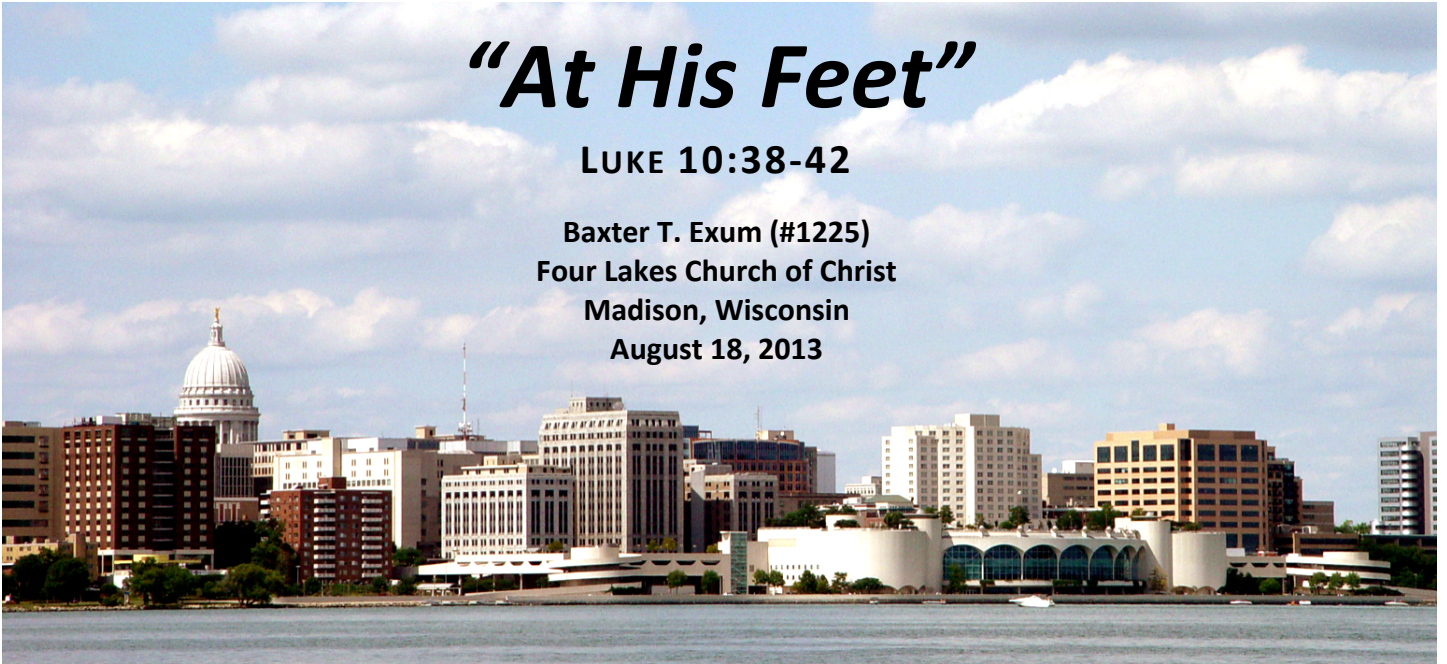


“At His Feet”

LUKE 10:38-42

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Most of us have probably seen the bumper sticker, “Honk if you love Jesus – text and drive if you want to meet Him right now.” We are thankful for that reminder, because we know something about the dangers of distracted driving. I find it interesting that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has a website dedicated exclusively to the dangers of distracted driving. The website is www.distraction.gov, and the site explains that there are three main ways to be distracted as we drive – we can be distracted visually (by looking at something other than the road), we can be distracted manually (by doing something other than driving), and we can be distracted cognitively (by thinking about something other than driving). The website explains that texting is especially dangerous because we are doing all three at the same time – we are looking at something other than driving, we are doing something other than driving, and we are thinking about something other than driving – and we are being distracted in these three ways all at the same time. The research shows, in fact, that sending or receiving a text takes our eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, they explain that that's like driving the length of an entire football field, blindfolded. A lot can happen in 4.6 seconds. The latest statistics show that in 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver and that an additional, 387,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver. The research shows that a person texting will react about a second slower than a person who is intoxicated. The danger, of course, comes in the distraction.

