

Sitting Before Serving

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Good evening everyone. Before we go ahead and start, as always, let's go to the Lord in prayer for this evening's lesson. Father, we thank you for another wonderful day. Thank you for bringing us here safely. I pray Lord that our hearts would be prepared for the message this evening. God give me boldness and clarity by your Holy Spirit. And I pray, Father, that you would do the same with those here in attendance. That your Holy Spirit will bring about the conviction where it's needed as well as comfort where is also needed to those that are here, Father. So bless this opportunity to listen from you from your word. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

This evening we're going to be touching verses of scripture that we're all too familiar with and yet there are times when you can read something and over and over again and keep gleaning new truths new diamonds in the rough as it were. And that's the case with what we're going to read tonight from Luke chapter 38-42. So, if you will go ahead and turn to Luke 10 beginning in verse 38 through 42 and the sermon of tonight, the title is sitting before serving. Sitting before serving and it is a I hope that it will bring about towards the end of the sermon again just a reminder of how important it is to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus namely by being filled by the word of God in your life before you go and do any serving whether it's ministry or ministering to your spouses or your children that you come from a heart and mind that's filled by the word of God and that is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. So this tonight I want to invite you to examine the life of Jesus Christ here as we've been going through this series on discipleship. We're now at the place where it's no longer the disciples entering into the homes. It is the Lord Jesus Christ at this time entering into the home and namely the home of Martha. We're going to see that in this passage. We have been seeing him on the mountain. We have been seeing him in temple courts. But now we see him in a home. And this is a simple home in a small village. And it's the home of two sisters. I already mentioned one of the names, Martha, but also the sister Mary. And we're going to see how they both respond to him. And you'll see as you're aware, if you've read the story, you see two very different ways of responding to the Lord Jesus. We get a rare glimpse here in these passages where the savior's private life shows him in a most domestic setting which is namely in a home and how in a setting like a home where there's hospitality where he speaks to Martha and Mary in ways that can cause one to reflect act upon minor differences, the major and minor differences in how we are to think about Jesus, how we are supposed to respond to Jesus. And we're going to see those major and minor matters.

Jesus reveals something essential not about Martha or Mary sort to speak, but actually about himself more. I want you to sense that as we go into the passage. So, it's not mainly about Martha Mary. It's more about the Lord Jesus Christ and namely what he gives and what he provides and then what he accomplishes. Okay? This is not a story about what we do for God. Main takeaway, not what we do for God, but this is a story about what God does for us. So, at

this time, if you will go ahead and stand out of respect of God's word, and I'll go ahead and read verses 38-42, and just go ahead and follow along with me, verses 38-42.

Now, it came to pass as they went that he entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her. May God bless the reading of the word of God. You may be seated.

We're going to look at verses 38 and 39 at this portion of the text and we're going to look at the context. Jesus enters a home on his way to the cross. That is again the big picture. He is going to the cross and his Jesus and his disciples are traveling with that deliberate purpose towards Jerusalem. He's about two miles away. He's in Bethany at this time. Just two miles away from Jerusalem and he stops at the house of Martha and Mary. So this is not accidental. Jesus is not simply meandering at this stage of his purpose towards Jerusalem. He is on his way to the cross and on his way he accomplishes one thing on this journey and that is he enters a certain home where grace is found in his message and that we see this is God actually drawing near to the life of Martha and Mary and Martha didn't bring Jesus into her home by her own effort. Rather, God brought Jesus into her home by his mercy. And we're going to see that here.

So, if you look at verses 38-39, you see that he entered a certain village. He was going to a certain village and he was looking for a certain woman named Martha. And Martha received him into her house. Now, that's a good start, right? Martha received him into her house. There was possibly many homes that he might have gone to that didn't open their house to them. We see that with the disciples, right, earlier in the text where they would go into the city and they will wipe their feet and go some place else. But we see already the first initial response of Martha is good. Received him into her house. And then verse 39, she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. So picture this. Jesus is coming in and immediately Mary goes towards Jesus and sits right in front of Jesus' feet and hears his word. Okay. So where did Martha go? Right? Where is Martha in these two verses? Well, we're going to see that in verse 40. So, that's the picture the context.

Now, we're going to see in verse 40, Martha is distracted by many things, right? You know, they both had an opportunity to go to Jesus. There was nothing nothing separating them from doing the same thing. But we see here in verse 40, she's distracted by many things. So we see in verse 40, Martha was what? Cumbered about much serving. This word cumbered literally means to be preoccupied, pulled into various directions by many concerns. Okay? So many that's the key thing here. Many various directions, many concerns. Okay. When you think about that, right? What kind of is where your heart is? Do you feel content or do you feel a word that I will use distracted? Right? Mary was focused. Martha was distracted. And I said that earlier what Martha's problem was. She was distracted by many things.

