

## WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

“Sitting at the Feet of Jesus”

Revised May 19, 2018

Luke 10:38-42

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<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 only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”*

Here’s where we are headed this morning. First, we will briefly review the passage and get a basic understanding of the story. Then we will consider five lessons gleaned from this passage, and then I will close with a brief admonition and encouragement to help you apply the message.

Let’s begin with our walk through this story. I encourage you to imagine yourself in the story as you listen.

<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.*

Picture the situation. I think it is likely that there were about fourteen people welcomed into Martha’s home to be served; Jesus and the twelve disciples, plus Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. The point is that there was much to be done to be a “good” hostess and take care of a group this size.

<sup>39</sup> *She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.*

Now see Mary, quietly seated at the feet of Jesus, listening intently to His words. She has taken the position of a true disciple and follower of Jesus.

<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!”*

The scene shifts from Mary to Martha. Can you see her working hard trying to serve the group? To fully appreciate what is happening, consider the word “distracted” in verse 40. It means to be drawn around or drawn away. It carries the sense of overwhelm and mental occupation based on the volume of work to be done. I want you to feel what Martha was feeling. Martha was being drawn away from the Lord and His teaching and overwhelmed with all the work to be done. She wanted to hear what Jesus was saying but felt the weight and responsibility of taking care of her guests. Finally, in frustration and out of a sense of unfairness, Martha speaks up. She questions Jesus about her situation. DON’T YOU CARE ABOUT WHAT’S HAPPENING HERE? She is thinking “How can you just leave me alone with all of this work to do by myself? Can’t you see that I am overwhelmed? Mary is just sitting there, doing nothing! Tell her to get up and help me!”

The blame game is in full swing. “Don’t you care Lord about me? Why don’t you do something about this situation? I am upset and overwhelmed because no one cares about me and my situation.

Jesus replies in verse 41:

<sup>41</sup> *“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things,*

Listen to our Lord's response. He begins by acknowledging her and getting her attention. He lets her know that He fully recognizes the situation. He repeats her name twice, and then gives His assessment. He acknowledges that there are "many things" that have her busy, but also addresses her worry and upset. These are two important words in this verse. The word translated worried means to be anxious and troubled with care, and the word translated upset means to become confused, disturbed, troubled, and even to make an uproar or noise like wailing.

Worry describes the internal turmoil of anxiety, trouble, and overwhelm that produces upset, which is the outward display of being disturbed, confused, troubled, crying, and complaining. Do you see what has happened? The serving has stopped, the joy is gone, the resentment and frustration is rising, and depression is not far behind. So how does Jesus address her dilemma?

<sup>42</sup> *but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

These are some astounding and perhaps unexpected words from Jesus. Only one thing is needed, and that one thing is what Mary chose. Jesus' solution to Martha's dilemma was not enrolling more help. The problem was not really Martha's circumstances, but her thinking and response to those circumstances. Jesus responded to Martha's cry, but He didn't do what Martha wanted Him to do. Instead, He addressed Martha's thinking, and challenged her to evaluate her attitude and priorities.

Beloved, I could stop now, and you could leave with plenty to consider. But I want to us to really dig a bit deeper and really meditate on the message from this text. I invite you to sit with me at the feet of Jesus for a short while. Allow the Holy Spirit to use His Word to challenge your thinking and re-order your priorities.

**Lesson 1: Realize that who you identify with in this story reveals something about your heart.**

To get the full benefit from this message, you must begin by honestly answering this question: Do you identify more with Martha or Mary? The following questions might help you answer that question. At times, do you feel overwhelmed trying to serve others in this life? Are you sometimes aggravated that others are not doing more to help? At times do you complain, even just to yourself, that you feel that the workload at church, or on your job, or in your family, is just not fair? Do you sometimes wonder if the Lord really cares about the schedule and burden that you carry? Do you often feel that there is just not enough time in the day to get it all done and as a result, spiritual responsibilities like prayer, church attendance and Bible study just feel like added burdens and not a delight? If that describes you, then Jesus provides some excellent counsel for you in this passage. And if you will heed this counsel, today could well be a great start on a pathway to a greater joy and blessing in the Lord.

**Lesson 1: Realize that who you identify with in this story reveals something about your heart.**

**Lesson 2: If you are distracted, worried, and overwhelmed by all you are doing for others, you need to take a break and sit at Jesus' feet to consider what is most important in life.**

You may be tempted to think, yeah Dave, that sounds pious and spiritual, but you really don't realize what I am dealing with. I'm a single mom with children to care for and support OR I have parents or grandparents that I need constant care for OR I have health issues that make it difficult for me to even get through a day OR I have an overwhelming job with ridiculous hours OR I have a wife (or husband) that gives me little support and understanding – on and on – fill in the blanks – we could all write our story.

