

Luke 10:38-42 | “The Priority of a Mother”  
*Preached on May 8, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to Luke 10, verse 38.

This morning, we will be in Luke for a Mother’s Day message, but then next week we will pick back up in our study in 1 Samuel. *[pauseeee]*

I want you to imagine a mother.

Before she goes to bed, she’s already thinking about the to-do list for the next day that never seems to get shorter.

She considers all that she has to do, and she eventually falls asleep.

The next morning, she wakes up early before everyone else does so that she can hit the ground running and get as much done as possible.

Her husband is still sound asleep, and the kids are, too. *[pause]*

You see, she gets up early to clean because it’s before all the craziness happens and people get in the way.

She wants her house to be spotless, who doesn’t like a clean house? *[pause]*

She finishes that, gets ready for the day, and the kids wake up.

Now it’s really on.

She gets them ready, makes their breakfast, checks to make sure that they did their homework, and runs them to school. *[pause]*

Now she has to get to work as soon as possible.

She works hard all day, finally gets off work, and now she has to pick up the kids.

She gets them and brings them home, but then she remembered that she volunteered at the local community center downtown.

In fact, she volunteers at numerous places.

She thinks, “Isn’t it just so good that I’m volunteering at all these places?” *[pause]*

She gets done with that, feeds the kids, and then she finally feels like she has a breather.

But then she starts to feel anxious that her house isn’t as decorated as she would like.

You see, she hosts a lot of people at her house, and she wants it to look like it’s one of those houses out of the magazines, so she shops online for ways to decorate her house better. *[pause]*

She finishes that, and it's the kids' bed-time.

She gives the kids a bath, gets them ready, and they finally go to sleep. *[pause]*

Whew, what a day so far!

Now she has a couple hours left before it's her own bedtime, but all of sudden, something pops in her mind.

She is having a family over from church in a couple days, and she feels like she just *must* buy a new outfit because her other clothes don't seem nice enough for the occasion.

So she shops online for some new outfits, and after doing that, she watches some TV to end the day, and then she goes to bed. *[pause]*

This mother continues the same sort of routine all week, and then Sunday comes.

This should be a day of rest, right?

Guess again - for she's busy with getting the kids out the door, and then even during the Sunday morning sermon, all she can think about is what needs to be done when she gets home. *[pause]*

This isn't restful for her at all, for her mind is even going full-speed at church.

In fact, she just feels so busy that she regularly misses church to sleep in.

Sunday is finally over, she lays her head on the pillow, and is once again anxious about the week ahead, and she finally falls asleep. *[pauseeee]*

What a busy mother!

Our heads are spinning hearing her routine, and it wasn't even our schedule!

That mother was busy with, anxious about, and distracted with many things, and many of them were good things, but there was something missing.

She had missed the most important thing.

There was absolutely no time for the most important, most eternally lasting, and most significant thing - there was no time to hear from Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

There are many mothers, and even many guys and people who aren't mothers who feel just like that woman.

Life is demanding and they are so overwhelmed, so anxious, so troubled by everything that needs to be done.

And Jesus will speak to us through His Word this morning, and make a point that we must not miss.

But will we be listening? Will *you* be listening?

If we don't listen, we may just be going against the very point of what Jesus is desiring to get across to us.

LET'S READ THE STORY. (Luke 10:38-42)

Jesus goes into an unnamed village, and is welcomed into the house of Martha, and we find that she has a sister named Mary.

So this is the Mary and Martha that we know of in the Gospels, who are the sisters of Lazarus.<sup>1</sup>  
[pauseee]

Now by welcoming Jesus into her home, Martha is the prime hostess and takes the responsibility of hospitality very seriously.

But her sister Mary is just sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him teach, and not helping her with the preparations. [pause]

This causes Martha to become very upset.

She's busy doing all of these things to show hospitality to Jesus, while her sister sits around.  
[pause]

How could she?!

As each minute goes by that Mary isn't helping Martha, Martha's bitterness grows.

She sees all the food that still needs to be cooked, she sees things that probably need to be tidied up a little bit, and she sees all the details still on the agenda.

She probably wants everything to be elaborate and over-the-top perfect, for this is Jesus, you know.

