

**A Woman's Place is.... At The Feet of Jesus**  
**Luke 10:38-42; Mark 14:1-11**

A woman's place is..... People finish this line many different ways because society, both Christian and secular, places so many different expectations on women. "A woman's place is in the home, running the household by: loving and showing respect for her husband, training her children, balancing the books, answering the phone, preparing meals, cleaning the house, doing the shopping, running errands, chauffeuring her kids, etc." "A woman's place is at work, earning extra income and making a contribution with the unique skills God has given her to use." "A woman's place is in the community, being the home room mom at school, volunteering for service organizations, serving in the ministries of the local church, etc."

As a woman does all that is asked of her, how does she evaluate her experience? Does she express contentment and fulfillment with her situation in life? Is she enthusiastic about all she gets to do? All too often, women give an evaluation that is quite different. They say things like: "Life is so hectic and busy, I always feel like I'm being pulled in a hundred different directions!" Or, "I feel so worn out, tired, and anxious all the time." Instead of feeling content, fulfilled, joyful, and at peace, women express feelings of discontentment, dissatisfaction, frustration, and anxiety. Is this what God intended for a woman's life to be like? Certainly not!

A Christian woman can get so tied up and busy with the expectations of the community around her that she misses spending time in the most important place. She becomes like Martha, getting herself so busy being occupied for Jesus that she neglects the necessary time she needs to be occupied with Jesus. It is the lack of this time with Jesus that is so often the main cause of the frantic, anxious life that she leads. The place where it is most necessary for a woman to be that is too often neglected is at the feet of Jesus, listening to His Word and worshipping Him. A woman's place is at the feet of Jesus. By the way men, the place where it is most necessary that we be which is too often neglected in our life is the same, at the feet of Jesus, listening to His Word and worshipping Him. A man's place is at the feet of Jesus.

**Read Luke 10:38-42**

**Mary's place is at the feet of Jesus to listen (Luke 10:38-42)**

**Mary chooses to be with Jesus (10:38-39)**

On their way to Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples make a stop in the village of Bethany. While there, Martha welcomes them into her home. With house guests, the expectation of society is that Martha and her sister Mary spend all of their time busying themselves with serving their guests, doing things like offering refreshments and preparing a meal. Martha, in keeping with these expectations, gets busy and keeps herself totally preoccupied with serving her guests. Mary, on the other hand, is focused on what Jesus expects her to do. Jesus doesn't want her to be completely occupied with serving Him. Instead, He wants Mary to take the necessary time to listen to His word, intent on obeying what He says, so Mary sits at Jesus' feet to do just that.

## **Martha chooses to do many things for Jesus (10:40-41)**

Martha lacks the patience for spending a lot of time just sitting around listening to Jesus' words. For her, it is more important to be busy doing God's work! Martha gets busy doing many things to care for her house guests, including Jesus of course. We might expect that Jesus would commend Martha for all the work she does. After all, aren't we supposed to do acts of service for the Lord? While serving the Lord is important, it is never appropriate when we do so much for the Lord that we neglect to spend time with Him.

### **Hostess preparations draw Martha away from Jesus**

Martha feels compelled that she HAS TO do all the acts of service she is performing for her guests. In reality, Martha is doing much more than is really necessary. She busies herself preparing an elaborate meal that Jesus doesn't need. In all of her doing, Martha is distracted from Jesus. How sad! Busyness too often comes between us and Jesus. It substitutes shallow frenzy for a deep, abiding fellowship with Him. It feeds the ego when we look over all the things we are doing, but it starves the inner person of the peace only Jesus can fill. Busyness fills a calendar, but squeezes out Jesus. Busyness brings barrenness in the place of the blessing we receive when we are with Jesus.

Spurgeon— "it may be you will undertake so much service that your time will be occupied, and you will have no space for prayer and reading the Word. The half-hour in the morning for prayer will be cut short, and the time allotted for communion with God in the evening will be gradually entrenched upon by this engagement and the other occupation, and when this is the case, I tremble for you. You are killing the steed by spurring it and denying it food; you are undermining your house by drawing out the stones from the foundation to pile them at the top. You are doing your soul serious mischief if you put the whole of your strength into that part of your life which is visible to men, and forget that portion of your life which is secret between you and your God. To gather up all in one, I fear there is a great deal among us of religious activity of a very inferior sort; it concerns itself with the external of service, it worries itself with merely human efforts, and it attempts in its own strength to achieve divine results."

Martha values busyness, performance, and doing more over abiding with Jesus, listening to His Word. Because of Martha's value system, she is too busy to listen to Jesus because she chooses to be too busy, not because she has to be so busy. She had a choice to make and so do we.

