

Choose The Only Thing That Matters

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- [0 : 0 0] Our reading is from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10. It's page 1042 in the Church Bible. Page 1042. Luke, chapter 10. Jesus is at the home of Martha and Mary. We're at verse 38. Amen. As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made, and she came to him and said, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me. Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you're worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, or indeed only one.
- [1 : 2 4] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her. Thanks be to God. Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much, Malcolm, for reading that for us. Happy New Year. Let me say that for myself, as well as Simon added to his welcome. My name is Robbie. I'm the children and youth pastor in training at St. Silas. What that means is I get to spend all my time here looking at the Bible and figuring out how to talk to kids and young teenagers and students about it, and people like all of you as well. So it's an absolute joy to be able to come together. This morning, boys and girls, I'm going to need your help. So if there's anyone from the age of about zero to 100 and you want to come to the front to help me out, please do. There's plenty of space down the front here. I've got some things I need. I need you to help me identify them later on. So if you're nervous, bring an adult, bring your mum or your dad. That's all okay. And if you want to stay back, that's also totally fine.
- [2 : 3 1] It's been a pretty busy few weeks, hasn't it? We've come to the end of the Christmas season. It's New Year's Day. Finally, we can start stopping worrying about being distracted. I'm sure lots of mums and dads here today are very glad. That's it, boys and girls. Thank you very much. Christmas is over. All the hustling and bustling is done. There's no more shopping that needs done. There's no more massive meals for 16 people to cook. Unless you're doing steak pie this afternoon. There's so much stressing and preparing that's done over Christmas. Did anyone have to make sure their bedroom was nice and clean for their cousins coming over to stay? No, I had to make sure mine was clean. It took me forever. It's such an easy time to be distracted by all the hustling and bustling. But it's not just a Christmas problem, is it? All year round, there's stuff that needs done. There's rooms that need cleaned. There's meals that need cooked. There's things that need organized and moved and rearranged. All the time, there's hustling and bustling.

[3 : 31] And our Bible story that Malcolm just read out for us, that we're going to think about today, it's all about someone who hustles and bustles. And it's about her sister. We're going to look at Martha and Mary today.

This is a story we might all know. We probably all have heard, like, I'm such a Martha. Or, you know, I want to be such a Mary. That kind of phrase. If you don't know the story, that's also okay. We're going to dig into that today.

But we're going to look at two people. We're going to look at Mary and Martha in this story. We're going to see that Martha, boys and girls, well, she hustles and bustles and does all the stuff. And she likes to distract her.

She gets distracted away from the important things. And then we're going to look at Mary and we're going to see that, well, Mary gets it right. She knows exactly what to focus on to see that things will last forever and ever.

So let's dig into the story. We're going to start off with Martha. Martha was a really nice lady. She was great. She had heard about Jesus. She'd heard his teachings. And she'd gone up to him and said, Jesus, come to my house for dinner.

[4 : 30] She invited him into her home. And boys and girls, you'll never believe it. Jesus said, yes. That's a huge honor. Jesus, the Jesus is going to Martha's home. And I imagine they're on their way home when Martha, all of a sudden, Jesus is coming to my house.

Uh-oh. The room is a mess. I'm going to have to cook. It's Jesus. I have to cook him the very best food I can give him. The room, there's a pigsty. Mary's left her clothes all over the place. We have to do so much when I get home.

I'm sure we all relate to that. Mums and dads probably feel that more than we might, boys and girls. But when we have friends coming around, remember your mum and dad have to make you clean all your toys up, put them back in their boxes, make sure everything's nice and neat. So when your granny, maybe your granny, grandpa come around and your mum and dad want them to think that their house is always clean.

You put all the effort into cleaning up. And there's a lot of stuff we can do when we need to clean or when we have guests coming over. So boys and girls, this is where I need your help. I'm not very good at this. Okay?

This is, these are things I can't do. I have my box of cleaning and hosting supplies. And, well, I don't really know what to do. So you're going to have to help me. So if I'm, I need to clean the house. Well, I found this stuff around the church.

[5 : 36] What? Does anyone know what this stuff is? That's pretty further than I thought. Boys and girls, what do we think this is? Spray. What might you use the spray for?

Cleaning. What might you clean with some spray? I don't know. Ford, do you have a hand up? Do you know? Yeah, maybe toys. Maybe clean your toys.

Give them a good wipe down. That's great. Okay. So we've got some spray. That's helpful. I'm going to use that. What might these be used for? What do these are? I'll show them to the book.

Yeah? Charlotte? Charlotte? To put rubbish in. All your messy, like rubbish from food or all your dirty stuff can go in a nice big bin bag. Tie up. Chuck it in the bin.