There are most likely hundreds of little chores that are going through her mind, and she can't help but be worried, anxious, and troubled wondering if it will all get done. [pause]

She's thinking, "I'm doing this all alone because Mary is over there at the feet of Jesus doing *nothing*." [pause]

Doesn't this remind you of the typical sibling fight?

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<sup>1</sup> See John 11.

It sure happens in our house, for when we tell our boys to clean up their toys, at some point we hear that statement, “He’s not cleaning up!” *[pause]*

So also, here is a sibling fight, for Martha can’t stop thinking about how unjust it is that she’s slaving away in the kitchen, while Mary is sitting around. *[pause]*

Finally she reaches a boiling point, and just *has* to say something to Jesus.

She pretty much accuses Jesus for not caring about her situation, and demands that Jesus tell her sister to help her. *[pauseee]*

But Jesus answers in a surprising way.

He starts out by using her name twice, calming her and showing great care for her.

He says, “Martha, Martha...” and then he gives the judgment of the situation by saying...

“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.” *[pause]*

While Martha thought that Jesus and Mary were in the wrong, Jesus makes the point that it’s actually Martha who was wrong.

She was worried and flustered over unessential matters, while Mary was concerned with the most important thing: *learning from Jesus*. *[pauseeeee]*

Martha had let all the preparations “pull her away” from the thing that should be priority: Him.

On the other hand, Mary knew that this was not an opportunity that you can just pass up and put elaborate hospitality preparations over it.

This was the Messiah, the Son of God, speaking. *[pauseeee]*

When Martha confronted Jesus, she was saying, “Jesus, aren’t you concerned for me and my situation?”

And Jesus in reply was saying, “You should be concerned and interested in me!” *[pause]*

Mary had chosen the best and necessary thing, and this wouldn’t be taken away from her because it was something that mattered for eternity. *[pauseeee]*

So now that we have understood the story, let’s apply and go deeper into it.

*First, this story shows us that...*

### **I. We can become distracted, anxious, and troubled about many things in life.**

That’s what Jesus points out, which is Martha’s problem.

It was about her priorities. *[pause]*

This story is NOT saying that serving is not a good thing to do, for Christ wants us to serve others, in fact, he told us to!<sup>2</sup>

So then what's the problem?

Martha was distracted and anxious over all of her serving, which detracted away from learning from Christ.

She was focused on *only* serving to the *detriment* of discipleship, and she became distracted from Jesus. *[pause]*

This can actually happen in our lives when we are serving.

It's so important that we serve, but we can be so consumed with serving that we have no time for our relationship with Christ.

We end up having no time for reading the Bible, sitting under His Word, and simply taking it in. *[pauseeee]*

Our serving shouldn't detract away from our relationship with God, but rather, our relationship with God should overflow into joyful service. *[pauseeee]*

If you notice, a big part of Martha's problem came down to her attitude and mindset.

She started to have a bad attitude about serving, as she became crabby and irritable about it.

She didn't have joy in serving the Lord, but serving had become a burden to her.

Instead of letting serving give her joy, she had let her serving become a point of anxiety and trouble. *[pause]*

You further notice her attitude in how she speaks to Jesus, for she says, "Lord, do you not care...?"

Have you ever thought that?

"God, don't you care that I'm going through this!? If you would, you would do something!"

We think, "God, look at all that I'm doing for you. Don't you care about me? If you would, you would do what I want!" *[pause]*

What a bold thing to say!

It's a telling question, isn't it?

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<sup>2</sup> See Mark 10:42-45 for an example.

It's a passive aggressive way of saying, "You don't care, Lord."

But just think about that: you are saying to the God of the Universe that He doesn't care when He is the very definition of love.<sup>3</sup>

You are saying to the God who made you that He doesn't care.

You are saying to the God who upholds and sustains the Universe that He doesn't care about you.<sup>4</sup>

You are saying to the God who sent His only Son to die for you that He doesn't care about you.<sup>5</sup>

You are saying to the God who has given you everything that He doesn't care about you.<sup>6</sup>  
*[pause]*

How could we say something like that when He has proven time and time again the opposite?  
*[pauseeee]*

It's interesting how Mary willingly listens to Jesus, but Martha tells Jesus what to say.

