's gospel. They almost always are mentioned together. They were sisters and their brother was Lazarus who Jesus raised from the dead. We'll look at several of those moments this morning as we try to get to know them both as best we can from their brief appearances.

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

There is very much here that we don't know. Mary and Martha were believers with their brother, but how had that happened. Was it from the 2 missionaries from the 70 that had been out preaching in all the villages?

Had they gone with all of the Jews down to the Jordan river to hear John the baptist, and believed in Jesus there? News from Galilee, all of the miracles, we don't know.

We do know, from John's gospel that the certain village, unnamed by Luke, is

Bethany which is just a couple mile walk from Jerusalem. It's just around the other side of the mount of Olives. Close proximity to Jerusalem.

What's telling though, and you can make of this whatever you will, Luke says it was Martha's house. She's definitely the type A personality person in charge. Out at work we would call her "large and in charge". That's just who she is.

But it's funny that the house belongs to Martha, clearly, but when John introduces the sisters, he mentions Bethany, the *village of Mary*. Martha may rule the house, but the village is Mary's. Like I say, make of that what you will. Martha has a house, Mary has a village.

I'm going to pick on Martha a little bit this morning. Probably more than she deserves. I'm sure she was a dear christian lady with a good helping of the problems we all struggle with. So bear with me as I try to show a contrast between 2 categories of christians.

Again, we hope we're not reading too much into between the lines, but we can almost picture Martha insisting the Jesus must stay at her home whenever He gets to Bethany. Almost like a point of status. Of course, Jesus will be staying in our home.

That's all good. Hospitality was very important in that culture. Inn's were usually suspect places with little safety and comfort. And Jesus has no home, no place to lie His head, so it's wonderful that people who love Him desire for Him to stay with them.

So this is no small thing. This hospitality and comfort of a home. Perhaps some of the disciples traveling with Jesus will also enjoy that hospitality. There is preparation and work involved in comfort, right.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet.

Sisters! There is synergy just leaping from the word. Sisters always equal more than whatever the number is. I enjoy that as the dad of 3 sisters. One of them is fun, but two is always more than double and 3 is always even more than that.

Martha had a sister who was Mary.

Anyone remember the Secret Life of Walter Mitty. I'm really dating myself. Actually the original version is much older than me. Much much older. It was made in 1947 and Danny Kaye is this little hen-pecked milk toast character who is always dreaming of who he really wants to be. The sea captain. The riverboat gambler. The brilliant physician. And on and on.

I had a Walter Mitty moment this week as I was thinking about what to say about this passage of scripture. I thought, if I ever had to speak to a room full of muslims, men and women, this would be an eye-opening section of scripture to teach.

They would be shocked to find that the Bible elevates women. Here is a story about two women. One is a householder. A person of authority that can provide for the needs of others. The house is hers, and she extends that comfort to others. Just the fact that women are in a story and in it in prominence would shock muslims.

But it gets better. Martha has a sister, and that sister is . . . oh, this is totally scandalous . . . Mary, the sister of Martha is seated at the feet of Jesus listening to Him teach. Scandalous. A women sitting with men. Learning with men. Listening to a great teacher. A student with the men.

You have no idea how shocking and scandalous that is. That's why I Walter Mitty'd the muslims into the scene. They would be scandalized. Their culture is not so far removed from this jewish culture where men sit under a teacher and learn, while women serve, unseen.

It's all pretty normal to us western culture folk. We aren't scandalized that

Mary is sitting like a disciple, a learner, at a great teacher's feet. There's a reason for that. The judeo christian writings, the new and old testament of the Holy Bible elevates women. Honors women.

Our book elevates women to equal but different status with men. We are complimentarians here. Go home and look that up. Complimentarian means that women are not less than men, but they have different roles to play in the church and the home than the men do. But when it comes to their intelligence, capabilities, acceptance and love and relationship with Jesus, 100% equals.

And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet.

Seated at His feet. A couple more generalizations. Every time we meet Mary, she's at Jesus feet.

Here she sits and listens to the Word of God; at Jesus feet. Later, in the story of Lazarus death, she comes weeping, to His feet. And finally in John chapter 12 she pours out the expensive perfume as a testimonial of His coming death, at His feet and wipes them with her hair. Every time we see Mary she is always in the position of worshipful submission to her Lord.

She always is the humble servant, always in the position of worship, at His feet each time we see her.

