**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 3-14-2021
Dinner Can Wait**

One of the most joyful days of the year for many people is Thanksgiving Day. Families gather together and a celebration meal is prepared. And it seems like everyone has a job to do. Someone is baking a pie, someone else is carving a turkey, someone is whipping the mashed potatoes.

And it is tempting on these special occasions to feel like there is something wrong with you if you are just stopping to be still and enjoy the moment rather than helping to get things ready.

Today, as we continue highlighting stories from the gospel involving Jesus and food, we come across something similar to this scene of Thanksgiving Day that we just described.

Jesus is coming to visit some of His friends, the family of Martha and Mary and Lazarus. By this point in Jesus’ ministry, it was very clear to most of Jesus’ followers that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.

And here, as Jesus has begun his long travel journey that would eventually lead Him to the cross, He is received as the guest of honor at the home of these friends and faithful followers. And like Thanksgiving Day, this family wanted to have everything just right for a special meal to honor Jesus. The cultural expectations would have been very clear. All hands-on-deck to prepare for this special meal to honor Jesus. Well at least all the hands of the women were expected to be on deck.

But sisters and brothers, this is where the story becomes very interesting. A person from this family decides that there is something more important than getting dinner ready. Instead, this family member simply wanted to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to Him teach about God and His Kingdom.

And even more interesting, this person choosing to sit at Jesus’ feet was a woman. It was Mary of Bethany. In that culture women were expected to be in the kitchen when there is a meal to be prepared. And especially if it was a very special gathering.

Even in our culture today, who is typically more easily excused for not helping out in the kitchen? Is it the men and boys or the women and the girls? It is the men and the boys, not that this is right or correct.

So as we turn to the Scripture today and we consider another gathering over food involving Jesus, I invite you to turn with me to Luke 10:38-42. This is just an amazing passage of Scripture.

**38As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. 40But 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!”**

**41“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, 42but few things are needed—or indeed only one.[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+10%3A38-42&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25406a)**] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”**

Perhaps you can see yourself in this story. I picture Martha heading up the efforts to bring together a beautifully prepared meal. She appears to be the older sister and the responsibility for the banquet would be felt more on her shoulders.

I picture this family being up early and tirelessly working in the kitchen. Perhaps even much of the day before was spent in preparation for this special gathering.

And finally, the special moment arrives. Jesus and His disciples come to the door. But things are not quite as prepared as Martha was hoping to be.

And as normally happens, Jesus’ presence quickly takes over the scene and Jesus begins to teach. And the disciples were sitting and just taking it all in and Mary chooses to sit and listen as well. “**Dinner can wait a bit**,” Mary would think. I just want to listen to my rabbi, my teacher, God’s Messiah – Jesus.

And maybe you can hear Martha saying “where’s Mary? What happened to Mary? Lazarus you can’t help me with this. We need Mary back here to get this finished for the Master. Lazarus, please go find Mary.”

And Lazarus discovers Mary sitting with the disciples just taking in the words of Jesus. Lazarus shoots back into the kitchen and says, “Mary’s sitting down with the disciples and is just listening to Jesus’ teaching.”

“Tell her to stop and give me a hand.” And Lazarus runs back and motions to Mary to come. But Mary motions to him as if to say “not yet, please.” And she turns her head back towards Jesus and continues to listen.

Now Martha is beginning to get frustrated. And when Jesus pauses from His teaching for a moment, Martha blurts out **“Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”**

And here we come to the climax of this powerful story. What will Jesus do? How would he respond? He found himself in what we could call “A Dillsburg pickle.” Would he side with Martha and respectfully tell Mary that she should go help her sister or would He affirm Mary and her presence just sitting and listening to His teaching? You could hear a pin drop.

And then Jesus says **“Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”**

This is such a profound statement of Jesus on many levels, as Jesus affirms Mary and what she was doing in prioritizing listening to Jesus’ teaching over serving Him by helping to get the meal ready.

There are a few very significant points about this scene that we must consider.

**First, this passage clearly refers Jesus as the Lord.** In this brief, 5-verse story, it is fascinating to note that three times Jesus is described as “Lord” or “The Lord.” Twice, Luke the narrator identifies Jesus as the Lord. And when Martha addresses Jesus, she calls Him Lord. And besides these 3 instances, the action of Mary sitting at Jesus’ feet and being willing to break cultural expectations in the process, implies that Jesus is her Lord as well.

So why is this so significant? The fact that Jesus is clearly the Lord means that His view of matters takes precedence over culture or traditions. One example from Scripture is Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says several times within that speech “you have heard that it was said, but I say unto you.” In other words, Jesus’ words take priority over culture and tradition. He is Lord. He is the master. His view on matters is definitive.

