

## **Mary and Martha: Unlikely Heroes**

### **Mother's Day Video Intro:**

Our generation is quick to call people heroes. We have sports heroes, superheroes, the list goes on. But so many of you women and moms out there are the real heroes and I salute you. You are an amazing group of people. And you've overcome much.

Societies over the centuries have generally been unkind and unjust toward women in so many different ways.

When I see all that my wife sacrifices for our children I am humbled. Countless sleepless nights, changing of plans, sacrificing social activities...

So on behalf of all the women and saints who went before you, and to all of you women today, I honor you. Men, do we appreciate the women here with us today?

ASK all the men/boys to stand and clap for the women as a sign of honoring/respecting them.

Being Mother's day, I know that today is a really difficult day for many of you. Maybe you're a mother who has lost a child, and maybe you're a woman who cannot biologically have children. And so we stand with you today, and we honor you as well. We are family, and since we are family we share each other's burdens.

PRAYER for women (moms, singles, unable to have children, lost children)

### **Sermon Series intro:**

If you have your Bibles you can turn to Luke 10.

We're continuing our sermon series on Unlikely Heroes. These are people in the scriptures who are flawed but we can learn something from their lives and see how God used them through their weaknesses.

Today we're going to be spending some time looking at two women who approached Jesus very differently. Mary and Martha.

Who are Mary and Martha? They're sisters, and their brother you may have heard of. Lazarus, who Jesus raised from the dead. The scriptures also tell us that Jesus loved these three very much, and had compassion on them. He was close friends of theirs.

And why are they heroes? Let's read the text and we'll come back to that question in a bit:

**Luke 10:38-42** <sup>38</sup> As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> 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!"

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

Lets digest the setting for a minute: Martha is probably the oldest, because the text indicates that she owns the home. She opened her home to Jesus to come in and relax.

In Mary and Martha we see two distinct personality types. Martha is the doer. She gets her hands dirty. She digs in. Mary is the soaker. She is probably more laid back.

Looking at my own kids, some of them are really good about taking initiative and doing their chores. Others, when we ask them to dust their rooms because it's been a while, have to put on a hazmat suit so they don't die from the dust particles that have by now surely turned radioactive.

When two people like this live together things can get testy, as we see here. Martha resented Mary for not working. It's *possible* that Mary was a little lazy. As siblings often are, they have distinct personalities that sometimes clash.

That's the church. The church is made up of incompatible people supernaturally glued together.

So whether you're wired to be a doer or a soaker....

## 1) Sometimes the best posture we can take is simply sitting at the feet of Jesus.

So here we see Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, soaking in every word he had to say. In the time of Jesus Jews did not attend schools to learn. They applied to rabbis to teach them directly.

Now I am sure many of you mothers (and fathers) are hard workers. And I know many of you struggle with finding time to spend with God in between all the other things that HAVE to be done around the house and with your jobs.

So why is Mary a hero here? When I think of heroes I often think of superheroes. And superheroes have super powers. Superman can fly and he's super strong. Spider-Man can climb walls. Aquaman can talk to fish. Mary...she can sit. And listen. And focus on Jesus.

The ability to drown everything else out with laser-focused attention on Jesus is a super power in this day and age. And Mary did it well.

I want to be very clear, Martha wasn't sinning by doing work. The work she was doing was good and probably necessary.

But when Jesus said, "[Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.](#)" he made one thing very clear....

**Timing is everything!** It wasn't WHAT Matha was doing, it was WHEN she was doing it.

God has blessings in store for us if we take the better way. This is no easy task, and this is not to vilify Martha for doing what was mostly likely really important, necessary work. Sometimes the work HAS to be done. And Martha's the one plowing through the work, and that is all to her credit. But there was something about THIS specific time that Jesus said, "Mary has chosen something better." Maybe the next day, it would have been better to be doing the work that Martha was doing.

*Story of Convention where we moved were moved from a seat that had the winning ticket. We missed out on the blessing.*

Or maybe you go to kiss your wife just as she burps. Timing is everything. The kiss was a good idea. The kiss was good. The timing wasn't.

Joshua Harris said, "The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing."

The work often needs to be done, but sometimes we need to put down the broom, put down the iPhone, turn the lawnmower off, because a precious moment has presented itself.

Spending time with my kids even when I have tasks that need to be done....it's so easy to miss those precious moments.

Sometimes we have to be proactive and create space in our schedule to be with Jesus.

Carpe Diem! Seize the day! Seize each moment when Jesus shows up!

"Your best work involves timing. If someone wrote the best hip hop song of all time in the Middle Ages, he had bad timing."

— Scott Adams

## **2. When we spend time with Jesus he puts our priorities in order and recharges our soul.**

According to the text, Martha was anxious and worried. Jesus said,

"Martha, Martha, you are *worried and upset* about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one.

Just about everyone has something they worry about.

Stress has been called the "health epidemic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" by the World Health Organization and is estimated to cost American businesses up to \$300 billion a year.

