

Luke 10:38-42

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 May 2020

Preacher: Joe Hall

[0 : 0 0] Well, we are going to return now to the verses from Luke that we read a few minutes ago. It will be helpful if you have that text open in front of you in some way as we come.

I don't know about you, but certainly for us here, one of the things we miss most about lockdown is having friends coming over to our house.

There's something so intimate, isn't there, about having people in your home. You get to see what life is like for a person behind closed doors, somewhere you can be yourself.

And in the passage that we're coming to just now, Luke brings us right into this family home for us to see more of who Jesus is and more of what it means to follow him.

And Jesus, at this point, is going with his followers up to Jerusalem. And we read how they're on their way. Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

[1 : 1 0] Now, I just love how true to life this tiny snapshot of their home is, the busyness of getting dinner ready, sisters who are falling out, just a bit of medicine and the chaos of normal life.

It's so real. It's so familiar. And perhaps you've brought, since you've been spending so much time at home recently, it's all a bit too familiar. Perhaps you never realized how much you would miss being busy.

Or perhaps life feels busier than ever, and you never realized how much you would miss a place just to unwind. The fact that we're not all together now in person, that I can't be with you in person, is a reminder that we really miss coming together as the family of God to worship him.

There are lots of things that we can rightly miss when we're stuck at home. But Jesus, here in this passage, proves deeper than even the things that we miss into the question of what we need.

In verse 42, Jesus says to one of these sisters, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.

[2 : 3 0] What do you need? It sounds like such a simple question, but of all the things that are maybe weighing on us now, of all the things that we miss, Jesus says there is only one thing we really need.

And the best thing is that we don't have to wait for life to go back to normal before we have it, before we have what these sisters had in their room.

Not stress and anxiety, but Jesus himself. And to show us how very necessary Jesus is, Luke shows us why it is that we need him.

So it's hard to miss, isn't it, straight away, how very different these two sisters are. You see, as soon as Jesus walked through the door of their house, and then Martha and Mary go in two opposite directions.

You read in verse 39 that Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching, but Martha was distracted with much serving.

[3 : 3 8] You know, you can just picture it, aren't you? Martha's run off her feet in the kitchen, and she's got five things cooking away on the hob, rushing out to set the table, and she's being pulled in every direction.

And meanwhile, Mary has just settled herself down right next to Jesus, and she's just caught up in everything that he's saying.

You can feel the tension rising in that household, can't you? It's all just, it's too much for Martha. Why am I here doing all the work for Jesus?

And she's just there spending time with Jesus. It's so unfair. You know, if you've got siblings yourself, you know how easy it is for brothers and sisters to get under each other's skin at times.

But I think there's more than plain sibling rivalry going on here, because notice who Martha's problem is really with in verse 40.

[4 : 42] We read, She went up to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.

You see, Martha is angry with Jesus. In Martha's head, she was doing so much for Jesus. And from the outside, it would have looked like that too.

But at heart, everything that Martha was trying to do for Jesus was actually taking her further from Jesus. But surely we think, you know, serving Jesus, that's a good thing, isn't it?

And it's true. Serving Jesus is an excellent thing. But who is Martha? Really serving? Yes, she thought it was for Jesus.

But at heart, she's raging at Jesus. So in the end, her serving was not good, because it was distracting and drawing her away from the one that she truly needed.

[5 : 48] Yeah, at the start of this lockdown, lots of us thought that we would have so much more time on our hands. You perhaps, but for you, life feels as full as ever.

Certainly for me, that can be true at times. Perhaps, you know, the time that you would normally spend with friends has been taken over by work instead. Or maybe if you're having to work a bit less, family time has come and filled in those gaps.

Perhaps in place of a social life, you turned instead to social media. Whoever we are, whatever we do, our lives have a habit of filling up with all sorts of things.

Because the truth is that the busyness isn't only out there. The busyness is in here too. Our hearts are full of distractions.

Our hearts are busy. Sometimes we even see that most clearly when there's not much going on. We can get anxious because we feel like we're not doing enough.

[7 : 03] Lockdown or no lockdown, our hearts can be easily distracted by good things as well as bad things from the one thing that we really need to be with Jesus.

So how can we tell when we are becoming distracted from him? Well, firstly, when we're not actually taking time to spend with him, taking his good news to heart.

You know, like Martha, we might be serving and helping and working and doing all kinds of good things. And we might even think we're doing all those things for Jesus.