Job done. You can put as much stuff in you want here. You're going to never see it again. Okay? So like there's cleaning and there's pretty things in the bin bag. I lean towards the putting in a bin bag. Okay. So the house is nice and clean.

[6 : 32] Next, I need to cook a dinner. What might we use this for when we're cooking? Cooking. You might use it for cooking. Exactly. Anyone know what we might use it for? No?

Bigger people, what might we use this for? Pizza. It's a roasting tin. It's the closest I had. We might roast our potatoes or we might just cook pizza.

We all love pizza, right? You know, put some pizza on here, put it in the oven. 20 minutes later, Bob's your uncle. You've got it done. Right? Last thing I'm preparing. What might we use this for? Peeling apples.

Yeah. Peeling apples. Or what else might we peel with it? Potatoes. Potatoes. Carrots. Anything you want. I've got my trusty Y peeler. I'm going to spend hours peeling potatoes and carrots and chopping them up, putting them in the oven to make sure that whoever's being hosted is going to have a nice big meal.

There's so much stuff. Right? And then one more thing. Right? One more thing. I've done all that. My oven. My potatoes are in the oven. What am I going to use this bad boy for? Well, come on. Shout it out. What do we think? Cleaning.

[7 : 31] Cleaning. You Hoover. This Hoover, right? Who can read? What's this Hoover's name? Henry. Henry. Henry's one of the best Hoovers. I got a new Hoover recently, boys and girls. It's a shark Hoover.

It's the fanciest Hoover I've ever seen. And I Hoover all the time. I've never had cleaner carpets. And I'm sure if I had Jesus coming around, I'd be Hoovering all the time.

I'd be making sure there was not a single speck of dust on my floor. And that's exactly what Martha does. Martha is putting all of her stuff in her bin bag. She's spraying and cleaning all of her surfaces.

She's peeling potatoes for hours to make sure that Jesus has the very best he could. She needs her room, her house, to be absolutely perfect.

Because nothing less than perfect will do for Jesus. Now, it's important to realize, okay, because Martha's doing a lot of work here. And all of this work, boys and girls, is really good.

[8 : 25] What I don't want you all to go home today and say, Mom and Dad, Robbie said we never have to clean our house again. That's not what I'm saying. We need to make sure. Cleaning is good. Making sure things are organized is good. But the problem with Martha, the problem that Martha has, is that she's getting a lot of stuff done.

You know, she's that type A personality. Everything's clean and organized. But we're not to be a Martha. The major issue with Martha is that all this preparation, that's what the passage says, all the preparation is distracting her.

All the practical things that she had to do are taking her away from Jesus. And that was causing her issues. She wasn't able to listen to Jesus. And to make it worse for her, her sister was sitting at Jesus' feet.

She was doing all of this, cleaning all the time. And Mary was sitting doing nothing. And we see Martha gets really annoyed at this, which we all probably relate to.

When your brother and sister annoys you, you really want to shut up and get annoyed. But Martha says this. On verse 40, if we've got it open in front of us, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?

[9 : 37] Tell her to help me. Lord, don't you care? That's a huge thing to say. Don't you care that I'm the only one doing everything?

Martha feels like she's been left in the dust. And if she doesn't hoover or tidy or cook, then, well, no one will hoover, tidy or cook. We understand how Martha feels.

Mums and dads, I'm sure you get that a lot. Or people maybe with some less than clean housemates, if you're at uni. We sympathize. But she's letting it all distract her from Jesus.

But luckily, Jesus is very kind to Martha in return. So verse 41, look at it with me if you've got it open. Jesus says, Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, or indeed only one.

Martha was so anxious about serving Jesus. She was so worried about serving Jesus. But Jesus reminds her that actually only one thing matters. And it's not cleaning the house.

[10 : 40] It's listening to him. It's really easy to end up being a Martha. We get distracted by all kinds of things. And there are so many things that take us away from sitting at Jesus' feet.

But we need to put Jesus first. He's the only thing that we need to worry about. He's the only thing we truly need. So boys and girls, what might it look like to put Jesus first?

Well, everyone is different. They could look different in a whole bunch of ways. But here are some things that, you know, it might look like to be less of a Martha. Maybe if you're a family, and you do your Bible times at breakfast, maybe, mums and dads, it looks like leaving the dishes till later to make sure you read the Bible and you sit at Jesus' feet together.

Boys and girls, it might look like leaving your toys and your games for a few minutes to sit and read the Bible and listen to Jesus with your mum and dad. Students, if you're here, it might look like starting to study five minutes later when you're in the library because you want to prioritize sitting at Jesus' feet than all the things that might distract us.