**Second, Jesus affirms Mary’s actions.** While Jesus is certainly not against service and He states elsewhere in the gospels that He did not come to be served, but to serve. But more important than service for Jesus is being with Jesus. More important than working for Jesus is learning from Jesus.

Let us take a moment to contrast Martha with Mary. Martha is running around trying to get a perfect meal. Jesus tells her that she is anxious and worried about many things.

And Jesus says that Martha is *distracted*. She was distracted and was missing what was so much more important.

Let’s contrast this with Mary. Mary was likely helping out in the kitchen all day, but when Jesus began to teach, she made stopping to listen and receive His teaching the priority. Mary does not appear to be worried or anxious, although she may have felt these emotions for a moment when Martha questioned Jesus about her place.”

Friends, which of these women were demonstrating what Jesus is looking for in His followers? Jesus teaches His disciples to be anxious for nothing and to not worry. Jesus declares in the gospels that heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. And Mary in this scene is feasting on the words of Jesus. Mary is exemplifying discipleship in this passage friends.

**And third and finally, this passage not only affirms being with Jesus and learning from Jesus over serving Jesus, but it affirms this for women**. For much of history, learning for women was considered either not important or less important as men learning. But Jesus says that only one thing is really needed and Mary has chosen it. Mary was sitting with the disciples.

While the Lord does value diligent service in the Kingdom of God, service naturally flows out of sitting at Jesus’ feet as disciples.

And not only this, but the fact that Jesus was affirming female learning and discipleship, I believe that indirectly Jesus is also affirming women as leaders within His church.

In the Scriptures, we read that Paul the Apostle used to sit at the feet of the Pharisees Gamaliel. This meant that he sat under his teaching and training. Paul would eventually become a Pharisees himself.

In passages like this and several others, we see that disciples are both male & female. And if disciples, if learners can be both male & female, then teachers and preachers can be both male & female. Jesus is constantly empowering people beyond cultural barriers. We see this in the Old Testament as well.

So friends, in light of this meal that Jesus was a part of, or would soon be a part of perhaps, what are a few takeaways for us today?

**First, this story reminds us that *Jesus is not only our Savior, but He is also our Lord, our Master***. Jesus didn’t just come to save us from our sins, but He came to transform us in our thinking and in our actions. And friends, this all flows out of submitting to Jesus as our Lord, our King, our Master.

**And this leads into our second application, which is that *in order to submit to Jesus as our Lord, we need to get to know Him and to understand His will***.

We see Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. This would be like us spending time in the Scripture and allowing His word to dwell richly in our hearts.

It is possible to serve on every ministry team for our church and yet neglect spending quality time with Christ in prayer and in His Word. If we neglect what is most important, we can easily find ourselves looking a lot like Martha in this story.

**Third, we are reminded from this story to *not let distractions keep us from Jesus*.** Distractions abound around us. And many of the more difficult distractions are good things. Martha wanted to do something good, to finish a beautifully prepared meal for her Lord. But sometimes good things can be distractions as well. And anything that is preventing us from sitting at the feet of Jesus, in prayer and in the Scriptures, that is a distraction that needs to be dealt with. So please do not let distractions keep you from Jesus.

**And fourth and finally, like Mary, *we are to reject cultural limitations of what our discipleship may look like or should look like***. Mary was taking the role of a student, the role of a rabbi in training, even though that was not the expected place of a woman at that time.

Brothers and Sisters, like Mary, I encourage you to pursue Jesus. Do not let traditions or stereotypes prevent you from growing as a disciple of Jesus.

The first witnesses of the resurrection Christ were women. We have the Samaritan woman at the well who became a great evangelist. There was a woman apostle mentioned in Romans chapter 16. There were female church leaders like Priscilla and Phoebe.

One of the things that I appreciate about the United Methodist Church is that we value male & female leadership in the Body of Christ. The most gifted preacher in my preaching course in seminary, both according to me as well of my professor, was a woman. And people like Mary helped to pave the way for all female disciples today.

Additionally, in our words today, at least in America, sometimes we find something quite the opposite happening when it comes to stereotypes. In our culture, many boys are raised to think that the church is really just for women. Prayer, reading Scripture, singing in the choir – all not viewed as very macho. But guys, please do not let cultural expectations that church is for the girls and women stop you from sitting at the feet of Jesus, stop you from all the growth the Lord has called you to as a follower of Jesus Christ.

So friends, let us all choose to be Mary’s. For the best way to serve Jesus is really not in doing things for Him, but choosing to listen attentively to His words and allow those words to sink deeply into our hearts and our minds. Truly, dinner can wait.

Let’s pray…

**Resources:**

BibleGateway.com

The Gospel of Luke Commentary – Joel B. Green

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QSarM_99Io> – Chris Yoon – There’s a Big Distraction Right Now but We Don’t Even Realize It