So Martha's problem was not her service primarily. Martha's problem was actually not even her hospitality. Martha's problem was not her desire to honor Jesus. Even her problem was

distraction. You see, we don't find here anywhere Jesus actually talking about anything inherently wrong with serving. We're going to see that it only becomes an issue when it overshadows or distracts from our focus on the Lord. That's the key here. See, Martha's eyes were focused on the tasks and Martha's eyes was focused on the Lord. You see that? And we also see Martha's hands were what? Full of things. And Martha or Mary's heart was rather full. So hands full. What's more important? Hands full or hearts full. So we see that here in this part of the text she was much serving. You see that much serving means like she had a lot of things going on with her hands, but there was something missing. We're going to see that. See Martha was trying to give Jesus something. Look at me. Much serving Lord. Look at me. Look at focus on me. Focus on me. Don't focus. Focus on me. But Mary was receiving everything from Jesus. Let me repeat that. Martha was trying to give Jesus something. Mary was receiving everything from Jesus. Big difference, isn't there? And Jesus gently, gently says this, Martha. Martha. Okay, I mentioned this again and again. when things are repeated, it means it's very important. Pay attention, Martha. And he does it in a gentle way. We see that because this there's three, as it were, it's almost like putting three dots in front of the comma of the second one. It's like a pause. And the repetition is tenderness, compassion, the voice of the shepherd calling as it were a wandering sheep back to himself.

You see, because we know this from John 11:5, it says this, Jesus loved Martha. It came from a loving heart towards Martha. It was not a rebuke at all. And so we're going to see in verse 39 going back to it, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and then here it is and heard his word. Heard his word. See, Mary valued, if you recall in our previous lesson on discipleship, he or she's rather Mary valued as it were the Samaritan's care for her. You remember the story about the Samaritan, how it's actually a picture of Christ binding binding up the wounds, right? Um repaying for her. I'm just kind of all over the place, but repaying for her, right? Um giving her um carrying her, right? She couldn't carry herself or himself, the person that was on the ground. So it it was a m it was rather Mary at a posture of I need to receive from you. I can't do anything. This the same idea here. And she valued um the shepherd's care, the Samaritan's care for her. And as Mary's listening to him while sitting at his feet, she came to know him and to know him as he is. See, Mary was not about performing. That was not her initial reaction, right? uh Mary's reaction was not um proving anything to her by much serving, but rather Mary's initial response is receiving. So, it's a really good heart check, right? Um if you're ever doing anything as far as serving goes, do you go immediately to I need to serve, I need to serve, I need to serve, or do you go with the posture, I need to receive, receive, receive. That that's the whole kind of uh one of the main thrust of this this the story is what is your initial response because it's very telling what your initial response is of how your li uh your serving is going to be carried out at the end. And so, um, Jesus tenderly says, "Be careful. Be careful." Not for just Martha, but for all of us when we're getting to a place where we're doing so many things, namely in serving in church, which is good. There's nothing wrong. Like I said, he doesn't correct her on the serving. It's just her posture. He knew that she was in a bad place in serving. And namely, it was her immediately going to serving rather than first sitting with Jesus. You see, notice Jesus went to um sit first somewhere else, not at the table, but somewhere else. And Martha goes to the table and and Mary goes to sit with Jesus. So, we we got to go where Jesus goes. Amen. Not not where we want to go in serving or the table illustration as it were.