You want to start your time right with Jesus. We might realize when we read about Martha doing all of these things that actually we're really distracted by preparations and not spending enough time with Jesus.

[11 : 56] Instead of being able to listen to God's word, you're on 18 rotas and you're always doing something on a Sunday. then we might just fall into the same struggles that Martha did. Everything she was doing was good and was for Jesus, but it ended up distracting her and led her to snapping and shouting and blaming her sister for doing the right thing.

We don't want our service to Jesus because we want to do everything we can for him, but if it takes us away from him, then it's not worth it. The only thing that is is sitting at Jesus' feet.

We also might need to look at our priorities. Well, do we make listening to Jesus our number one thing? Maybe if we're to be less of a Martha, one of the things we could do is make sure that all of our events in the calendar are the right ones.

You know you've got two things when you're planning your weeks. You've got your things in pen, the I must do those, and the things in pencil, I might do those. Well, if we were prioritizing sitting at Jesus' feet, then the things that we're going to put in pen are things like roots or our growth groups or Sundays where we want to come and serve or every Sunday would be in pen.

The things that are in pencil are maybe the social event with your friends or the other things, but the things we absolutely put in pen are our church life, to sit at Jesus' feet and hear from his words.

[13 : 18] Boys and girls, it might be dangerous club is the number one thing you want to do every month or if you're in high school, Friday night live or coming to youth zone becomes the thing that matters because sitting at Jesus' feet is the thing to prioritize.

Now, everyone, this is good news. I don't want you to go away today feeling really guilty, okay, because that's not what we're here for. The reason this is good news is not because we're doing it wrong because the thing that's good is that the only thing that matters is Jesus.

It's really easy to think that if we're not doing enough, then we're not Christians or we're not good Christians. If we're in a season of life where maybe serving isn't as possible as it was six months ago or six years ago or 16 years ago, maybe a newborn baby is meaning you can't serve on the team you used to.

You can't lead a small group like you used to. Actually, Sundays are way busier because of a new job. Well, reading Mary and Martha helps us see the thing that counts is sitting at Jesus' feet.

And boys and girls, as long as we sit at Jesus' feet, then we know that we are doing what we're meant to. We're not stressed or worried. Everything else can be good and it can be important.

[14 : 28] But the one thing that matters is Jesus and his words. So as we move past the busy Christmas period into the busy January period, into the busy February, into the busy whole year, we need to make sure we don't let regular life crowd out Jesus.

We need to make sure our serving doesn't crowd out Jesus. What we need to do in 2023 is realise that sitting at Jesus' feet is the only thing that matters. We're now going to sing a song.

So Jane and Ailey are going to come back up. Boys and girls, we're going to stand up in a second. Then after the song, we're going to think about Mary a lot briefer. And then we'll probably sing again. So everyone, on your feet to sing.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Do something to do for the next year. Maybe we resolve. That's a fancy word to decide. We resolve to get healthy. We're going to lose 15 pounds. We're going to eat less sugar.

[15 : 31] We're going to reduce our caffeine intake. We're going to exercise more. We're going to read more books. We're going to start knitting. We're going to start painting. We're going to learn a language. We're going to save some money, move house. I'm going to get a new job, quit smoking.

The list goes on and on and on. And maybe you've picked one of those for your New Year's resolution. Maybe you've picked them all and you're in for a hard year ahead. Or maybe you've not picked one at all. But, you know, New Year's resolutions, they are not bad things.

Well, most of the time. You know, too often what we do is we put all of our energy into our New Year's resolutions. The gyms are absolutely packed in January, then I guess to February 1st, and everyone's given up.

Or actually the gyms are just making way more money with way less people there because we forget to cancel our subscriptions. You know, they're not bad, these resolutions. It just depends what we're choosing to do. What really matters is making the right choice.

And if we make the right choice, then it's key to follow through. In our story of Mary and Martha, we see that Mary, which is Martha's sister, has made a choice to focus on Jesus.

[16 : 38] Whilst Martha was distracted by all her preparations, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to what he said. That's verse 39. Martha showed us that we need to not get distracted by things that aren't needed.

The only thing that we need is Jesus. Mary is going to show us that we need to focus on Jesus because he's the only thing that won't be taken away. Whilst Martha was stressing, Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet.

She resolved to sit and listen to everything he had to say. It's all she wanted to do. Now, it might be easy to look at Mary as the good sister and Martha's the bad sister who got distracted from Jesus.

