



Important Over Urgent- Session 5

Luke 10:38-42; Matthew 26:6-13; John 11:17-27

3/24/19

MAIN POINT

Sometimes our attention to our many tasks can distract us from listening to the teaching of Jesus. Living light means that we are going to focus on the main things in our lives that help us to grow in Christ.

INTRODUCTION

How many hours a week do you spend working? How often are you distracted by work when you really should be spending time with family or friends? What are some of the major distractions of our culture?

What are examples of things in your life that would be important? Urgent? What is the difference between them? Similarities?

What are some tasks at church that could keep people too distracted to listen and/or worship? Do you think we do a good job as a church of realizing when people are distracted by responsibilities?

Transition: We live in an incredibly busy world—it seems like there are countless events, people, and pressures competing for our attention and time. By looking at the example of Mary and Martha, we will see that sometimes our attention to our many tasks, including ways we serve the body of Christ, can distract us from listening to the teaching of Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Have a volunteer read Luke 10:38-39 and Matthew 26:6-13.

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

⁶ While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷ a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

8 When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. 9 “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”

10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. 12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

Who was Martha? Martha had good intentions. Jesus once told His followers, “*Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head*” (Luke 9:58). If Martha had not been kind enough to open her home to Jesus, He would have had to sleep outside. Jesus counted on the kindness of people like Martha in order to have a place to rest.

Who was Mary? Mary sought to be about what is important. She desired to be in fellowship with Jesus and to be about his death. In fact, her actions in Matthew 26:6-13 demonstrate her understanding of the gospel (Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection).

What are some positive things we can glean about Mary and Martha from these verses? What do we learn from Jesus’ response to how he views their actions?

How do we learn to choose the important? What are ways that we create artificial deadlines? What helps us to move from urgency to importance?

Do you think the “also” in verse 39 implies that Martha also sat at Jesus’ feet? Do you think she was trying to listen but couldn’t because of “her many tasks”?

Can you name a time in your life when you began to do something for the right reasons, but soon got overwhelmed? How quickly did you lose your joy? How often do we grow to dislike a good thing because of the work it takes to do it?

Transition: We often begin this way with church tasks. We know the nursery needs help, so we volunteer. We know they need a teacher in the children’s department, or the church needs a volunteer for a hospitality ministry. We volunteer because we see a good work that needs doing, but sometimes we find ourselves overwhelmed with the work. If we aren’t careful, this can lead us to have a bitter attitude.

Sermon Notes

Have a volunteer read Luke 10:40.

40 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!”

Martha's busyness led her to aggravation. First, she spoke harshly to her own guest. A guest she invited herself: "Lord, don't You care...?" Second, she became angry with her sister, even referring to Mary as if she wasn't in the room. Resentment can easily cause us to ruin our relationships with others.

For example, let's imagine that someone volunteers for an organization because he/she wants to help others. But he/she winds up spending many hours volunteering. This volunteer notices that others never volunteer as much as them. Have you ever experienced something like that developing into a grudge? Describe what happened and how you handled your feelings (for good or for bad).

Martha sought in this account to be about entertainment instead of being hospitable. Hospitality is something that we see that serves others where entertaining is about how others perceive ourselves. How can we lean towards being entertainment in our lives versus being hospitable?

What sort of attitude do you have when you are too busy? Is it possible to be so involved in the service of the church and the service of others that you cease to be helpful? Can we serve to our own detriment?

Why do you think Martha asked Jesus if He cared? Who is Martha upset with, Jesus or Mary? Why didn't Martha ask Mary to help directly?

How can volunteering to do a good thing, like being entertaining to Jesus, cause us to sin? How hard is it to tell when we are over-worked or just over-worried?

Transition: It's important for us to recognize people in the church that can begin to lead to frustration, which can lead to grudges and burnout. It is also important for us to learn, as Jesus shows us in the next section about what is truly important in our lives.

Sermon Notes

Have a volunteer read LUKE 10:41-42.

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha was probably distracted by several important things. She probably worried about Jesus and the disciples receiving a warm welcome with good food and something to drink. She might have been worried about everyone having a clean place to sit. She could have been distracted by so many people being in her house. Whatever the case, Martha's worries distracted her from listening to Jesus.

What was "the right choice" that Mary made? Why did Jesus defend Mary?

What were the “many things” Martha might have been “worried and upset about”? How could she have handled the situation better? What was Martha’s error?

Read John 11:17-27. What are some ways that you see Mary and Martha’s role in this account?

Transition: There are times when we have to leave service and simply listen to the teaching of Jesus. We will not be fit to serve in any ministry if that ministry takes us away from the Word of God consistently. Like Martha, we will begin to resent that others aren’t working as hard as we are. We might even think that we can get Jesus to “rebuke others” for not being as good at volunteering as we are. It is a terrible thing to host a party but miss out on the happiness of your own guests. Sometimes, the food can wait. Sometimes, people may have to simply take care of themselves. Sometimes, we need to just sit and listen to the teachings of God’s Word.

Sermon Notes

APPLICATION

How can we be careful not to over-work or over-worry ourselves in the service of the church?

How can we guard ourselves against judging how much work others are doing? How can we keep “volunteering” from feeling like “unavoidable obligation”?

Have you been sitting and listening to Jesus by the preaching of God’s Word? Is it time for you to make “Mary’s choice,” and sit and listen?

Evaluate your motives for serving. What are some things that we try to look perfect in our lives over simply being present with the Lord? What needs to change some things in how we serve and live that can help us to remain focused on the main motives?

Evaluate your busyness. Is it a barrier to how you relate to others? What needs to change? Who can help you hold you accountable for taking the right steps?