Martha on the other hand is always taking Jesus to the woodshed. Every time we see her, it's all about her and what He needs to do to make her life how she see's fit.

40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations;

The original manuscripts didn't have the verse numbers. In the original we don't have the number 40 to interrupt what Luke is saying here.

Mary who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. But

Martha was distracted with all her preparations;

Jesus comes to your house. What's your priority? What do you do. 2 ladies, 2 sisters, and they have different priorities. Our motives drive our priorities, right. So Martha has a priority to serve her guests. She's distracted because she has a higher priority to clean and prepare and do the work necessary for her guests to have the most comfort.

Mary, on the other hand, is mesmerized by listening to the Word of God. Her priority is to hear God's word. Above all else, she has a hunger to hear the word of God spoken and taught. Jesus is in her house and she stops doing whatever it was she was doing and is sitting at His feet, listening to Him teach, or preach. Nothing's more important than that.

Martha's multi-tasking, and her work load just doubled. The roast is starting to burn in the oven and the table hasn't been set, and a thousand other things aren't getting done because she's only got two hands and her sister is awol.

and she came up to Him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."

That's a pretty bold indictment. Walk right up to the creator of the universes who holds together the atoms and sovereignly rules over your next breath and tell Him he obviously doesn't care about your problems.

You see her sitting there. Too big for her own britches, sitting with the men like she's a regular disciple. Why would you allow that?? Can't you see my work load doubled and I can't get what is necessary done? This is your fault Jesus. Make her get to work.

Now ususally when some group goes to work on this passage they do a personality inquiry at this point and talk at length about your type A people and B and C and D and blah blah blah. You've got your Martha type server gifted people, and your Mary type worshipful navel gazer types and everything in between. Ever take those tests.

We just need to explain to Martha that she's type A and Mary's type C or D and you need to give her some space or use psychological trickery to guilt her into working for type A and it'll all work out.

I want to go a little deeper and suggest that before us we have two types of christians. Especially in our modern American evangelicalism.

I already hinted at the Martha type a little. She's spanking Jesus both times we see her, because it's all about her and it's Jesus job to make her happy. The purpose of Jesus is to do stuff for Martha so Martha can be happy.

Don't you care about me Jesus. I'm overworked and unhappy and it's your job to fix it. Make my sister get to work. I'd like to enjoy the day too. But the roast is burning and the baby has a dirty diaper and the twins are coloring on the walls and the table isn't set and the plumbing is backed up, and it's your fault. Don't you care about my happiness Jesus?? Get with it Jesus.

I'm embellishing and overstating the case, but we have christians like this who's only purpose for Jesus is to fix stuff for them so they can be happy.

It's the same thing when Lazarus dies. She hears that Jesus is coming down the road and she storms out there to give Him a piece of her mind. We sent for help. You didn't come. If you'd have paid any attention to me and done what I wanted, my brother would be alive. He's dead. I'm sad. It's your fault, Jesus.

Everything about her relationship to Jesus is about her and her well being and her happiness. Do we have some christians like that today? I guess my question is; Are there any christians in American evangelicalism that aren't like that.

Mary on the other hand, submits to Jesus as though He were sovereign God or something. She sits at His feet, listening, worshipping. When her brother dies and her sister is done taking Jesus out to the wood shed, she goes to Jesus and

throws herself at His feet and just weeps. She just accepts her brothers death as God's sovereign plan. She's sad at the loss.

And Jesus is moved to weeping by who? Mary, not Martha. The shortest verse in the Bible that we've all got memorized. Jesus wept. He was moved to weeping by this giant saint, Mary. Martha is a noisy saint. Mary is a giant.

So, back to our story. Martha stomps in and demands that if Jesus cared 2 cents about her, He'd have seen and understood the situation He has put her in by allowing her sister to be a slacker. If you care for me, make her get to work, please.

Do you pray like that. Lord, if you love me at all, can you please modify my other person who lives here behaviour. If you care about me, can you do that. You need to do this so I can be happy.

I think Janis Joplin was making a little bit of fun of us, even in 1971 when she wrote; "Mercedes Benz"

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz ?
My friends all drive Porsches, I must make amends.
Worked hard all my lifetime, no help from my friends,
So Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz ?

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a color TV ?
Dialing For Dollars is trying to find me.
I wait for delivery each day until three,
So oh Lord, won't you buy me a color TV ?