And it just goes to show that when you are consumed with the many things of this world, and your eyes get off of Jesus, you will start to demand Jesus to do your will and not His. *[pauseeee]*

So Martha's serving the Lord led her to essentially turn against the Lord, but also to turn against Mary.

In her agitation, she became critical of others, and we can do the same.

We are serving God, and we start to criticize those who we think aren't doing enough.

But like Martha, our real problem isn't usually with the "Mary's" in our lives, but with our own hearts.

It's us who have turned our eyes off of Jesus in our pursuit of many other things. *[pauseeee]*

So Martha was wrong about both Jesus and Mary.

Jesus *did* care about her, and Mary *was* doing something important, for Jesus tells Martha that what Mary chose was the best, most necessary thing. *[pause]*

*That leads me to the second application point...*

## **II. One thing is necessary: sitting at the feet of Jesus.**

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<sup>3</sup> "God is love." See 1 John 4:8,16.

<sup>4</sup> See Hebrews 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> See John 3:16.

<sup>6</sup> See 1 Corinthians 4:7.

During my ordination last week, one question that I got asked was, “How do you balance family and ministry?”

And in answering that question, I brought out my priority to my marriage, then to my children, and then to my ministry. *[pause]*

The truth is, we each prioritize whether we think about it or not.

We show our priorities in our actions, and both Martha and Mary showed their priorities in this story.

Martha prioritized hospitality and Mary prioritized Christ. *[pause]*

Even Jesus points this out as he tells Martha that she’s focused and anxious about many things, but Mary chose the one thing that was necessary: learning from Him.

But why is that such an important thing?

Was it *just* because he was a guest, or was there something more? *[pause]*

It was something infinitely more.

It was important to hear from Jesus because just back in Luke 9, God had said of Jesus, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”<sup>7</sup> *[pause]*

And then just a little earlier in this very chapter of Luke, Jesus talked about how all things were handed over to him by His Father...

“Then turning to the disciples he said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!

For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.’”<sup>8</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Jesus wasn’t just a normal guest at Martha’s house, this was the very Son of God, who prophets and kings longed to see and hear from! *[pause]*

And yet we put nonessential things over time with this very Christ!

And yet we think, “I don’t know if I can fit some time learning from Christ when I need to make sure this house is spotless.”

A spotless house!? I think your priorities are showing. *[pause]*

Of course, I’m not saying that cleaning should be disregarded completely, for it wouldn’t be good to live in a pigsty.

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 9:35.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 10:22-24.

But if there are a couple pieces of dust on your bookcase because you spent some time in the Word of God this morning, you have chosen the good portion that won't be taken away from you. *[pause]*

If your house doesn't look like a house out of a magazine because you chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear Him speak in His Word, then you have chosen what's best. *[pauseeee]*

In Martha's prioritization, it seems as though Martha wanted things to be elaborate and to meet the social conventions of the day, and that was probably a part of what drove her.

She was worried about unessential things over hearing from Christ.

She could have done something simple, in order to spend more time with Jesus, for who gets a chance like that? *[pauseeee]*

The cares of this world overtook her and pulled her away from Jesus. *[pause]*

Earlier in Luke, Jesus warned about the cares of this life, when he said of the seed that fell among the thorns...

"They are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature."<sup>9</sup>  
*[pause]*

Moms, do not let the cares of this world worry you and overtake you.

Do not major in the minors, and pass over what is most important.

Social conventions should never prevent you from taking in God's Word, for there's no more important meal for the Christian. *[pauseeee]*

There's nothing wrong with keeping things simple in order to spend more time with Christ!

I totally understand that there are some things that need to be done, and we must do them in order to function, but I fear that we often go too far.

Neglect things that can be neglected to commune with Jesus, for it's never a wasted opportunity!  
*[pause]*

It's very easy to get into the mindset of perfectionism, where everything needs to be perfect, but sometimes it can be a detriment to your spiritual walk.

What's more important? Looking like you have it together, or a thriving relationship with Christ, which is enthralled with and savors Him and his amazing grace? *[pauseeee]*

We are so concerned with temporary things that don't last, and are not eternally important!

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 8:14.



