

**Are you a frustrated or a fulfilled worshiper?  
Luke 10:38-41**

This Week's Prayer  
Requests:

**Memory Verse:** Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

**Text:** "Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.'

And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'"

**Monday**

What is the  
significance of being  
"at someone's feet"?

There are five occasions in the Gospel of Luke that we find someone at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see a woman weeping at His feet in 7:38 in brokenness and repentance, a man sitting at His feet in 8:35 in the joy of having been set free and given a new life, a ruler falling at His feet in 8:41 begging Him for help, a leper praising at His feet in 17:15-16, and Mary of Bethany listening at His feet in chapter 10, verse 39. Each of these scenes of someone at the feet of Jesus is worth our attention and consideration. And the reason why we find each of these individuals at the feet of Jesus is both enlightening and encouraging. Yet of all the individuals we find at the feet of Jesus, none speak to my heart more than Mary of Bethany, mentioned in Luke chapter 10.

Is there anyone you  
know that you might  
describe as "always  
being at the feet of  
Jesus"?

The Mary in this text was the sister of Martha and Lazarus. She is distinguished from other Marys in the Bible as "Mary of Bethany." One commentator calls her "The woman everlastingly remembered"; and, the most interesting feature of Mary's life is that every time you find her mentioned in the Bible she is always at the feet of Jesus. What a wonderful testimony that would be for our lives, if we were remembered as always at the feet of the Lord. In Luke 10:39, she is found sitting at His feet. In John 11:32, she is found falling at His feet at the tomb of Lazarus, her brother. In John 12:3, she is found bowing at His feet and anointing them with that lavish and amazing gift of costly perfume, a year's wages spent in a moment of worship and adoration. Perhaps her favorite place in the world was at the feet of Jesus. And each time we

find Mary at the feet of Jesus a blessed and precious quality about her heart is revealed. In Luke 10 her actions say, “Lord, I want to know more of you.” In John 11 her actions say, “Lord, I need You.” And in John 12 her actions say, “Lord, I love You.” At this time we are going to consider the first incident, particularly in reference to worship by comparing Mary with Martha her sister.

Which woman in this text do you identify more with? Why?

Now as we think about Mary’s desire to be near and close to Jesus this week and compare her choice to Martha’s, I want us to put our own desire for the Lord on Trial. Does your heart cry out, “Lord I want to know more of you?” Is there a deep, burning, passionate and ardent desire in your life to be near Christ, to be close to Him, and to know Him better? Is there a longing to be in His presence? Is that your prayer, “Lord, I want to live in your presence! I want to sit at your feet! I want to hear your word! I want to know you!” Is that you, or do you find a lot more Martha in you than Mary?

How would you describe your Christian walk? Is it half-hearted or are you running hard after the Lord?

Most Christians, I’ve discovered, really live a half-hearted Christian life. We would like to read our Bible and pray, but we never really seem to get around to it. We would like to witness and serve the Lord, but it never seems like the appropriate time. We have a lot of excuses: work, no time, too tired, family. But the truth of the matter is that we really just don’t want to. You see we want to watch football or basketball, and we’ll spend three hours doing that. We want to see movies and watch television, so we find time to do that. We want to spend hours surfing the internet or playing games. The truth is simply this: we find time to do the things that we want to do. I’m sometimes astonished at our sinfulness. We will give lip service to Bible reading and prayer, but that is often all that it is, lip service, not heart service. May God forgive us and make us more like Mary of Bethany who loved to live at the feet of Jesus. May God have mercy and change our hearts and our desires, even this morning.

## Tuesday

As we continue to look at this familiar story there are several key features about the worship of Mary that are highlighted by their contrast with the worship of Martha, and in comparing Martha with Mary we see the difference between two kinds of worshipers.

We see first in Martha **the frustrated worshipper**. Martha opened her home to Jesus. How thrilled and excited Martha must have been to have Jesus in her home! The word “welcomed” in verse 38 means

Is the Lord a welcome guest in your home? How do you know?

specifically to welcome as a guest or to admit for the purpose of entertaining. I can imagine Martha saying, “Lord, it is so good to have you with us. Will you stay for dinner? Please sit while I go get some food ready.” In Martha we see a welcomed Lord. The Lord ought to be a welcomed guest in any life, home, or church, but unfortunately things did not go as smoothly for Martha as she desired. Maybe it was because of those twelve other guys lounging around the house. As a result, she became frustrated.

Now Martha’s desire to have the Lord in her home was good, but Mary’s desire to be close to Him and learn of Him was better. But after things begin to fall apart from her own personal perspective – they weren’t falling apart as far as the others in the home were concerned -- we see the marks of a frustrated worshiper. The first is this:

What does “distracted” mean in verse 40?