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the town ?
I'm counting on you, Lord, please don't let me down.
Prove that you love me and buy the next round,
Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the town ?

That was 40 years ago. It's worse now. More gimmicks to get Jesus to give

you what you want. Jesus is the genie in the bottle. It's all about you getting something.

I'm being pretty hard on Martha. Probably harder than she really deserves. In John 11, the account of Lazarus death, both women say exactly the same thing. Jesus is so gracious. He doesn't get angry at her false accusation. Jesus takes a lot of abuse from us. So much abuse. And He's always gracious. Gracious enough sometimes, to say no.

41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha,

Whenever Jesus doubles up on a name, like here, it's for extra emphasis. When Peter's about to blow it, bragging about how he'd never leave the Lord's side, even unto death; Jesus says, Simon, Simon. He uses his old name because he's acting like his old self. Simon, Simon.

And just before Jerusalem, the seat of the false religion of the jews, murders Him, He says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . .

I think when He says your name twice, it's time to stop dead in your tracks and listen. Every time He did that, it was important. *Martha, Martha . . .*

you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only a few things are necessary, really only one

Jesus says; let me help you prioritize. You're all worked up about stuff. Things. Material problems. Work to accomplish. Whatever. We could all fill in the blanks.

Then Jesus says, only a few things matter. Really, only one thing matters. One thing is more important than anything else. One thing is worth pouring yourself into more than anything else. One thing to get worked up about. One ultimate priority.

This life is 5 minutes long. Everything Martha is struggling to accomplish,

even though it's service, for the comfort of Jesus in her home, it's all going to perish. It's here for a moment and then gone. She's working hard for His comfort, but that only lasts a moment, and it vanishes.

Pam used to have a little sign in the dining room that said, Bed and Breakfast. You make both. I always thought there was wisdom in that. All of this goes up in smoke. My wood cameras and cars are going to be BTU's. Nothing we're struggling to accomplish here is going to make it through the fire. With one exception;

you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only a few things are necessary, really only one Are you dying to know what the ONE thing is?

for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Most of the commentators I read said the good part, the top priority in life, is listening to the word of God. Hearing the word of God. That's what Luke said Mary was doing. She was listening. Hearing the Words of God.

All of those things we spoke of from Psalm 19 were happening to Mary because she was taking in the Word of God.

perfect, restoring the soul; sure, making wise the simple.
right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes.
clean, enduring forever; true; they are righteous altogether.
more desirable than gold Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the
honeycomb. Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned;

In keeping them there is great reward.

Her soul was being restored. She was becoming wise. Her heart was rejoicing in the truth. She was becoming clean and righteous as her soul was being restored. She discovered something worth more than gold, something sweeter than the drippings from the honeycomb. She was warned of evil and rewarded by good. All of those effects are caused by hearing and doing God's Holy Word.

But I would stick my neck out and say the one thing, it's all of that, but I think there's something else here. What Mary chose is the most important priority in any of our lives. Spending time with Jesus. Spending time with Jesus. That's what Mary chose that Martha missed out on.

We get so caught up in our busy lives, we put Jesus on a shelf and we're just like Martha, doing a whole lot of good things, serving serving serving, but we're too busy with everything to just sit quietly and listen to Jesus. Just spend time with Him.

In a closet, by yourself, with everything else turned off. Opening the word and just reading and listening and praying as the thoughts come. Being prepared on the Lord's day to really dig in and hear what God will say to you as we work through these passages.

Mary was a giant. A huge saint. She sat at the Lord's feet and listened and worshipped and was changed. Then when her brother perished and Jesus didn't come, she's back at the Lord's feet. Weeping. Sorrowful, but different than Martha. She's open to whatever Sovereign God has planned. Even her brother's death in Jesus absence.

She anoints the Lord's feet with perfume worth a years wages because she understands what no one else has caught on to yet. He is going to die for her.

And then we see her one last time; On resurrection morning, Jesus appears to Mary first. Before the apostles, she sees the risen Lord before anyone else. Mary is a giant of a saint. Why?

Because she made spending time with Jesus her priority. She made listening to the Word of God her priority.

God's word, and the effects it has on God's people is what transcends this world and continues into the next one.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians who are more like us than most of the others these words; 1Cor. 3:11 - 15

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

Martha was busy with wood, hay, stubble. Mary was adding gold, silver, and precious stones to her collection to give away later. She chose the better and the lasting thing. Time with Jesus in His Words.