

Weaving the Word

Divided Attention

April 7, 2019

Welcome to where we're learning to give the Lord our undivided attention!

Is Jesus the guest of honor in your home?



I sure hope not! That's horrible for two reasons.

Today we've invited ourselves to Martha's big dinner. Remind me, is it Mary or Martha who sits at Jesus feet to listen? *You sure?*



In our storyline, it's almost Passover (one year before the cross) and the markets are wall-to-wall people preparing for the big holiday feast.



Jesus' twelve teenage Apostles have been on their own in the surrounding towns for over a month, and they'll reunite with Jesus later on today.

Jesus just finished an extensive ministry tour in Galilee with the help of 72 junior disciples; and He just learned of the death of John the Baptist.



On this *Sabbath* morning, He snuck into Jerusalem, to the Pool of Bethesda, and anonymously healed an excuse-making whiner who then squealed on Him!



Jesus reunited and rejoiced with His 72 junior disciples, before publically denouncing the three woe-to-you cities whose rulers had rejected them.



He calls the crowd to come and learn from Him, so He can remove their burden and give them rest. But, the religious rulers interrupt Him and harass Him for healing on this Sabbath; and, He warns His accusers that Moses is going to be *their accuser*.



Now it happened as they went that He entered a **certain village** ["Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha" (Jn 11:1); because "Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem" (Jn 11:18)]; and a certain woman named **Martha welcomed Him into her house** [the way we welcome Him into our heart]. And she had a sister called **Mary, who also** [like Martha] **sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word**. [Martha gets a bad rap; but, she's at Jesus' feet too ... at first] **But** Martha was **distracted with much serving**, [i.e. many to serve; which tells us that this is not a small get-together. She has many to serve] – Luke 10:38-40a NKJ





Know what really bugs me?

When you're trying to tell someone something meaningful, and they get distracted, or interrupt, and they're unaware and don't care that you're not done; but, *you're so invested* at this point that you just grovel through it.

Imagine how often it's *Jesus talking, and us interrupting!*

Martha opened her home. That's a *good* thing. **But, she closed her ears.** That's a *bad* thing.



Because: **when we open our heart to Him, He opens His Word to us.** And, He kinda, sorta, *absolutely demands* our undivided attention.

That's how Mary was serving when she *wasn't serving*; and, how Martha wasn't when she *was*.

But, before we're *too hard* on poor Martha, we should hear the whole story. For instance, who's this "**they**" who went with Jesus? Well, it's ...

The **seventy-two** returned with joy ... As Jesus and **his disciples** were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home – Luke 10:17, 38 NIV

And by syncing up Jesus' departure from Jerusalem ... (Mt 14:13; Mk 6:32; Lk 9:10)

They **withdrew by** themselves in a **boat privately to a solitary place.** a town called Bethsaida,
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... we can reverse-engineer the *rest* of the guest list, and find out what all was going on at Martha's big dinner that night.

[King Herod] heard about all that was going on. ... And **he tried to see him.** John [the Baptist]'s disciples came and took his body ... When the **[twelve]** apostles returned, **The apostles gathered around Jesus** and reported to him all they had done and taught. [John the Baptist's disciples] took his body and buried it. Then **they went and told Jesus.** Then, because **so many people were coming and going** that **they [the Twelve and Jesus] did not even have a chance to eat** ... they went away by themselves – Mt 14:12; Mk 6:29-32; Lk 9:7, 9-10 NIV

Somewhere between 85 and 100+ people showed up at Martha's door!

And, she *opened her home* to them! Way to go, Martha!

But, her brain was in frantic-panic mode. And, who can blame her?

Martha [left Jesus' feet because she] **was distracted with much serving**, and [before Jesus was done speaking] **she approached Him** [and interrupted Him (which doesn't speak to her rudeness, as much as their close friendship); she's one of His *best* disciples ... *as we'll see*] and said, "Lord, **do You not care** that my sister has **left me to serve alone?** Therefore **tell her to help me.**" [Who's the "Lord-Lord" or "Lord of Lords" in this situation? Not Jesus. Not the way Martha addresses Him after she says, "Lord"] **And Jesus** [always saying the most with the least] answered and said to **her**, "**Martha, Martha**, [or "*Martha of Marthas*"] you are **worried** [i.e. *crowded with thoughts*] and **troubled** [by those thoughts] about **many things**. [lit. *much* (NKJ adds "things"); it's the same word and refers back to the "**much serving**" (i.e. *many to serve*) that's distracting her] But **one thing is needed**, ["one" what? Again, NKJ adds "things"; One "serving" (i.e. *One to serve*)] and **Mary has chosen** [to serve] **that good part**, which will not be taken away from her." [Jesus once said, "*Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.*" (Lk 18:18-19); and "part" is also translated "portion", as in: "*You are my portion, O Lord; I have promised to obey your words*" (Ps 119:57)] – Luke 10:38-42 NKJ