Which is really unfair to Martha. Martha's not a bad person at all. But Mary is the sister who makes the right choice. Jesus tells us that she made the right choice in verse 42.

Jesus says, Mary has chosen what is better. It is better to listen to Jesus than be distracted. We need to choose Jesus just like Mary did.

[17 : 39] It won't just happen. New Year is a great time to decide something. We're going to decide to change something. And what matters most is choosing the right thing. We can spend a whole year striving towards a goal.

But in reality, even if we could make that goal, eventually it's going to be taken away from us. Health, wealth, new skills, social status. None of it will last forever. All of it will be taken away.

There's only one thing that will never be taken away from us. Only one thing that is needed. So I think we need to make Jesus our resolution for the year. We need to choose Jesus this year.

To choose him over everything else. And to do that will transform us. If we choose Jesus this year, well we might live out Psalm 27. Let me read out verse 4 of Psalm 27.

I ask only one thing from the Lord. This is what I want. Let me live in the Lord's house all my life. Let me see the Lord's beauty.

[18 : 42] Let me look around in his temple. That really summarizes what Mary wanted to do. Mary wanted to see the Lord's beauty. She wanted to be with him.

So as a church, as St. Silas, as Christians, let's strive this year to sit at Jesus' feet. That's a bit of a contradiction, isn't it? To strive to sit.

We often think it's really easy to just sit at Jesus' feet and listen. But we know that every single day, so much can distract us. Just like Martha. So what might it look like to be a church who focuses on the Lord's beauty?

Well, we might ask each other about the sermon on Sundays. We may remind and encourage one another as the week goes on about the things we've learned and seen in the word this week.

Encouraging one another in the truths we've listened to. We might meet with one another to read the Bible and talk about Jesus. It could be a really brief text to a friend with some scripture that you thought they might appreciate when their life is going hard.

[19 : 45] Or when someone's knackered through the term. Just a simple phone call to say you've been thinking and praying for them. Boys and girls, to sit at Jesus' feet is to choose to hear about him all the time.

To choose to read his word on our own. Or with mum or dad. Or with our friends or our siblings or our cousins or whoever is near us. Jesus has given him, given us, all that we need to love him.

He's given us his word. He's given us the Bible. All we can ever want to learn about Jesus is in there. Our main priority this year shouldn't, it shouldn't be all these other resolutions that we might make.

The only thing that will never be taken away from us is Jesus. How did that happen? Why is he the only thing that isn't taken away?

Well, the thing that takes everything away from us is death. Death is scary and it's really hard to think about. But when we look at Jesus and see what he did, we see that he died for us.

[20 : 49] But he didn't just die, he rose again. He defeated death. The only thing that can take everything from us has been defeated. Death cannot touch Jesus. Death cannot take him away from us.

So going forward as a church, we need to choose Jesus. We need to sit at his feet and we need to listen to what he says. We need to fight against distractions. We need to strive to sit at his feet and prioritize him.

Many things will make us worried and upset, but only one thing is needed. So let's enter 2023, choosing what is better and the thing that will not be taken away.

Boys and girls and everyone else, you should have been given one of these sheets when you walked in. They were printed wrong, so there are long ways up and down, which means they're not the fun books. But there are four things on there.

One is the passage for you to read as we chat about it. Boys and girls, there's a thing to color in and a word search for you guys to do and some questions for your mom and dad to ask you. And on the back, for everyone else, you're also welcome to read the, they're all good questions to talk about, but there's a few big questions for the older children, is what I'll call you.

[21 : 57] So why not spend five minutes going back to sit with your mom and dad or talking to the people near you and discussing these things, and then after that I will come up and pray and then we'll sing and get near the end of the service, I think.

So boys and girls, go back to your moms and dads. Turn, chat to someone beside you, get to know them. I'll do the prayer at the end of the talk, so I'm not going to get distracted by all that cleaning.

I hope that was a really helpful time of discussion in the word search and coloring in. If you were sitting on your own, maybe there wasn't people super near you, why not over the after service bit ask these questions to one another.

As you go in the week, dwell on these questions. And these aren't discussions that only are to fit in five minutes, they're to fit in the rest of our week and help us continue to mull over what it means, what the story of Mary and Martha means for us.

But let me pray, and then I'm going to pass over to Aileen Jane as we close in song. Father God, we thank you that you sent Jesus for us. Thank you that we can sit at his feet and listen to him.

[23 : 02] Lord, we ask that you'd help us not get distracted this week, but focus solely on him. Lord, we ask that you'd help us choose Jesus over and above everything else. And Lord, help us encourage one another and do that together as a church family.

We pray these things in your son's holy name. Amen.