But if the rest of life is squeezing out that one relationship, pushing aside those times that we spend with Jesus, opening his word, coming to him in prayer, just taking in who he is and his rescue of us, then in our hearts, we are distracted and drifting away from the one that we truly need.

But secondly, and maybe more subtly, we can tell that we're distracted from Jesus when our lives and even our service becomes basically about us.

[8 : 27] Martha was outwardly serving, but her words tell a different story, don't they? Inwardly, she's self-pitying and defensive. Because her gaze wasn't fixed on Jesus, her work had turned her gaze in on herself.

And that happens to us all. When we think that we don't need Jesus, we kind of carve in on ourselves. That's how the reformer Martin Luther described our sin, that instinct to make it all about us instead of coming to Jesus and drinking in his words of grace.

When we are distracted from Jesus, even our serving becomes self-serving. So here's perhaps a question to ask each other at home or online maybe during this coming week.

What in your life currently threatens to distract you from Jesus? I personally found this passage extremely challenging as it showed me my own heart over the last couple of weeks.

Martha seems like a very complicated character maybe. But in truth, she's no more complicated than you or I. Our hearts are deceitful and easily drawn away from the one who we need.

[10 : 01] And that is the very reason why we need Jesus. And thankfully, we see that that is exactly what he came to give us. You look with me just at the way that Jesus responds to Martha in verse 41.

We read, The Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.

Mary has chosen the good portion which would not be taken away from her. Martha would have been so ready to hear Jesus take her side and say that she was right and send Mary away to help.

But Jesus refuses to send Mary away. In fact, he says that Mary has made a better choice than Martha by choosing to be with him rather than to be anywhere else or doing anything else.

In fact, Jesus would rather Martha stop doing and come and sit and spent time with him. See, I don't know about you, but with these two sisters, I find Martha much easier to relate to than Mary.

[11 : 22] Your hearts go out, don't they, to this overworked, underappreciated woman. It's so easy to see ourselves in her shoes. But I don't think that's an accident.

God knows that we are often more Martha than Mary. So what does he think of us? Well, see here what Jesus says.

He doesn't affirm us in our sin, but nor does he condemn us and belittle us. No, we see instead that he speaks to our busy and heavy and anxious hearts with kindness and compassion.

Martha was so wrong to think that Jesus didn't care about her. No, you can hear it in his voice, the way he says her name, the way he gently sympathizes with her stress over so many different things.

Jesus cares deeply for us when we are running ourselves into the ground. But his compassion is really seen in the fact that he calls us to stop doing and to be with him.

[12 : 38] Martha saw all the things that she was doing as being so necessary. She had to keep on top of things. She had to keep everything going. She had to work and serve.

She had to give it everything that she had. But none of that was truly necessary. The surprise for her and for us is that Jesus didn't need her to serve him.

Though we read elsewhere that Jesus came, he says he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom or payment for many.

Jesus says here there is one thing we need and that is to be served by him. Jesus was there to serve these systems, not to be served by them.

And so Jesus calls Martha to stop trying to give to him, but instead to come and receive from him and share in this good portion.

[13 : 46] Now perhaps if you're listening in today and you're not Christian, you may be this is just the opposite of what you think Christianity is all about.

You often faith is seen basically as a lot of doing and giving money and good works and charity. But here Jesus says that following him is actually about us receiving what he came to give and relying on what he came to do.

That's what faith in Jesus is. It's a relationship with God where we trust him with our lives and he gives us new life.

But to be honest, in our lives as Christians, we can sometimes send completely the wrong message. A few years ago, I went with some friends to walk the West Highland Way, 96 miles over five days.

So we went out with our bags full of all our gear, super heavy, not realizing that at the time, we could have just thrown them in the back of a van and had all our stuff dropped off wherever we were going to spend the night.

[15 : 03] 21 long miles later, we came to our senses, we ditched the bags, and we carried on just with what we needed.

And suddenly the walk that had been so heavy and grueling the day before became so much lighter and freer. Walking with all of those heavy bags wasn't the way to do the walk.

that's true of us spiritually too. How often do we go on carrying the weight of our own efforts as we walk with Jesus?

It's exhausting spiritually, mentally, even physically. But that is not the right way to walk with Jesus. He doesn't call us to bring all our baggage, our work, our performance, our service, on our walk with him.

He doesn't need all that stuff. So often we needlessly carry the sense that we need to do something to be right with Jesus when truly all we need is Jesus himself.

[16 : 19] He gives us a right relationship with God. He repairs our relationships with each other. He restores our souls. so we can ditch the baggage of needing to work for our own rightness because God clothes us in the perfect rightness of Jesus.