This morning I would like for us to think about the danger of being distracted spiritually, and I would like for us to do this by looking together at an incident in the life of Christ, an incident that took place in the home of two of his very good friends, the two women, Mary and Martha. The account is found in Luke 10 (p. 1620). I don't think anybody would disagree when I say that we are living in a very busy world. We are living in a world where it is very easy for us to be distracted. It is very easy to get so busy that we fail to do what we absolutely need to be doing. So, as we come near the end of our season of summer recreation here in Wisconsin, I would like for all of us to take a few minutes to reevaluate the priorities in our lives.

We know from the Scriptures that Mary and Martha were sisters, Lazarus was their brother, and that all of them were very close friends of Jesus. There were a number of occasions, in fact, when Jesus spent time in their house. One of those times is described in Luke 10. In Luke 10, we will find that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem for the crucifixion, and this morning's account takes place in Bethany, a small village about 2 miles

outside Jerusalem – this would be like stopping in Monona on our way to downtown Madison. With this in mind, let us please notice Luke 10:38-42,

Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

As we look back at these five verses, I would invite you to keep your Bibles open to this passage as we ask ourselves what this passage really means to those of us who are now living on the other side of the world and now separated by nearly 2000 years. As we study, I would like to bring out two ideas.

I. First of all, I'd like for us to focus in on the fact that MARTHA WAS DISTRACTED.

But before we tear into Martha, I want to point out at least a few things that Martha did RIGHT. And to start with, I want to point out that Martha had an awesome spirit of hospitality. In many ways, she was like the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4, the woman who had a special room in her home set aside for the prophet Elisha. Martha understood what the apostle Paul would write later in Romans 12:13, that Christians are to practice hospitality, that we are to contribute to the needs of the saints. Martha was willing to have Jesus as a guest in her home, and this is good, this is commendable. I would point out here that Jesus was most likely not the only guest. Remember: Jesus normally traveled with his twelve disciples. So, we are probably talking about Martha feeding a group of at least 16 people, if we include Jesus, the 12 disciples, along with her brother and sister, Mary and Lazarus. One author pointed out that she was serving not "Teacher Jesus" but "Team Jesus." The Lord traveled with a group. So think about it: Most of us today might get at least a little bit stressed if we were to have 15 people drop by for dinner. Martha, though, was an active worker. We can say this to Martha's credit, that she was willing to care for those who stayed in her home. She was willing to sacrifice her time and resources for the Lord's benefit. So, first of all, she was very hospitable.

Secondly, I would also point out that Martha was a faithful follower of the Lord at this time. Martha believed in Jesus Christ. There were many people who saw the Lord who had seen the miracles, who had heard Jesus speak, who had not even made it to the point of belief. On another occasion, in John 11, Martha had another conversation with Jesus, and Martha responded to the Lord's question of whether she believed in him with these words, ***"Yes, Lord: I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."*** And so we can say that Martha was far ahead of her peers in terms of her belief in Jesus as the Son of God. And so there was a lot that Martha did that was good.

However, we find at the beginning of verse 40 that Martha was ***"distracted"*** with all of her preparations. As I understand it, this is the only time that this word is found in the entire New Testament, and the word comes from two words that are combined – a preposition meaning "around," and then a word referring to drawing something out, as you might draw a sword out of its sheath. In my mind, at least, I see this word, and I picture somebody very quickly drawing a sword and then spinning around. Or maybe in modern terms: Somebody drawing a firearm out of a holster and then very quickly spinning around, almost in a kind of panicked situation – maybe the person is almost scared, or surprised, or almost rattled by something. In my mind, that is the picture painted with this word here at the beginning of verse 40. Martha is ***"distracted."*** There is so

much going on that she cannot really focus, but she is in that stage where she is spinning around – there is too much going on. Most of us have probably been there!

But imagine being in Martha's situation – 2000 years ago, how do you feed 15 people? She can't just go pull something out of the freezer. She can't run down to Woodman's for a couple of those family-sized lasagnas. She had no microwave for heating up some leftovers. Most likely, even the water she needed for cooking probably had to be brought in from some distance – the water had to be carried in buckets. So, Martha, as she is spinning around, sees her sister very calmly sitting there at the Lord's feet, and Martha has finally had enough – so, she **"came up to"** the Lord (in the middle of verse 40). That phrase, **"came up to,"** actually comes from one Greek word, and the word literally refers to "standing upon" somebody. In another passage, the same word is translated as **"attacking"** somebody. So, we almost have the idea that Martha kind of bursts into the room. She has had enough of this! And so she confronts the Lord toward the end of verse 40, **"Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."** Counselors sometimes refer to this as "triangulation," where you don't go to the person you have a problem with, but you bring in a more powerful third party – you bring in somebody of a higher rank, somebody you think will take your side in the matter. We see this with children – one will call in mom or dad in an effort to nail the other one over some issue. We see this with kids who get in trouble in school. They get in trouble for not listening in class, and they tell their parents how mean their teacher was to them. They don't tell their parents how they were goofing off in class. Their goal is to get their teacher in trouble. Of course, as I was growing up, I prayed that my parents would not find out about anything I did at school. I knew that my parents would take the teacher's side! But this is what Martha did: She complained to Jesus, assuming that the Lord would rebuke her sister for skipping out on the preparation of dinner.