Now imagine if I told you that Jesus was coming over to your house tonight for dinner at 6:00. What would be the first thought to run through your mind? Would it stress you out?

It's not necessarily that what Martha was doing was wrong. There was clearly work that needed to be done. And the work needs to be done. It is *good* to be a hard worker. There's a blessing in it:

### **Proverbs 13:4 (NLT)**

<sup>4</sup> Lazy people want much but get little,  
but those who work hard will prosper.

In fact, the Greek word for “work” that she was doing had nothing to do with domestic work. It was the word usually associated with a vocation, or in this case, a ministry.

There's ALWAYS work that needs to be done. Think about what you do each day: You eat three meals, maybe you prepare three meals, you clean up three meals, you shop for meals, you go to work, you check homework, you run kids to practice, you run kids to youth group, you do the laundry, you fix the appliance, you change the lightbulb, you make a to-do list for the next day for whatever you didn't get done today. When you're at the end of your rope you're either passing out or maybe watching something on Netflix.

Oh, and you try to squeeze time with God into that equation. All of that leads to us being drained mentally, physically and emotionally. And what is left over? Stress and anxiety.

### **Proverbs 12:25 (NIV) Anxiety weighs down the heart**

So what happens when you hold onto stress?

Holding a glass of water analogy: How much does a glass of water weigh? 12 ounces? 14? It's easy to hold a glass of water, but if you hold it for an hour, your arm will start to ache. If you hold it all day your arm could actually go numb. The weight of the object didn't change, but the time holding it did.

Stress and worry work the same way. You have to cognitively let it go and get recharged. (Sabbath?)

How do you get recharged?

lphone charge analogy. You've got to keep it plugged in. We've got to stay plugged in to the Lord.

Mary was getting recharged, while Martha was missing a precious opportunity to simply soak in the presence of the Lord.

### Psalm 84<sup>:1-4</sup>, 10 (NIV)

- <sup>1</sup> How lovely is your dwelling place,  
LORD Almighty!
- <sup>2</sup> My soul yearns, even faints,  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh cry out  
for the living God.
- <sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow has found a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may have her young—  
a place near your altar,  
LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
- <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who dwell in your house;  
they are ever praising you.

10 Better is one day in your courts  
than a thousand elsewhere;

Sometimes we need to stop doing the work and take advantage of those moments when Jesus is here. That's one of the reasons church, small groups, and one-on-one conversations of fellow saints is so important. They force us to lay aside our chores, hobbies and other time consuming pursuits and instead it allows us to simply sit or stand in the presence of our Savior and listen.

**MARIA-** How do you, as a mother of four, as someone with a few part-time jobs, as someone with a husband, as someone who has many daily responsibilities, as someone who volunteers on the board of a local ministry and teaches Sunday school, who takes care of the majority of the household chores, who volunteers in a classroom, how do you find time in your schedule to set aside time for Jesus? And how do you get recharged?

I remember talking to an old college professor of mine who was an insanely busy man, and I knew he got up every day at 5:00 AM to spend an hour in

the Word before he left for work. I asked him, “How do you do it?” and he replied, “How could I not?” He went on to explain how everything else in his life would fall apart if his priorities were not in order.

Maybe all of us don’t have that kind of discipline, but here’s the good news:

### **3. Where grace begins striving ends.**

Our natural inclination is to think that if we do more work, if we do a charitable deed, if we help a person cross a street, that that is a checkmark on our ledger in our favor. That NOW God will love us more.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)** <sup>8</sup> God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. <sup>9</sup> Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Works are the evidence of our salvation, not how we earn it.

**We've been conditioned to say, "I will be rewarded for my work." Jesus says "I'm your reward for the work I've done."**

It’s so easy for us to get trapped in the pursuit of striving.

I heard a former Muslim say that Christian missionaries came to his nation and said to him, “If you were to die today, do you know where you would go?” He emphatically said, “I know exactly where I am going to go. I am going to hell. I haven’t done enough good works yet.” Muslims believe in a scale. Your good deeds have to outweigh your bad ones. And this highlights one of the major differences between Islam and Christianity. I heard it said that Islam and Christianity are very similar. In certain respects, yes, but in the most important ones they couldn’t be further apart. And here is what it is: In Islam there is no assurance of salvation except through martyrdom. With Christianity, we CAN have that assurance of salvation NOW!

If I were to ask you all, “What’s the most important thing in the world?” you would probably answer me with some form of “knowing I will spend eternity in heaven.”

So if heaven is most important to us, our natural inclination is to do everything we can to get there.

How many of you know that you're selectively motivated when something is important to you? How many of you are hunters? You might go out in the rain to hunt for that elusive 12-point buck, but if the front lawn needs to be weeded, you say, "It's raining!"

BUT.....

Where grace begins, striving ends.

Here's why this is hard for us. **Striving makes sense, and grace doesn't.** Earning salvation and earning God's love makes sense, grace doesn't.

Why? Grace is unjust. Not to us, but to God. It's not fair to Him.