Jesus tells us that he knows and sees our situation completely. He understands that we are worried and upset by many things. As sovereign creator and Lord of the universe, nothing escapes His notice or full knowledge and understanding. And if you are one of His sheep, the good shepherd takes special notice and care of you. He loves you so deeply and completely that He died for you. Oh, my friend, he knows your situation completely and he cares deeply.

Listen to another occasion where Jesus' disciples questioned His care for them:

*Mark 4:36-41*

*Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"*

The worries you have are unfounded and rooted in the lie that Jesus does not care. He does care. So why don't we always feel like it? Listen again as Jesus speaks to Martha. "*Martha, Martha,*" the Lord answered, "*you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.*"

Martha, all this stuff that you are worried about is NOT your real problem. It is all a distraction. There is only one thing that is truly important, and it is your relationship with ME. Your greatest need is to sit at my feet. You need to come and drink from the fountain of living water that will forever satisfy your deepest thirst. You need to sit at the table and eat the bread that will give you eternal life.

For you to accept that this is the one essential thing in life, you must allow your Father to show you your true need. You must see your utter poverty. You must see that you are unable to do anything without His enabling. Jesus Himself said apart from the Father He could do nothing! You must understand that you are spiritually naked, blind, and deaf. What is it that you think is so important that takes precedent over an invitation from the Son of God to sit at His feet? Martha's deepest need was not for help in the kitchen. What she needed most of all was to recognize that her list was a lower priority. What you and I must see, my friend, is that our lists of priorities are relatively unimportant in the big scheme of things. So why do we place our priorities ahead of God's? It is an expression of pride. It is because we have an exalted view of our own wisdom and importance. Jesus offers to come and dwell with those of a broken and contrite spirit. To have that daily experience of the flowing presence of the Spirit of God in our lives, we must first cease from our agenda and activity, and sit at His feet. It is the poor in spirit that inherit the Kingdom. Like Martha, we need to recognize our desperate need to sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus.

**Lesson 1: Realize that who you identify with in this story reveals something about your heart.**

**Lesson 2: If you are distracted, worried, and overwhelmed by all you are doing for others, you need to come apart and sit at Jesus' feet to consider what is really most important in life.**

**Lesson 3: If you truly recognize who Jesus is, you will make His words the top priority of your life**

Think about it. Martha had this opportunity to personally sit with the Lord of the universe, the very Son of God, God in the flesh, and learn directly from Him! But her focus and concern was all the work she had to do! She was so distracted with her ministry, she failed to recognize and appreciate the One she was trying to serve. Not only did she miss this opportunity, she became frustrated with Jesus and His lack of action to address her situation. Mary, on the other hand, recognized that she was in the presence of One who was worthy of all her attention, and realized she was the one that needed to receive and learn. Jesus said that she chose the better option. If you are His disciple today, you are faced with this same choice. The invitation is to come and behold the Son of God, to sit at His feet, to adore Him and allow Him to teach and disciple you. It is a choice to lower yourself, to cease from your labor and your works, and humbly accept His help.

Listen to Psalm 27:4

*One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.*

What is the number one request on your prayer list? Is it to sit at the feet of Jesus, and gaze upon His beauty, and to seek His wisdom and counsel so that you might bring Him the greatest glory and worship? If you belong to Him this morning, there is something deep in your heart right now that is being pricked and prodded. Every true child of God has the Holy Spirit, and that Spirit calls to our spirit to come and draw close to our Lord and Savior. Do you love Jesus? That is the fundamental evidence of true salvation. Beloved, we need to stir these desires, and fan these smoldering coals into a passionate hot fire. He is worthy of our attention, our admiration, and our passion. We should be mesmerized and captured by His beauty. We ought to be awe struck with His greatness and His purity. He has cleansed us through the cross and made us clean and acceptable so that we can now enter His presence and sit at His feet and receive the grace we need to live this life to His glory and praise. The invitation is offered to you every morning as you arise, and every evening as you retire. It is especially offered every time the people of God gather to worship, and to read and study the Word of God. He is calling to you right now to come and sit at His feet. Lay aside your distractions and business and come seek Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

If you are ready and willing, and saying yes to that offer, you may be asking “How do I sit at the feet of Jesus?” This all sounds great, but how do I do this? I think that the primary way to sit at His feet is to read, study and meditate on His Word. Meditation is lingering, pondering, mulling, considering, wrestling, dancing, and interacting with the Scriptures. It is asking questions in prayer as we read and study, comparing one verse with another, hungering to understand even more and digging deeper. It is tasting, and savoring, and appreciating the flavor. It is comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. It is not a quick snack. It is not rushing through to get to the next task. It is not a checking it off the list. It is a gazing appreciation for the wonder and beauty of our Lord and Christ....in all of the ways that He is revealed from Genesis to Revelation.