So Mary again is not in a place of uh um performing but rather receiving first. And the essence of Christianity is that it is about receiving and you know those that please God most is those who take inmost from Jesus. Let me repeat that. The essence of Christianity is that it is about receiving and those please God most who take inmost. So Jesus, you know, God is all about wanting us to receive from him primarily. It's not so much about giving him first. And so we can learn all also about that in this in this lesson. It's the heart of the gospel. What is it? Right? Why were we yet sinners? Christ died for us. He he did the thing that we needed. Um, and so that that's the priority. Remember, God is a God of order, as I mentioned in a previous sermon. Um, receiving is a priority rather than giving. Um, and so we do not come to God with our hands full. We come with our hands empty. We do not come to God with our accomplishments. We come with our need. We do not come to God with our service. We come to God to receive his grace. Receiving his word is a means of grace, isn't it? And Mary understood this. Martha did not yet. Not yet. And then now we go to verse 42. Verse 42. Jesus says, "One thing is needful. What God provides, not what we do." That's for this part of the text. Mary demonstrated the essential priority in her life is that an attitude of worship and contemplation or meditation characterized by listening primarily before doing. You see a lot of times we can be so busy about doing things and think that that's the good thing. But what is best is he wants us to listen. Um, even when you're praying, are you primarily listening to him or are you just simply asking a bunch of requests and not willing to pause and let him speak to you? Let him speak to you in your prayers. Again, receiving, listening. See that posture? Receiving, listening. Rather than saying and giving, he wants us to receive and listen. That's the heart that's receptive to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so Jesus says this one thing and he's not saying one thing our service, one thing our performance, one thing our effort, one thing our ministry, one thing how productive I am, but the one thing is Jesus himself and listening to him and receiving what he has for us which is best. Possessing God in Christ provides the single essential element, the one thing needful for genuine living, spiritual development, spiritual maturity in Christ, and effective service. Key effective service, not just any kind of service, but effective service and lasting joy. Do you find joy in the Lord? Not in the ministry, but joy in the Lord. That's also very important. See the good part Mary chose is not something she produced. It is something God gave. So Jesus says which shall not be taken away from her. I just love that. This part will not be taken away. Everything we do can be taken away. Can it everything we build up can be taken away. Everything we accomplish can be taken away. But what God gives cannot be taken away. Gospel does that for us. He gives his life for us and it cannot be taken away. Once done for all, it is finished. And so the story is not al about two sisters. It is about two ways of relating to God. Relating to God again. Jesus is there and two different ways of relating to him. Martha represents effort. If you can sum it up, Martha represents effort. But you see, our effort cannot save us. Effort cannot justify us. Effort cannot sanctify us. Effort cannot produce peace. Mary represents grace. Grace saves us. Grace sanctifies us. Grace produces peace. And grace gives us rest. Mary focused everything she had on one point. It's Christ. That's the point. This is the gospel. Christ is the point. We need him. We need everything from him ultimately to live this life and of course to spend eternity with him. That is what cannot be taken away. Jesus himself. Our work will be one day gone, be temporary. Our service will be one day done. And all of our performance will one day conclude. But one thing that will not be ever taken away or removed or be temporary is Christ. Is Christ for all eternity.

So what does God do then in this passage? What does he want us to know even more? There's so much more. So let's continue to highlight what God does in this um in these verses because the

passage is full of God moving of God's divine action in our lives. Number one, God brings Jesus into the home. Grace initiates. Number two, God speaks his word. Grace reveals. Third, God draws Mary to his feet. Grace invites. Fourth, God defends Mary. Grace protects. See, Mary entrusts her situation to the judge, the righteous judge, the Lord Jesus, who then acts as her advocate. Remember, it was Jesus that spoke to Martha. Mara didn't Martha or Mary didn't speak to Martha. Jesus spoke on her behalf. the perfect judge who knows exactly what to say at the right moment. We have an advocate. We have an advocate. And so number five, God gives the good part. Grace provides. Always provides for us. He always does. Never ends. Grace upon grace. As John says, grace upon grace. Number six, God ensures it cannot be taken away. Grace secures. That's beautiful, isn't it? He secures us. Cannot be taken away. He'll never leave us nor forsake us. Another part of the passage of scripture. See, this is not a story about what again we do for God. This is a story about what God does for us. I just share with you all the graces that he gives to us.

So, here are some application for us tonight. What does this mean for us tonight? God calls us to sit before he calls us to serve. God calls us to sit before he calls us to serve. Sitting at the feet of the Lord should proceed and produce serving him. Let me let me put it this way. When you're at a place of sitting before serving, you'll be oriented Jesus and then your service will be towards him. But if you come from a place where you serve first, you're going to serve man first and you're not going to serve the Lord Jesus. See, it's all about orientation. I must sit with the Lord Jesus and then from out of that I serve the Lord. But our flesh would always gravitate towards service, doesn't it? And what is it? Serving God. So orientation is key in looking at this passage. How we start matters most. Matters most. And that's why Jesus said this one thing that she's doing is the one thing needful. So service without sitting by the way becomes anxious. Are you anxious when you're serving? Are you critical about people? Are are you joyless in your service? Are you distracted? So many things I got to take care of. I got to take care of. Isn't that how we always say things? I take all of this. But if your focus is on the Lord, he's you're listening from him. He's giving you um you're receiving for him and you're being filled up in your service, not depleted from your service. Does that make sense? See, when you serve at the posture of serving Jesus, you're actually being filled. But when you're serving man, you're depleted because you have nothing to receive. You have nothing to receive. So again, extremely extremely important for us to know.

See, when God fills us first, service becomes worship. We can either worship God or worship man. That's another way to think about it. That would change the way you you sit down, don't you? That that would change the way you orient yourself before you go and serve. This is how serious this is. Many people miss this point. I don't want any of us to think that ministry is more important than sitting with the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're ever in that place, please do a heart check. There's something wrong there. And I rather you stop from doing your ministry and just sit with the Lord Jesus Christ. Ministry will take care of itself with the right people, but having a wrong person doing ministry can be disastrous. And as a pastor, I want to make sure you're in a good place because there'll be plenty of ministries to do. I have plenty of things that I like for people to do. I wouldn't want you to do it in the wrong spirit. I rather you just slow down, reorient yourself, and then go back into it. And I'll be and when I see that joy when I see that not critical spirit when I see that you're being filled and you're maturing in your walk with the Lord Jesus Christ and I go yeah that's thank praise God glory be to God that's that's that for a pastor is

the most blessed thing when we're all oriented for this purpose God calls us to simplify our lives around one thing.