This idea that striving saves us is like a ninja. It so quietly sneaks in there, and starts killing you from the inside. Because in the deepest part of who you are, you know you'll never be good enough for God. But HE did it all for you on the cross.

When we hold onto striving for our salvation the other byproduct is that salvation becomes about us suddenly. WE save us by what we do. WE have earned more of God's favor by what we do. And then that causes us to be more judgmental toward others. Look at how Martha attacked Mary indirectly through Jesus.

This is a good litmus test for us all. Does striving have a hold of part of our hearts? Ask yourself how quickly you are to judge others by what they're doing compared to what you're doing. And do we attack indirectly through Jesus?

May we all let go of striving and breathe the free air of grace.

Closing:

So...how was Martha a hero? It may seem like we were concentrating on Mary a lot, but Martha did something incredibly heroic. Let's read the first verse again: **As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.**

Did you catch that? She let Jesus in. That's incredibly heroic. I'm not just talking about salvation. I'm talking about letting Jesus into every corner



of our lives. Sometimes that takes more courage than anything else in the Christian walk. Why? We're surrendering control, and that's scary.

Martha owned that house. What is in your life that you have ownership of that you need to give over to God?

So, the bat signal lighting up the sky. All of you are being called to be heroes, but in very different way:

Maybe you've never surrendered your life to Jesus. This is your day to be a hero.

Maybe you put your faith in Christ years ago, but you know your priorities are out of order. This is your day to be a hero.

Maybe you feel drained. This is your day to get recharged.

He is here, and we are going to spend some time with him.

MINISTRY:

Jamie Detweiler reads:

### **John 10:27-30 (NLT)**

<sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, <sup>29</sup> for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> The Father and I are one."

### **John 4:13-14 (NLT)**

Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

### **John 10:10-11 (NLT)**

<sup>10</sup> The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

<sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.

**Matthew 5:16 (NLT)**

<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

**Matthew 6:25-34 (NLT)**

<sup>25</sup> “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? <sup>27</sup> Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

<sup>28</sup> “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, <sup>29</sup> yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. <sup>30</sup> And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

<sup>31</sup> “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.

<sup>33</sup> Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

<sup>34</sup> “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries.

**Mark 10:42-45 (NLT)**

<sup>42</sup> So Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. <sup>43</sup> But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**John 18:36 (NLT)**

<sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”

Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT) “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”



## Discussion Questions:

May 14<sup>th</sup> 2017

## *Unlikely Heroes: Mary & Martha*

Message by Pastor Gary Buck

### ICE BREAKERS:

- What is one thing in life right now that is energizing you and inspiring you?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

#### 1. Read Luke 10:38-42

- Do you tend to identify more with Mary or with Martha? In what specific ways?
- God loves and uses both Mary and Martha. Not only did He create each of them, but He created each with their unique personality type.
  - If you're a Mary what would you say to the Marthas in the room to encourage them to be who they are?
  - In verse 41 we see Jesus refocus Martha. What would you say to Marthas in the room to help them refocus?
  - If you're a Martha what would you say to Marys in the room to encourage them to be who they are?
  - What would you say to Marys in the room to help them refocus?
  - In this story we are reminded that our worth is not found in what we do but in who we are. How should that restructure the way you do ministry and life?
- Notice, in verse 40, how Martha's expectations of Mary created relational tension. What expectations and judgments do Marys and Marthas tend to have toward each other? And how do we resolve those in a healthy way?
- In verse 39 Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened. Do you have trouble sitting down at Jesus' feet? Why?
- In verse 40 Martha was distracted by the preparations. When do you think it's appropriate to let go of perfection or preparation or effort and just be with Jesus? And when is God's work dependent on our hard work and excellence?

2. On Sunday Pastor Gary said, "Timing is everything. 'The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing.' Work needs to be done, but sometimes we need to stop doing work because an opportune moment or precious moment has presented itself."

- What's your process of discerning when a moment is special and needs us to stop our routine; how do you decide what's a priority in that moment?
- What are some helpful habits that can help you quickly shift from Martha-mode to Mary-mode?
- Our busy culture tends to be very Martha-like. Stress and anxiety are prevalent.
  - How have you seen stress impact your family, or your health, or your relationships?
  - In your family or workplace how much stress do you think is unnecessarily created by people's drive to find worth in their success, or business, or busyness? How so?
  - Do you have any helpful ways to deal with stress?
  - Exodus 20:8-11 says, *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*

Resting one day out of every seven is a very important biblical principle. What are some practical boundaries you need to create to protect your Sabbath day rest?

## **MEDITATION [20 MIN]:**

Step 1: On a sheet of paper write down all the things that you are worried about. Take about five minutes to honestly express your heart to the Lord. Tell Him how you feel about your circumstances and worries.

Step 2: Then take five minutes to turn your worries into a prayer. Write down how you need God to help you.

Step 3: Next take five minutes to sit at God's feet and meditate on a scripture that declares who God is and how He is worthy of your trust.

Step 4: Finally take a final five minutes to listen to the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit want to say to you about your circumstances and the things you're worried about?