### **It bothers Martha that she is left alone to do all the work by herself**

While Mary sits, Martha stews. She is upset that Mary is just sitting there leaving her to do all the work. Martha can't understand why Jesus doesn't do something about the inequalities that are so obvious to her. She asks, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work all by myself?"

Have you ever been there? Have you had a pity party for yourself because of how overworked you are? Have you been critical of others because of how many more things you are doing compared to them? When we find ourselves in these situations, we need to examine our lives. We need to evaluate whether or not we are overdoing it. A sure indication that we are doing too much is when we are distracted from Jesus and "don't have time" to be with Him.

Wiersbe: "Whenever we criticize others and pity ourselves because we feel overworked, we had better take time to examine our lives. Perhaps in all our busyness, we have been ignoring the Lord. . . . If serving Christ makes us difficult to live with, then something is terribly wrong with our service."

Did you notice how Martha states her problem? Martha doesn't ask Jesus why she doesn't get the opportunity Mary has to be with Him. Instead, she asks why Mary is allowed to leave her to do all the work. She is upset because Mary isn't working, not because of her opportunity to be with and listen to Jesus. Martha thinks that what Jesus needs to do is to make Mary help her. What is really needed is for Jesus to point out gently what Martha is missing.

### **Martha is anxious and upset about many things**

The first thing Jesus addresses in His response to Martha is her emotional state. She is anxious and upset about all of the things that still need to be done for Jesus. She is agitated and worked up as she finds herself pulled in so many directions with no one to help her.

When we focus our lives on doing all that we expect of ourselves or all that others expect of us without finding out first what Jesus expects by spending the necessary time to listen to Him, we will end up feeling the same way Martha did, anxious and upset about all we have to do. It doesn't have to be this way. Mary's life encourages us that there is another path to take.

### **Mary makes the better choice (10:42)**

The world calls out for Martha and Mary to jump on the treadmill of performance and do many more things for Jesus, but Jesus wants them to focus instead on the most important thing. At the crossroads of decision, Martha chooses to do many things for Jesus; whereas, Mary chooses the good part. She chooses to do the one thing that is necessary—spending time with Jesus, listening to Him, finding out what He expects of her.

Jesus asks us to spend time with Him, listening to His Word, and in doing so, He requires no more of us than what the Father required of Him. Joanna Weaver in her book, "Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World" makes the following observation about Jesus' example:

He was never in a hurry. He knew who he was and where he was going. He wasn't held hostage to the world's demands or even its desperate needs. "I only do what the Father tells me to do," Jesus told His disciples (pg. 8)

No one has more important things to do than Jesus did. No one has more demands put on him or her than Jesus did. Yet, we don't find Him anxious and upset about all that He had to do. In fact, the more life pressured Jesus, the more committed He was to step away to spend time with the Father to find out what He wanted of Him. Jesus focused on the one thing that is needed. Because He did, His life was simplified. He only needed to do what the Father told Him to do. Jesus lived out what He is telling Martha to do with Him.

When we do the one thing that is needed, we too will find our lives simplified. Instead of continuing to do more and more as the world expects only to experience frustration and anxiety, we can instead concentrate on doing what Jesus leads us to do and we won't have to worry about everything else.

The essential need of life is spending time with Jesus, listening to His Word. Being with Jesus must come before what we do for Jesus. Loving Jesus and taking the time to hear His Word is more important than keeping busy serving Him. Service to our Lord is important. There might be some here who need to be doing more in service to the Lord. Just the same, attention to Jesus is the most important necessity in life.

**The most common value in Christian culture today: Busy is better**

**Jesus' values: Listening to Him is better**

An unknown author has captured the lesson of Luke 10 in these poetic words:

"**Martha** in the kitchen, serving with her hands,

Occupied for Jesus with her pots and pans.

Loving Him, yet fevered, burdened to the brim.

Careful, troubled Martha, occupied for Him.

**Mary** on the footstool, eyes upon her Lord,

Occupied with Jesus, drinking in His word.

This one thing was needful, all else strangely dim;

Loving, resting Mary, occupied with Him.

So may **we, like Mary**, choose the better part:

Resting in His presence, hands and feet and heart;

Drinking in His wisdom, strengthened by His grace;

Waiting for the summons, eyes upon His face.

When it comes, we're ready, spirit, will, and nerve;

Mary's heart to worship, Martha's hand to serve;

This the rightful order, as our lamps we trim:

**Occupied WITH Jesus, then occupied FOR Him!"**

**Transition:** The world distracts us from time with Jesus by pressuring us to do more. The world also intimidates us to keep us from worshipping Jesus by criticizing us for giving our best to Him instead of giving our best to what it values most.