**1. The frustrated worshiper is distracted.** Verse 40 says, “But Martha was distracted with much serving.” In the midst of her busyness, Martha became “distracted” it says in verse 40. That verb in the original language literally means to be drawn about in different directions or to be drawn away by the burden of duties. Evidently Martha’s problem was not that she could not also sit at Jesus’ feet. She wasn’t particularly interested in that. No, her problem was that she had to work alone. This is obvious from her comment and the Lord’s rebuke. What she wanted to do was work, rather than sit at the Lord’s feet, she just didn’t want to work alone. In verse 41, the Lord further describes her as “worried and troubled about many things.” That means to be anxious and have an agitated state of mind. Now how many of us can track with and identify with Martha here? What might you run home and do if you knew that the Lord Jesus Himself and a dozen or more guests were coming to your house after church for lunch? Would you be running around picking stuff up, vacuuming, hiding old pizza boxes under couch cushions, that sort of thing.

Have you ever found yourself “distracted” as Martha was in your service to the Lord? What happened?

Martha’s distraction led directly to the next mark of a frustrated worshiper:

What should you do when you find a demanding spirit in yourself?

**2. The frustrated worshiper is often demanding.** Martha’s distraction led to a demanding spirit, in which she actually tries to dictate to the Lord how He should direct Mary. She walks into the room and says, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.”

How many Christians have you known like that? They seem to know

What about in others?

exactly what other people in the church ought to be doing for the Lord. So they come to Him in prayer: “Lord, please wake this person up so he can start serving the way he should.”

Apparently Martha became so troubled that she misunderstood the situation. She couldn't see her own wrong priorities and she lost her temper out of frustration. Martha's demanding spirit, then led directly to the third mark of a frustrated worshiper. It's this:

How does the Lord discipline Martha?

**3. The frustrated worshiper is sometimes disciplined.** Rather than bringing about the longed for rebuke of her sister, Martha's worry and actions brought a rebuke down on herself from the Lord (vv. 41-42). “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part...” He reveals to Martha that her priorities are in error and that the most important thing to Him is that His disciples spend time with Him. Martha needed to learn to give the Lord and His word priority even over loving service. Yes, there are important human needs, food, but what is most “needed” goes beyond even these.

How does the Lord normally discipline His children?  
Consider 2 Tim. 4:2 as you give your answer.

Now when one looks at this story it is obvious that Martha is totally wrapped up in working for the Lord Jesus. Her desire was to do something for the Lord, which is to be praised. This story does not condemn serving the Lord. There are many that are not doing anything for Him. They say to the Lord by their actions, “It's good to have you with us. I wish I had time to fix you a meal, but I've got to run here and I've got this to do. One of these days I'm going to get around to fixing you a meal.”

You will notice, Beloved, that the Lord did not rebuke Martha for what she was doing. He didn't rebuke her for her desire to serve, but He rebuked her for what she was not doing. The Lord said in effect, “Martha, Martha. You are so upset about all the things you have to do, but there is something you are not doing. You are not spending time with Me!” The Lord is not condoning laziness, but just as the Lord requires us to work, He also requires us to worship, spending time quietly at His feet.

### Wednesday

As we continue reflecting on our text for this week, we see that the Lord makes a comparison between Martha, the frustrated worshiper, and her sister in order to teach Martha and important lesson. In Mary, therefore,

we see the marks of the fulfilled worshiper. The first one is this:

If you were to list your priorities for a typical day, what would come first?

**1. The fulfilled worshiper has the right priority, namely to be close to Jesus.** One sees, immediately, that for Mary being at the Lord's feet was her first choice, her first priority. In her actions we hear Mary saying, "Lord, I want you to know more of You." She wanted to be near and close to Him to hear His word. There were many things to be done. There were many things Mary could have been doing. But she laid all of them aside for a while to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Years ago Charles Hummel wrote an article entitled, "The Tyranny Of The Urgent." In the article, he made this statement: "We all think we need a thirty-hour day to cope with life. But would a thirty-hour day really solve the problem? Wouldn't we be just as frustrated as we are now with our twenty-four hour allotment. Our dilemma goes deeper than shortage of time. It is basically the problem of priorities."

How do we know what our priorities really are?

I would add that it is also a problem of desire.

I am confronted with this issue very powerfully as I write this lesson. This week we've been in the process of moving. Last Monday the movers arrived late and they were at the house unloading furniture and boxes until 11:30 at night. I have no idea how many boxes of things we have, but it is well over a hundred. It's almost disgusting how many boxes we have. They are just everywhere, so you have to walk around the house like your traveling through a maze. Then, when you combine moving with beginning a new pastorate and all of the things you want to just jump in and start doing, the immediate temptation when you wake up in the morning is to just go for it and get busy ... busy! But the Lord says, "No Chris, one thing is needed before anything else. Come away and sit at My feet."