It is not a mystical reflection on our own thoughts. Instead, it is allowing a proper understanding and study of the Scriptures to guide our thinking and reveal our God to us. It is an unfolding and revelation of divinity through the Word of God to our hearts through our minds and intellect. It is investing time on our knees, imploring the Father to show us Himself, and then diligently searching the Scriptures to find Him. That is what it means to sit at the feet of Jesus. It is developing a deep reverence and fear of the Lord, an awesome respect and honor for His person and being. It is deepening our affection for His grace and His work and His person. It is acquiring and nurturing a taste for knowing God in His fullness, and going beyond a shallow acquaintance. And the amazing truth is that He invites each one of us to come and dine and enjoy this wonderful spread. And the cost – it is free! Not cheap, for it cost the Son of God His very lifeblood to make us fit for His presence.

We sit at the feet of Jesus when we listen intently to His servants that have been gifted to teach and expound His Word. Our pastor invests the better part of a week preparing to give us the words of Jesus every Sunday. Jesus is speaking through His Word every Sunday morning. What could be more important than being here to listen and take it in? Jesus speaks to us His body in our small groups in Sunday School, on Wednesdays, and when we fellowship with one another. He leads and guides His flock. The essence of this message is an exhortation to slow down and enjoy sitting at the feet of Jesus.

**Lesson 1: Realize that who you identify with in this story reveals something about your heart.**

**Lesson 2: If you are distracted, worried, and overwhelmed by all you are doing for others, you need to come apart and sit at Jesus' feet to consider what is most important in life.**

**Lesson 3: If you truly recognize who Jesus is, you will make Him and His words the top priority**

**Lesson 4: To serve Jesus in a manner that He accepts, you must first sit at His feet and be served by Him**

There are many religious people today deluded and headed for an eternal judgement apart from the living God. The tragedy is that they believe that they are ok and will be accepted by God because they pray to Him and are busy doing His work. That is a damning lie. Listen again to Jesus' words:

Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Religious activities, such as coming to church, and praying, and helping other people, do not necessarily indicate that you have a true relationship with Christ. Sitting at the feet of Jesus is a ceasing of religious activity and service. It is for the purpose of receiving from Him, not giving to Him. This whole concept of first being the taker instead of the giver offends the self-righteous person. Grace will always offend the self-righteous person.

Acceptable service is a fruit that is produced from true worship of Christ. It seeks no glory for self. It is filled with love, joy, and peace. The servant that delights the Lord depends on God as the source and recognizes his need to first receive from God to be a blessing to others. He realizes that he has nothing of worth to give from himself, and that God is the sole source of real goodness and help.

Beloved, not only are we justified by grace, we also live and serve by grace. Grace magnifies the glory of Christ and is grounded in His work, not ours. We have nothing to offer but what we have received. This is great news to the poor and humble. It is offensive news to the rich and proud that believe they have so much to give.

Religious service that is rejected by God is a work driven by the fear of man and manifests in self-righteousness and condemnation of others. It is often characterized by anxiety, overwhelm, and confusion. The fleshly servant looks inside himself to find the strength and resources to serve. He often judges and resents others for not helping him.

One clear example of this resentment is displayed in the story of the prodigal son. That story has so many great lessons. Do you recall the response of the older brother, when his wayward brother returned home, and his father was rejoicing and threw a great celebration? The older brother was resentful, hurt, and bitter. The self-righteous cannot tolerate the free grace and kindness of God poured out on sinners. It offends their sense of fairness. They are blind to their own wickedness and depravity, and inwardly believe that they deserve to be treated better than others. Brothers and sisters, allow the Holy Spirit to come and uncover your pride, your arrogance, your self-righteous spirit. None of us are exempt. All of us are tempted to feel that we deserve to be treated better, and that we should not have to bear the burdens of ministry ourselves. Let the Spirit reveal the source of such proud thinking and reasoning before it becomes a root of bitterness and resentment.