We should care about what's most important and what lasts.

Jesus says that what Mary chose "will not be taken away from her." *[pause]*

Hearing and heeding what Christ says is something that lasts for eternity! It matters! No one can take it away!

This is why it is the "good portion" and the "one necessary thing". *[pause]*

Martha thought that Mary was "doing nothing", but Jesus showed her that that's the farthest thing from the truth, for she was doing *the most important thing!* *[pauseeee]*

Moms, your one simple and single most important priority is to be a disciple of Jesus.

Never let busyness detract away from discipleship.

Enjoy time with Christ! Never be too busy to sit at His feet! *[pause]*

Husbands and sons, help your wives and mothers spend time with Jesus.

Step up and help to take a little off her plate, encourage her to be in the Word - this is important!

Really, this priority is for all of us, not just mothers.

Is being a disciple and learning from Christ priority in *your* life? *[pauseeeee]*

Moms, there will be many things in this life that will try to take your attention and pull you away from what's most important.

Don't let them!

When many things pull you away from the one needful thing, then you're in trouble.

If you have no time for Jesus, then your priorities are wrong.

That's like a surgeon being distracted by many other things, so that he never has time to actually do surgery on people. *[pauseeeee]*

Things could be done simpler to hear from Christ more.

Some things could be cut out to hear from Christ, but are we willing to do it? Where are our priorities? *[pause]*

You might be sitting there thinking, "Yeah right, where am I going to find time?"

Let me tell you, some of the busiest people that I know still find time to be in God's Word and to sit under God's Word proclaimed because they know it's important. It has eternal value. *[pause]*

You have to be willing to invest in your spiritual life.

We are so often willing to invest in other areas of our lives, but not sitting at the feet of Jesus.  
*[pause]*

May we say like the Psalmist, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”<sup>10</sup>

And also, “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: 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 inquire in his temple.”<sup>11</sup> *[pause]*

This priority of Christ above all goes against the normal American Christian mindset that sees faith as just a little add-on to your life.

**But your walk with the Lord is not just a little portion of your life, it should be the most important thing above all, and everything else fits under it and flows from it. *[pauseeee]***

Just listen to Charles Spurgeon, as he says this...

“Imagine not that to sit at Jesus’ feet is a very small, unmeaning thing.

It means peace, for they who submit to Jesus find peace through his precious blood.

It means holiness, for those who learn of Jesus learn no sin, but are instructed in things lovely and of good repute.

It means strength, for they that sit with Jesus, and feed upon him, are girded with his strength; the joy of the Lord is their strength.

**It means wisdom, for they that learn of the Son of God understand more than the ancients, because they keep his statutes.**

It means zeal, for the love of Christ fires hearts that live upon it, and they that are much with Jesus become like Jesus, so that the zeal of the Lord’s house eats them up.”<sup>12</sup> *[pauseeee]*

**Do you have time to sit at the feet of Jesus?**

Women, Jesus doesn’t push you into the kitchen and say, “Stay there, that’s where you belong, not out here with the men.”

No, Jesus says, “Come, sit at my feet”! *[pauseeee]*

Mothers, your role as a disciple of Jesus trumps everything else!

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 73:26.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 27:4.

<sup>12</sup> Spurgeon, Charles. Found at: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/luke-10/>.

Martha kept thinking, “I’m a hostess! I’m a hostess! I’m a hostess!” but Mary kept thinking, “I’m a disciple of Christ!” *[pauseeee]*

Sit at the feet of Jesus!

What does that mean?

It means to be devoted to Him, see the importance and priority of Christ above all.

Have a readiness to listen and obey Him, be attentive to His Word.

Absorb His Word and take it all in whenever you hear it. *[pause]*

As commentator Trent Butler said, “When the Word is taught, listen. All else is secondary.”<sup>13</sup>  
*[pause]*

Be enthralled by Jesus, knowing who He is, as Mary did. *[pause]*

Mary was a woman who knew who Jesus was and she couldn’t help but sit at His feet, for we even see at another point in the Gospels, she pours expensive ointment on his feet.<sup>14</sup>

He was worthy of everything to her! She couldn’t help but love Him! *[pauseeee]*

Remember who Christ is, and you will be compelled to sit at His feet!