The same thing happens again at night. The kids are in bed. The boxes are begging for attention and I just want to play one more round of golf on the computer. – I only play computer golf. Real golf is just too hard. – The Spirit nudges me in my heart, though, and says, "No, Chris it's time again, you need to pray with Eve and sit at my feet." Mary had the right priority, to be close to Jesus. There is a second mark that we see in this text:

What would a consistent desire to hear God's word

**2. The fulfilled worshiper has the right practice, namely consistent desire.** Look at the end of verse 39 for a moment. It says very simply that Mary "heard His word." Her attitude was one of eager desire to

look like in your life? hear Jesus' teaching, His word. The verb "heard," is in the imperfect tense in the original language meaning a continual listening. In other words, Mary didn't just catch sound bites. She wasn't just tuned in for a few seconds here and a few seconds there and then gone again. Mary also didn't just listen to the Lord outwardly, while inside she was a thousand miles away thinking about other things: lunch, work, school, the American Idol finale, texting her friends or whatever.

What kind of things does an intent and eager listener do? No, this word means that she really listened, intently and eagerly. Listening is almost a lost art in our day and time. This second mark of Mary's worship led immediately to the third mark:

**3. The fulfilled worshiper has the right praise, namely the Lord's Commendation.** In His response to Martha, far from rebuking Mary and telling her to get up and get busy, the Lord commends and praises Mary. It's one thing, Beloved, to have the praise and commendation of men; it's a completely different and far more delightful and satisfying thing to have the praise of the Lord. Far better to have the disapproval of men and the praise of the Lord, than to have the praise of men and the disapproval of Jesus.

What would the commendation of the Lord mean to you?

### Thursday

Moving deeper today, we see that in the Lord's commendation of Mary, He points out three very important truths about her personal worship:

**1. Personal worship is a prescribed practice.** Let's think about this word that Jesus gives to Martha in verse 42. He says to her, "But one thing is needful." That word "needful" speaks of a requirement from the Lord. In other words, it was a spiritual necessity, something basic, something fundamental.

How does the Lord feel about you spending time with Him?

Think about that, Beloved. Martha's work was important, but they all could have done without it. Mary's worship on the other hand was in a completely different category. It was both **indispensable** *and* **expected**.

Now this truth tends to be is very, very hard for us, because we get it exactly backwards. What happens? We get up in the morning and we are immediately flooded with the busyness of the day. We have to get things ready; we have to get the food on the table, the children dressed; we have to get out the door and off to work. After work is done our evenings can be filled up with just as many activities. We have to go to the ball game. We have to catch the news and make that phone call.

Which do you feel is more important for your day, food or a personal worship time?

We have to pay the bills, mow the lawn and go to that meeting. We have this. We have that. And by the end of the day, the one thing that has suffered and the one thing that has been put off and shoved to the side and rationalized away (“I’ll get to it tomorrow”), the one thing that has been left out, is the one thing that Jesus says is needful, namely personal worship time at the feet of Jesus, time spent sitting at His feet, listening intently to His word, not letting a single one fall to the ground.

What do your habits say about your answer?

O church, you think this is hard for you. Think how hard it is for a pastor, who spends a large portion of his day in study to do his work. Do you think this is a substitute for personal worship and quality time with the Lord? No way, but it becomes easy to rationalize that time away. Many times I have heard older pastors say that after seminary was completed they discovered that they were as far away from the Lord as they had ever been in their life, because they had realized too late that studying for school or studying in order to teach was not a substitute for personal time at the feet of Jesus.

How can you change your habits to make time for that which is “needful”?

Jesus says, “One thing is needful.” So don’t let it get crowded out by other things. Let the dinner wait Martha, just let it get cold, forget about it for a while, come over here and sit and spend time with me. That’s what I really want from you. Beloved, you know God, but you do not yet know Him as well as He wants you to know Him.

The second truth that we see about personal worship in this text is this:

**2. Personal worship is a profitable practice for today.** Notice what Jesus says to Martha in v. 42, “and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” The word “good” speaks of that which is beneficial and profitable. Jesus was saying, “Martha, what Mary is doing is for her spiritual benefit and profit.”

How can personal worship benefit you today?

Now, one obvious benefit is seen in the immediate text and that is an internal peacefulness. Martha is filled with anxiety, fretfulness, and frustration, rather than the contentment that Mary undoubtedly felt. Jesus describes Martha as “troubled.” Not only is she being pulled in many directions by her self-imposed burdens, but the word “troubled” literally means to be thrown into an uproar. In other words, Martha had been running around like a chicken with her head cut off. She was agitated and filled with stress, until finally she blew her top, came out of the kitchen and cried out, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone.”

Can you just imagine the sigh of Jesus. If the Lord ever rolled His eyes at anyone, He probably rolled them here, “Oh Martha, don’t worry about all of that, it will keep, rather than Mary joining you, why don’t you join her, sit down and listen to what I am saying, spend some time with me.”