So another thing, where are you right now with life? Are you just cumbersome? So many things, so many concerns, filled with more anxiety than you can think about of all the things that are going in your life. Um are you just running on empty? Because God never called you to be anxious, right? Be anxious for nothing. As one passage of scripture says, he wants us to be living a life focused around one thing and that one thing is the most important thing is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the essential. It's a non-negotiable in your life is spending time with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, when you do that, Jesus will give you the wisdom to discard what is unimportant. you prioritize him, he will take care of prioritizing everything else. Wouldn't you want that instead of you trying to figure it out? Because guess what? Our party will always when we do it ourselves is always wrong. Just just know that. Know that about yourself. You'll never reach a place of spiritual maturity where I got this, I can take care of it. When you're there, probably before the fall, it's always going back to the one thing needful. And he'll take care of prioritizing your life. I've seen it in my life. God of God of order. I'm a Christian first, then I am a husband, then I'm a father, then I'm a pastor. I mix those all those orders around. It's my flesh. And I acknowledge it and I turn back to the Lord. That's what it is. He'll take care of removing the unimportant, the inefficient, again, the incorrect things in your life when you make him the one thing again. And that's what's going to ultimately remain is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, God calls us to receive receive more than we give. Are you receiving more than giving? Better way of putting it. Are you receiving more than giving? Because the Christian life is not about what we bring to God. It is about what God brings to us in Christ. Can you in your own life exalt Christ more or exalt your problems more? That's a good way of testing it. Are you exalting more of Christ in your life or exalting more of your problems more? It's a good test. I'm going to conclude here the good part that cannot be taken away. Just really want to focus in on that. See, Mary chose the good part, but that but she did not produce it. She did not produce it. God gave it to her. See, Jesus says which shall not be taken away from her again. Everything else in life can be taken away. Our health, our wealth, our relationships on this earth, opportunities, ministries, abilities, those are all can be taken away just like that. Some people have experienced that. Um, just don't count on those things. But what God gives us in Christ cannot be taken away. That's for sure. I can tell you that with confidence. So today, tonight, God calls us not to strive, but to sit primarily, not to perform, but to receive primarily, not to be distracted by many things, but to be devoted to one thing, spending time with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the one thing that will not be taken away. So question assess how much time do you spend sitting with Jesus in his word with the time you spend on all other things. Do a healthy assessment of yourself. You know I used to journal um my early life as a Christian and I would count everything. This is what I'm doing. This is what I'm doing. This is how much time I'm spending on it. And boy, when you start doing that, it it just clicks. like, "Yeah, I'm not spending enough time." And then hopefully as you pray and you ask God, God, help me to do this the way you want to do it, not my way. Suddenly, you thought that you had you didn't have enough time. Suddenly, you have all this time to spend time with the Lord Jesus Christ. So, if you're in a place where like I don't have time for this, that's a bad place to be. You always have time to sit with Jesus. You always do. Never ever forget that. So the health of Calvary Road Baptist Church will never be measured by how much we do. I don't want us to ever say that out of our lips, but by how much and how

deeply we sit together under the word of Christ. I would love for that. And so everything that we do, my my philosophy and ministry, um the importance of membership of the local church, our corporate life, our our culture here in this church should reflect this that God forms us before he sends us. God feeds us before he uses us. God speaks before we serve. We are not a Marthur church running on human effort. We are a merry church resting on divine grace. This body will this local body will then look the way it's supposed to as Christ as the head and us as the body of Christ and the activities that come out from this local body will be from generated by the spirit of God working through the word of God as you s sit at the feet of Jesus together. May this be so. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the story that all of us are very familiar with, but even I, Lord, I got so much more this time. And then, Father, I still have a lot more to grow. And certainly, I believe my brothers and sisters feel the same way. God, help us to reflect on a very simple lesson that Jesus taught us. that this one thing, one thing needful will never be taken away. And that's you, Lord Jesus. We thank you, Father, that um we didn't do anything to deserve being saved and washed from our sins. It was the Lord Jesus Christ that while we're yet sinners, Christ died for us. that you father loved us um and you gave your only begotten son again a posture of us receiving. Thank you for all your blessings Lord. Thank you for giving us the clarity that we need so that we can order our life according to the way that would please you and glorify you and exalt Christ not only in our personal life but as also as a corporate body as the local church. Help us God to constantly remind ourselves the importance of orientation to sit before we serve. I pray that you would bless the descent in Jesus name. Amen.