Okay, so: **should Jesus be the guest of honor in your home? No way! He didn't come to be a guest; but, a permanent resident. And if you gave Him your heart, it's not even yours; it's His.**

And, **His house, His rules.** But, Martha was treating Him as a *guest of honor* in *her home*. That's why she took it upon *herself* to serve the many. And to busy herself to the point of distraction and frustration. And to chastise Jesus for his insensitivity to her situation. And to confront Him and tell Him what she demanded *from* Him, in order to usher Him back into *her* good graces.

Is that a snapshot of your relationship with Jesus?

Martha is a driven woman with a good work ethic. But, **she drove herself to distraction.** Instead of allowing Jesus to take this burden (as He *just taught* earlier *that day*), Martha assumes control and spirals out of it. "How do we feed so many? We need more food! Who's gonna pay? We need to borrow pots and pans and dishes and cups! Don't let 'em eat the Passover supplies!"

Why didn't she go to Jesus for help? *She did.* She said, "**tell her to help me**". But, **that's not asking for help, that's telling for help.**

Sometimes, to serve the *One*, **you must serve the many.** Sometimes, to serve the *One*, **you must ignore the many.** If you want to know if you're aligned with His will, or making a good choice, ask yourself one thing: "**Am I serving Him in this?**" If you're not, you'll be left to serve by yourself.

What might've happened if Martha had said, "Okay. Forget the food," and sat back down at His feet? Well, He *might've* said ...

I am among you as the One who serves. **[And what I can't do with a couple fish and a loaf of bread!]** – Luke 22:27b NKJ

Are you telling for help, or listening to help?

Are you allowing Him to serve you in this way?

Martha wasn't; and she got served! **Serving has its place; but, it can't replace growing.** Settle down now. And listen up. Focus. Breathe. Trust. We live in a broken world. No one gets out alive. But, He's here to lead you through it, if you'll open your heart *and your ears*.

Several months later, Jesus returns when their brother dies.

When **Martha** heard that Jesus was **coming**, she **went and met him**, but **Mary remained seated in the house**. [Maybe we give Mary too much credit, and Martha not enough; it's not enough to sit at His feet. We must jump up and use 'em to go to Him, to question Him, to trust in Him] Martha said to Jesus, "**Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died**." But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ... [And after a brief chat, Jesus says] "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do **you** believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that **you are the Christ, the Son of God**," [Peter gets all the credit for that great confession; but let the record show that Martha said it first] ... she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher **is here** and **is calling for you**." And when she heard **it**, she [got off her duff] rose quickly and went to him. ... [And, like her sister, said] "**Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died**." [But, unlike her sister, said nothing else. *And Martha suddenly pulls into the lead!* And says to us, "Thank you for listening to the whole lesson! Everyone cuts Jesus off before He's finished!"] – John 11:20-32 ESV

As Ecclesiastes says, there's a time for everything. (Ecc 3:1) We're called to be *doers* of the Word, not *hearers only*. (James 1:22) There's a time to be a doer and a time to be a hearer.

Just, **don't be up and running when you should be sitting.** And, **don't be sitting when you should be up and running.** We should sit and listen so we'll be ready to jump and run!



What do you do when you first get up? Whatever we put first will dominate our attention that day. If I get up and watch the news, it dominates my concerns. If I get up and pour over my to-do list, that's what dominates my thoughts. If I get up and Amazon, ebay, or Facebook, *that's* what dominates my imagination. **Our first thoughts each day will work for us or against us.**



Yet, we often begin each day by immediately distracting ourselves and dividing our attention and allowing this world to dominate our thoughts.



[James has a simple remedy] Draw near to God and He will draw near to you ... purify your hearts, you double-minded. – James 4:8 NKJ

Singleness of purpose will purify your heart.

There is unbelievable relief when we're set free from divided attention, when we finally decide on the focus of our life. **You can't be torn apart if you're pulled in one direction.**

So, let's serve the Lord our undivided attention.