Who was better prepared to actually serve the Lord at this time, Martha or Mary? Why?

Now let me ask you, had Mary risen up to serve after sitting at the feet of Jesus for a time, whose service would have been better, Mary’s or Martha’s? Mary’s, it’s obvious.

What are the dangers of trying to serve the Lord with a “dull ax”?

There is an old story of two men chopping trees in the forest. The first set a steady pace and worked hard all day long without stopping. The second worked equally hard, but took a few minutes off every hour to sit down and rest. At the end of the day the second man had cut twice as much wood as the first man. The first man finished his work, turned around, and saw in utter astonishment a pile of wood stacked twice as high as his own. Flabbergasted, he said, “I don’t understand it. I have worked all day and didn’t stop once and you stopped for ten minutes every single hour. How in the world did you cut twice as much wood as I did?” The second man smiled and replied, “Yes, I stopped every hour. But each time I stopped I sat down to sharpen my ax.” There are many men and women, who are trying to serve the Lord with a dull ax, and we are often tempted to measure ourselves spiritually by how much we are doing. But if we don’t spend time sitting at the feet of Jesus in worship, our work will be ineffective.

### Friday

Today we want to consider a final point from our text regarding personal worship, namely:

Are you investing in things that are of no eternal value? How can you change that?

**3. Personal worship is of eternal profit.** Look at the end of verse 42. What does the Lord say, “that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” Jesus was saying to Martha in effect, “You know Martha, you may not see it, but what Mary is doing right now has value for her for eternity.”

You are going to lose a lot of things when you die, Beloved. A lot of the stuff that you run around here and there trying to accomplish or trying to obtain is going to vanish: possessions, money, reputation, entertainment, that new title or position at work, the high score on that new game. Many of these things that consume our time and energy are just a mist and a vapor. Here for a moment, and then poof! They are gone.

How important is it that you draw near to Jesus and sit at His feet?

But what will you take with you according to this text? Everything that you have gained in that close personal relationship with the Lord. All of the joys, the peace, the love, the goodness of those times with Him, you will be taking that with you. And one day, if you are His child, you will stand before the Lord and He will give you that white stone that it talks about in Revelation with your name on it – you’re real name, which nobody else will ever know (Rev. 2:17) – and He’s going to say what he said to Nathaniel, “When you were under the fig tree” – or wherever it is that you spent time at His feet – “I saw you.” “I was there with you.” Then you will burst forth in worship, and in wonders of heaven there will be an ever increasing joy, an ever increasing delight and an ever increasing closeness and knowledge of our infinite glorious God. And no one will ever be able to take that intimacy with Him away from you.

Do you have a protected place and time to sit at the feet of Jesus?

But it doesn’t start there, Beloved. It starts here and now, under the fig tree, in the closet, sitting in a group as Mary was, in the church service, or wherever you are that you find yourself at the feet of Jesus, drawing near to Him.

We must sit at the feet of Jesus as Mary did, with the right priority and the right practice, which will lead to the right praise, and that Beloved has eternal value, which will never be taken away.

Someone has written a poem about this. It says:

We mutter and sputter  
We fume and we spurt  
We mumble and grumble  
And our feelings get hurt.  
We can’t understand things  
Our vision grows dim  
When all that we need  
Is a moment with Him.

Spend some time at the feet of Jesus right now and pray that He will make you more eager, more intent, more consistent and more like Mary of Bethany in your desire to know Him

As we think about Mary’s desire to be near and close to Jesus, let us as I said earlier put our desire for the Lord on trial. Does your heart cry out, “Lord, I want to know you more.” Is there a passionate and ardent desire to be near Christ, to be close to Him, and to know Him better? Is there a longing to be in His presence? Is that your prayer? Do you want to hear from Him? Are you eager for that and attentive to what He might say? Are you choosing the good part that Mary chose. Is Jesus simply a guest in the house of your life, or is He at the center? Are you sitting at His feet refusing to let a single word drop, refusing to be distracted, and

and love Him.

longing to know Him and be close to Him. The greatest concern and the chief desire of our hearts should be to seek the Lord. Our desire for the Lord ought to exceed all other desires. It is to be our very first and greatest priority. The one thing that we see as needful and refuse to compromise and put to the side.

“Lord make us like Mary of Bethany”

### **Hymn – In The Garden**

I come to the garden alone,  
While the dew is still on the roses;  
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,  
The Son of God discloses.

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own;  
And the joy we share as we tarry there  
None other has ever known.

He speaks, and the sound of His voice  
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing;  
And the melody that He gave to me  
Within my heart is ringing.

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own;  
And the joy we share as we tarry there  
None other has ever known.

Author: C. Austin Miles, 1912

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