## **Read Mark 14:1-11**

Here again we find Mary at the feet of Jesus. In fact, in all three occasions the gospels mention her, she is at His feet. Mary's consistent position demonstrates her love and devotion for Jesus.

### **Mary's place is at the feet of Jesus to worship (Mark 14:1-11)**

#### **The religious leaders are looking for a way to get rid of Jesus (14:1-2)**

The religious leaders want Jesus dead and have for some time now. They are to the point where they have had enough of Him and are resolved that they will intensify their efforts to find a sly way to arrest and kill Him. Though determined to get rid of Jesus, those planning His execution feel it is necessary to proceed with utmost caution as the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are approaching.

The reason it is risky to attempt arresting and killing Jesus during Passover is that the population of Jerusalem doubles during this feast. It is a time when the crowds are excitable and the threat of riots is a concern. The religious leaders can't be sure that they will be able to control the people and persuade them to take their side against Jesus. Little do they know that they will receive unexpected help from one of Jesus' disciples. Judas' agreement to hand Jesus over to them convinces them to change their time line for His crucifixion.

#### **In the midst of His betrayal and rejection, Mary worships Jesus (14:3)**

Sandwiched between details of the plan to arrest Jesus, Mark contrasts the betrayal of Judas and the hatred of the religious leaders with the devoted love of Mary. Mary is at the home of Simon the Leper in the village of Bethany for a meal. While Jesus reclines at the table, Mary worships Him. Mark doesn't identify the woman who worships Jesus as Mary, but John does in his gospel (John 12:3).

#### **Mary pours costly perfume over Jesus' head and feet**

Mary breaks open the neck of an alabaster jar and pours the costly perfume on Jesus' head. John tells us that she pours the remaining contents out on the Jesus' feet and then humbly and worshipfully wipes His feet with her hair. Mary doesn't merely put a drop of perfume here and there. Rather, she lavishly pours out the entire bottle.

#### **Mary gives her best to express her devoted love**

The priceless jar of perfume Mary breaks open is probably the most expensive possession she owns. It is her best stuff. Why does Mary make such an expensive sacrifice? She does it because she is devoted to Jesus and loves Him. For Mary, Jesus is worthy of her best, of her all. Because of what Jesus means to Mary, only an extravagant and fervent expression of devotion and worship will do.

#### **Because Mary values Jesus most, her costly sacrifice is worth it**

### **Some are incensed by what Mary did (14:4-5)**

Mary spontaneously and sacrificially worshipped Jesus with no concerns for what others would think of her action. Positioned at the feet of Jesus and focused on giving her all in worship, Mary unexpectedly finds herself being verbally attacked by angry critics. Mark doesn't name those who reacted indignantly at the "waste" of all the costly perfume. Matthew says it was the disciples (Matthew 26:8), while John says it was Judas (John 12:4-5). Judas probably originated the objection that others later picked up. It is probably Judas who expressed the most vigorous and vocal dissent for what Mary did as the treasurer and soon to be traitor of the group. Here is Judas' assessment of the situation.

**The perfume was worth more than a whole year's wages** (More than \$40,000-\$45,000 in today's economy)

**The money from its sale could have been given to the poor**

**Instead, it was wasted**

It was the custom for Jews to give gifts to the needy on the evening of Passover. What a remarkable gift Mary could have doled out to the poor by selling her bottle of perfume and giving away all the money from its sale. With poor people in need of food and clothing, Mary dumped it all out on Jesus. What a waste, or so thought Judas. Judas and the other disciples harshly criticize Mary for what she did.

**Because Judas values money most, Mary's costly sacrifice is considered to be a waste**

Judas' concern isn't really for the poor. His value system is centered on money. The more he has in his pockets, the happier he is. Judas is insensitive and harsh towards Mary because He doesn't value Jesus like she does. Judas is blind and insensitive to the appropriateness of Mary's worship because all he can focus on is the money that is evaporating before his eyes.

**Jesus defends what Mary did (14:6-9)**

His assessment of the situation is that:

**Mary did a fitting thing at an opportune time**

The disciples thought that they shared the mind of Jesus. They thought that He would join them in their evaluation of Mary's actions. They are badly mistaken. Jesus came between Mary and her attackers to defend her. What she did was not an inappropriate waste, but instead it was a fitting and beautiful act of selfless love, devotion, and worship.

Mary's worship isn't only appropriate, but also timely. Jesus isn't going to be physically with the disciples much longer. The poor, they would always have with them. There would be continuing opportunities to help meet their needs. While they can help the poor any time they want to, the time for the disciples to worship at Jesus' feet while He is physically with them is quickly running out.