You can't improve on his perfection so we receive his perfect righteousness as a gift. Jesus calls us to himself not to wear us out or give us more things to do but to give us himself so that we would find fullness and completeness in him.

That fullness is what we find when we stop standing where Martha is and come and sit down where Mary is in the presence of Jesus, listening to his words, taking in his message of grace and forgiveness and new life.

That is the one thing that you and I need. lots of people have said that lockdown has helped them to see what is truly important in life.

So I wonder for you, where does time spent with Jesus come on your list of priorities? You may be looking back over the last few weeks or months and you can see it's slipped way down or maybe just fallen off the bottom of your list completely.

[18:01] Or maybe for you it's right up there, you battling in the top five or top three things in your priorities. Here Jesus says that time spent with him isn't on the list of priorities because it's on a list of its own, the list of things that are necessary.

And there is only one thing on that list that we need to be with Jesus. to be a Christian.

So how do we do that? If you're listening in and you're not a Christian, it's such a delight to be speaking to you today. And the way to come to Jesus is simply to listen to his message and take it to heart.

As we have seen, Jesus says he came to serve us and to give his life as a ransom or a payment for many. All the times that we have turned away from him and made it all about us.

Jesus has paid for all of that with his own life. And he calls us to come to him and to find rest with him. He knows that we come with a lot of baggage.

[19:18] He knows that we create burdens for ourselves that we can't carry. But Jesus says in Matthew 11, 28, come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Like Mary, when we come and choose Jesus for good portion, he won't ever send us away from him. But as Christians, we can find it hard to spend time with Jesus too.

So how do we do that? Well, the answer really is that we continue listening to his words and taking his gospel to heart. Sometimes we can think perhaps that Jesus is like the door that we go through to get to where we're going really as Christians.

That Jesus is the beginning, the middle, and the end of being a Christian. We never stop needing him. But wonderfully, we will never be without him.

He will never be taken away from those who choose him. So how does your light show off this wonderful reality, this relationship that we have with God through Jesus by faith?

[20:40] So often we can live kind of hand to mouth and catching a breath here and there, maybe not sure where the strength is going to come from for the next thing.

But all the time Jesus is with us and he holds himself out to us. Jesus is a beast in the wilderness. We don't need to starve ourselves spiritually.

No, instead we need to come to him and take time to spend with him. Anytime we can open our Bibles, even on our phones and take five or ten minutes just to read his words and let it sink in and thank him for what he said.

Sometimes you can think of Bible reading and prayer as just another thing on the to-do list and maybe we can feel guilty sometimes if we've not checked it off on a certain day.

But spending time with Jesus isn't something that we do for God or that we give to God. These are the ways that God gives himself to us and we cheat ourselves of the best thing God gives if we don't spend time with Jesus.

[22:01] So here's perhaps another question to ask each other this week at home or online. How are you finding spending time with Jesus right now?

maybe honestly you're finding it a struggle or maybe you don't really know where to start. But then that is all the more reason to ask and to talk about it with people who trust.

Because we all, you and I, need Jesus. On the night before he died, at another meal with his followers, Jesus would stand up from the table and tie a towel around his waist and begin washing his disciples' feet.

His disciples were really shocked that Jesus would serve them in that way. Peter says to Jesus, you shall never wash my feet. But Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me.

one thing we need, and that is to be served by Jesus, washed clean by his death. Can you imagine being served by this king of kings?

[23:24] Well, that is something that King Jesus loves to do for all his people every day, whoever we are, wherever we are. So whatever you do this week, come and spend time with Jesus.

Take in his words of eternal life, and rest in his finished work to you. Let's breathe together.

God, our Father, we thank you that you have saved us from dead works, to instead live for you, the living God.

We thank you that you sent Jesus, and that his life, death, and resurrection cover all our sin and guilt before you.

Thank you that you don't ask us to work, to earn your favour. We know that we can never do it. But we thank you that in Jesus we have a rescue.

[24 : 37] Please, Father, would you give us faith that we might continue to trust you for all that you give. Father, would you give us wisdom that we might know how to spend time with Jesus?

Would you provide space and time in our lives that we would just receive from you, grace upon grace? and for those who perhaps don't know you today, would you give this gift of faith?

Would you open the eyes of their hearts that they might see for the first time the goodness of Jesus and the free gift of eternal life that you give in him?

We thank you, Heavenly Father, and we ask these things in the name of your soul. Amen. Amen.