

Lesson 18

Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And 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." But 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 will not be taken away from her."



- No context that is crucial to understanding this account – just a beautiful, simple glimpse into a quieter part of Jesus ministry.

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. ^{Bethany}

Bethany

- Raising of Lazarus
- On the Saturday evening before Palm Sunday, a feast at Simon the Leper's home. Martha served, Lazarus was at the table with Jesus, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume.
- Left Bethany on Palm Sunday morning, returned there in the evening
- Jesus ascended from a hill at Bethany

Friends of Jesus and a place of respite.

And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was **distracted with much serving.**

- Mary's service – listening, learning, worshipping Jesus
- Martha's service – providing for Jesus' earthly needs
- Martha's weakness
 - o Distracted by her service
 - o The service itself not wrong, service that is no longer in love and joy is a sin; "doing" that is prioritized over love, devotion, and the Word is a sin.

⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And 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."

- What started as joyful service for Jesus, became a point of contention, frustration, and anger—to Mary, and to Jesus, "...do you not care..."

⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,

- When we are "Martha"
 - o anxious about many things
 - o troubled by many things
 - o cf. the parable of the sower and the seed (seed fallen on thorny ground is choked out – the seed takes root, but then the cares and worries of the world choke it out, cf. Matthew 13:1ff)

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious," ^{Martha} saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ^{Mary} ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:25-34)

- Martha was so busy *about* Jesus that she forgot to live in Him – to listen to Him, to put Him first

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. (Revelation 2:2-5)

⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

- One thing is necessary
 - o Salvation from sins
 - o Earthly needs (cf. daily bread)
 - o Earthly struggles, cf. counseling in sorrow, marriage, parenting, being trapped in sin, depression, etc.

“The good portion” (Bread of Life)

*“Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;*

*and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!*

*Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.*

*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy? (Isaiah 55:1-2)*

The best service to Jesus is to have Him serve you. “

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many
(Matthew 20:28).

One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure

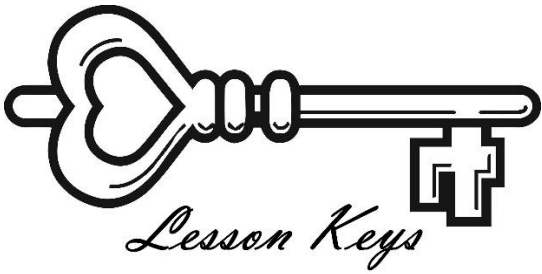
One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure
Teach me highly to regard.
All else, though it first give pleasure,
Is a yoke that presses hard!
Beneath it the heart is still fretting and striving,
No true, lasting happiness ever deriving.
This one thing is needful; all others are vain—
I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain!

How were Mary's thoughts devoted,
Her eternal joy to find
As intent each word she noted,
At her Savior's feet reclined!
How kindled her heart, how devout was its feeling,
While hearing the lessons that Christ was revealing!
All earthly concerns she forgot for her Lord
And found her contentment in hearing His Word.

Wisdom's highest, noblest treasure,
Jesus, is revealed in You.
Let me find in You my pleasure,
And my wayward will subdue,
Humility there and simplicity reigning,
In paths of true wisdom my steps ever training.
If I learn from Jesus this knowledge divine,
The blessing of heavenly wisdom is mine.

Nothing have I, Christ, to offer
You alone, my highest Good.
Nothing have I, Lord, to proffer
But Your crimson-colored blood.
Your death on the cross has death wholly defeated
And thereby my righteousness fully completed;
Salvation's white raiments I there did obtain,
And in them in glory with You I shall reign.

Therefore You alone, my Savior,
Shall be all in all to me;
Search my heart and my behavior,
Root out all hypocrisy.
Through all my life's pilgrimage, guard and uphold me,
In loving forgiveness, O Jesus, enfold me.
This one thing is needful, all others are vain—
I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain. (LSB 536, cf. TLH 366).



1. Beware the distraction of Martha—service to Jesus that loses its focus.
2. Pursue the desire of Mary – sitting at Jesus’ feet to hear and absorb His Word.
3. Apply Jesus’ words in and to our day-to-day lives.