## **Jesus interprets Mary's act as preparation for His death and burial**

Mary gives what she can while she can. The motivation of her sacrificial act is love and devotion, but Jesus interprets it as a fitting way to anoint His body beforehand in preparation for His death and burial. Was Mary aware of this aspect of what she was doing? Perhaps not, but the text does not tell us. It is possible that she has a greater sensitivity to what is about to happen than the disciples do. Remember what we learned from Luke 10. Mary is a good listener. Perhaps she is more in tune to what is about to happen because she listened more attentively to the passion predictions Jesus shared on a regular basis.

## **Still today we proclaim what Mary did in her memory**

Jesus said to Mary in His closing comments, "I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." We are doing that right now. It is fitting that Mary's example is shared wherever the gospel is preached because her actions serve as a demonstration of how we should respond to Jesus for who He is and for what He has done to change our lives forever. Because Jesus gave His all on the cross in order that we might be saved, it is appropriate that we respond by giving our all to Him as a thank you letter for what He has done. Like Mary, when we love Jesus, and sacrificially worship Him, we leave a legacy that others will remember. A legacy that reminds people not so much of what we have done, but what Jesus has done that makes Him worthy of our acts of sacrificial worship.

In the midst of Mary's expression of devoted love, there is great hatred and jealousy by another who follows Jesus around—Judas. Judas is on the inside. He is one of the Twelve. Just the same, while He knows a lot about Jesus, He doesn't really know Jesus. He doesn't care to know Jesus or worship Him, because something else is more important—Money. Money is so important to Judas that He is willing to betray Jesus for the funds the religious leaders promise for doing so.

## **We will devote everything to pursue what is most important to us (14:10-11)**

### **For Mary, Jesus is most important**

Because Jesus is most important, she worships Him extravagantly without concern of the expense because He is worth everything to her.

### **For Judas, Money is most important**

Since money is everything to Judas, Jesus is not worth the costly perfume poured out on His body. Because he values money more than anything or anyone else, he regards Mary's act of worship as wasteful.

## **The world's values: Giving our best to Jesus is a waste**

The world says, "Why would you waste your money by giving it to Jesus?" "Why would you waste your time spending it with Jesus?" "Why would you waste your energy and talents, giving them to serve Jesus?"

## **Jesus' values: Giving our best to Him is appropriate**

The committed follower of Jesus says, "He is worth it! He is worth my time! He is worth all I give to Him to express my worship."

Mary serves as our example by her attentive ear to the words of Jesus and by her devoted worship of Him. Perhaps some are here this morning who don't understand Mary's actions. Mary's extravagant worship of Jesus will seem strange to the person who doesn't personally know Him. Mary's time spent abiding at the feet of Jesus, fellowshiping with Him will seem foreign to a person who does not have a personal relationship with the Lord.

We will not worship Jesus if we don't know Him. We won't spend time with Him if we are without a relationship. If you do not know Jesus in a personal way, have you identified the problem? The problem is the sin that comes between you and Him. The Bible tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) and that the penalty that we earn by our sin is death (Romans 6:23), or separation from God. Have you come to the point in your life that you are ready to admit that you are a sinner who can't make it to God on your own?

For those who have come face to face with the reality of their own sin and need of God's help, the Bible contains good news. Romans 5:8 says that, "God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit." The good news is that Christ died for your sins and mine and paid the penalty of death for us.

The good news is that we can be delivered from sin's penalty and saved from God's judgment for sin by trusting Christ as our personal Savior. John 3:36 makes clear the choice we need to make and the results of that choice- "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." When we trust Jesus, we have eternal life. If we reject Him, we will be forever separated from a life and relationship with Jesus.

Christ suffered for our sins so that we could be brought into a relationship with God that will last for eternity. The way we enter into this relationship is through trusting in Christ. We must come to the end of ourselves and forsake our own efforts to get to God. We can never get to God by our works. The Bible tells us that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). We are delivered from the sin that separates us from God through trusting in Christ and not by the works we do. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast." Have you come to the point that you are ready to believe in Jesus? Why don't you trust in Him, right now, right where you are seated?!

For those of us who already know the Savior in a personal way, "How have we been investing our lives?" We will invest in that which is most important to us. We will spend our resources of time and money on what we value most. Remember as kids when we saw something at the store that we really wanted? For the next several days or weeks, we would spend our time and energy earning extra money to pay for the possession we dreamed of having in our hands. All the sacrifices we made seemed small because of the value we put on the prize we were after. We invest in what we value.

How much do we value Jesus? How we handle money and how we choose to spend our time reveals much about the depth of our commitment to follow Christ. Is Jesus worth our time? Is it worth it to give up everything for Him? Mary, a committed follower of Jesus Christ said clearly by her actions, "Yes, He is worth it." What are we saying by what we do with our time, our money, and our lives? Jesus deserves our very best! Are we giving it to Him?