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**Lesson 3: If you truly recognize who Jesus is, you will make Him the top priority**

**Lesson 4: To acceptably serve Jesus, you must first sit at His feet and be served by Him**

**Lesson 5: The bottom line: Jesus doesn't need you, you need Him**

Martha's focus was on what she needed to do for Jesus and the disciples. The fact is that her need of Jesus was much greater than His need of her service. The first commandment is to love the Lord God with our whole soul, mind, heart, and strength, and then the second is to love others as we love ourselves. The order is critical. Before we can serve others acceptably, before we can serve the Lord rightly, we must first sit at His feet and allow Him to serve us.

Another gospel story that illustrates this point is the washing of the disciple's feet. Do you remember Peter's initial response when the Lord Jesus was ready to wash his feet?

**13** *It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;<sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.<sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."*

If we want to be a disciple of Jesus, then we must allow Him to serve us before we serve Him. If not, we will be producing our own filthy rags of self-righteous works. I know those are stern words, but beloved, we need this to sink in. The only thing that is necessary is that we sit at the feet of Jesus and worship and adore Him as He gives to us. Out of that ministry, we will be filled with the sufficiency of God and with His Word, in fact, we will overflow with an abundant supply that will feed multitudes. Our hearts will be joyful, and we will minister to others with the sufficiency and energy and abundance supplied by the Lord. And He will receive the glory, for we are just vessels that He fills to overflowing with Himself as we sit at His feet. The Lord is my shepherd, I have no need because He leads me into green pastures of abundance – my cup runs over and He restores my soul! Oh, brothers and sisters, all you are weary and heavy laden, come today and lay down your burdens, your strife, your wrestling, your weariness, and receive the refreshing life-giving water from God. Come and dine and take in the sustenance and nourishment your soul needs. Learn how to receive from the Lord so you can give out of the sufficient, abundant supply of heaven. Humble yourself, come poor and needy, and allow the King to fill your coffers to overflowing. Beloved, there is only one thing needful, because when you have Jesus, you have everything you will ever need for any situation. And He invites you today to drop everything and come to Him. You desperately need Him, He doesn't need you.

To conclude this morning's message, I want to ask you a few questions for your consideration:

1. Have you come to Jesus, and received His forgiveness and grace for salvation? Are you relying on your own good works to get you into heaven? Are you coming to God the Father solely through Christ and His work, or are you trying to add your own good works to grace to in some way merit His favor? If so, drop your good works and come to Him poor, blind, naked, and begging, and He will give you riches untold, open your eyes, clothe you with His white robe of righteousness, and place you as a son and joint heir in His house. If you have never received the Lord Jesus, today is the day of salvation.

2. Now I have a question for you that have come to Christ as Lord and Savior. Have you become a Martha, overwhelmed and burdened with the seemingly endless tasks and service and responsibilities? Choose instead to be a Mary. Come and sit at His feet every day. Set aside time every day, preferably before your day begins, and sit at His feet and allow Him to give you all you will need and more. That is all that is necessary. Let Him remove your weariness, and your overwhelm, and your sins of worry and anxiety. Ask Him to show you how to experience His joy and peace. Repent from your prideful attitudes of self-sufficiency, and start sitting at His feet by enjoying the Word of God again. Slow down and savor His goodness, love, and generosity. Be like a newborn baby who craves his mother's milk, and taste and see that the Lord is good. Be uplifted and

encouraged today. Enjoy the Lord! Treasure your time with Him in the Word. Sing joyful and loving songs of praise and adoration to Him. Let Him show you more and more of Himself. In that revelation you will be filled with an abundance of all you need to face anything in life.

3. Are you neglecting the opportunities to sit at the feet of Jesus with your brothers and sisters? Are you participating in Sunday School, and in Wednesday prayer service, and in the community groups and other services.

I invite you today to choose the best. Make it top priority to sit at His feet and let Him serve you and minister His grace and kindness into your heart and life.

#### QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Share with your group some of the many distractions and cares that have kept you from sitting at the feet of Jesus. Also share ways that you have been able to overcome distractions and make Scripture, and devotions, and corporate worship and study and priority.
2. How has God providentially moved in times past to bring you back close to Him?
3. What are some practical ways that we can encourage one another to walk close to the Lord?
4. Many churches today seem to have an emphasis on personal, subjective experience as a way to know the Lord. Discuss the importance of getting to know the Lord through a theologically accurate study and meditation in the Scriptures. Share how you are learning to find security and stability through understanding the Scriptures, and basing your devotional practice around truth.
5. Discuss the role of emotions in worship, devotion, and fellowship with the Lord.