He is the all-supreme One, the preeminent One.

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”<sup>15</sup>

He is the One who “loved the church and gave himself up for her,”<sup>16</sup> so that you could be forgiven and given eternal life.

Will you sit at His feet with an open mind and open heart, ready to humbly submit and obey?  
*[pause]*

Be in His Word, learning more of Christ!

Come regularly to hear His Word preached and taught on Sundays, and don’t let the distractions of life distract you when it’s proclaimed. *[pause]*

When you sit at His feet that decision won’t ever be taken away from you, for it’s eternally significant. *[pauseeeee]*

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<sup>13</sup> Trent C. Butler, Luke, vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 174.

<sup>14</sup> See John 12:1-8.

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 1:3.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:25.

**So in your busyness as a mother, don't let it distract you from learning from Christ!**

I want you to imagine a family going to see the Grand Canyon for the first time.

And so the family gets there, and the family is looking and standing in awe at its magnificence.

It's amazing, it's a once-in-a-lifetime, spectacular sight, and they are only going to be there for a limited amount of time.

But while the rest of the family is marveling at it all and taking it in, there's someone in the family whose not. *[pause]*

You see, the father is *distracted*, and he doesn't take it all in like the rest of them.

He's busy on his phone the whole time.

Why? Well someone texted him and was asking him a question about something going on next week.

Then all of a sudden a sports score popped up on his phone, and he just needed to find out who won and who did well on the team.

And then he remembered that he needs to buy that new computer online right this minute in order to get that special deal.

And that kind of stuff took up his whole time while at the Grand Canyon, and now it was time to leave, and he missed the opportunity to experience the greatness of the Grand Canyon. *[pause]*

Isn't that so sad?

He missed such a great opportunity, such an amazing time because he was distracted by so many less important things. *[pause]*

Who cares about a sports score when you are at the Grand Canyon?

That deal isn't as important as taking in a once-in-a-lifetime sight.

That person could wait a couple hours to hear the answer to their question, it didn't need to be answered right then.

His priorities were all wrong. *[pauseeee]*

And in a much bigger, more eternally significant way, that's the kind of thing that happened with Martha, and that's what can happen with us when it comes to Christ. *[pause]*

If you confronted that father, he would say, "But those things were all good. It's not like I was doing something bad."

And that's what Martha would say, too, "What I was doing was good!"

And that's true, but even good things can detract away from the best thing when we prioritize wrongly.

We can become so distracted and anxious about many things and miss the best, most important thing: sitting at the feet of Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

Moms, I know you try to be "superwoman" and try to get it all done.

You have a lot of responsibilities, and you do so much for us and we appreciate it, but what is the most important, all-encompassing thing?

Hearing and learning from Christ. *[pause]*

Men, and those who aren't moms - this message is for you, too.

What is the one needful priority in your life? Is it Christ? *[pauseeee]*

Now as you've heard this message, you might be sitting there thinking, "Aw man, I have really failed in this area. I put time with Christ on the backburner for things all the time." *[pause]*

Don't wallow in guilt, for you deal with all that "mom guilt" already.

No, I want you to rest in His forgiveness right now.

Your standing with God isn't based on your works, but it's based on what Christ has done for you.

And if you have never repented of your sins, and trusted in what Christ has done for you by dying on the Cross, then do that today, and you can be forgiven and be made right with God because of Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Now just because we have this glorious forgiveness and right standing with God doesn't mean that we just neglect Him though...

...For our love and desire to sit at His feet comes from being captivated by who He is and what He has done for us. *[pause]*

I want you to remember who Christ is in all His glory...

He is the Son of God, the Messiah, who has "the words of eternal life".<sup>17</sup> *[pause]*

I want you to remember what He has done for you on the Cross, how he took your place, and paid the penalty for your sin so that you wouldn't have to be condemned.

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<sup>17</sup> See John 6:68.

I want you to remember how He rose again, conquering the grave, ensuring that someday you will also be raised from the grave because you believe in Him. *[pause]*

I want you to remember that even now He is with you, and He intercedes for you at the right hand of the Father.

When you truly remember and cherish all of these things, and more - you can't help but sit at His feet because everything else fades into the background.