By the way, Martha uses an interesting word here when she wants Jesus to tell Mary to **"help"** her. In Greek, that little word is actually a huge word, and it literally means "to take hold with at the side." And so, it's almost like Martha is standing there trying to move a piano, and she wants Mary to get up and take the other side of it. Or, we might think of those old two-man saws. You can't use one of those on your own. So, Martha was ordering the Lord to tell Mary to get up and take the other end of this dinner. She wanted Mary to **"help."** She assumed that she was the one doing what the Lord wanted by helping with dinner. You might remember: Last week we talked about the danger of presumptuous sin, the danger of presuming to know what God really wants. In a sense, that is what Martha was doing here. She presumed that the Lord would want Mary to come help out in the kitchen.

However, notice the Lord's response. In verse 41, the Lord answered and said to her, **"Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things."** In other words, the Lord did some reflective listening. In the Lord's first words, he summarized what he was really hearing in her complaint. We might say that the Lord affirmed Martha's frustration, "Yes, I hear what you are saying" [paraphrased]. We will get to the rest of the Lord's response in just a moment, but for now, think about this: Martha is under the same roof with the Son of God with only six months until his crucifixion, but she is too busy, she is too distracted to pay attention! And so the Lord continues with a gentle rebuke. What I appreciate here is that the Lord is not upset about dinner being late. Instead, the Lord is clearly upset about the effect that this distraction is having on Martha. The Lord is concerned about Martha being **"worried and bothered."**

We think of the parable of the soils in Matthew 13 where some of the seed fell among the thorns – the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choked out the word of God, and it became unfruitful. There is a danger to being distracted. And that is where we apply this passage to our lives today. If Martha could be distracted by a meal, even to the point of ignoring the Son of God sitting right there in her own house, then

how much easier must it be for us to get distracted from what is truly important today! There are so many ways for us to get pulled around and ultimately to be pulled completely away from those things that are truly important. There is a danger in distraction.

- II. **So, we have the negative side – we have the danger of distraction – but let us not leave it there! The Lord didn't leave it there, but he went on and gave a positive instruction here as he clearly pointed out that ONLY ONE THING IS REALLY NECESSARY IN THIS LIFE.**

After making sure that Martha knew she was heard, the Lord's response comes in verse 42 as he says, ***"...but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*** And that's it! We don't have a resolution here. We don't have Martha's response. All we have is the Lord's answer to Martha's complaint as he points out that ***"only one thing is necessary."*** In fact, the Lord doesn't even come out and tell us what that ***"one thing"*** is. Instead, he leaves it up to us to figure out by pointing us back to the example of Mary, and the only thing we know about Mary from this passage comes from verse 39 as we find that she was ***"...seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word."*** The ***"one thing,"*** then, the one ***"necessary"*** thing, is that we take time to truly listen to God's word. We think of King David and his attitude in our scripture reading this morning, ***"One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple"*** (Psalm 27:4). King David understood the lesson that Jesus was trying to get across to Martha: In this life, only one thing is truly important.

In a world of seemingly endless distractions, the Lord is telling us in this little paragraph of Scripture that we are to listen to his word. Yes, Martha was busy – she was busy serving the Son of God, she was busy doing a good thing – but in her business, she was missing what was truly important – she was missing the long view, she was missing the eternal. In the big scheme of things, who cares if dinner is a little bit late?

Most of us here this morning have a lot of stuff going on in our lives right now. We have children. We have family who are not well. We have the ongoing stress of making a living. In a few weeks, some of you will have some challenging assignments at school. As God's people, it is good that we deal with these things – we need to live, we need to practice hospitality, we need to make a living, we need to raise our children. But in the big picture, let us not forget what is truly important.

To me, it is sobering to think that Satan has a way of making us think that there is no time for God. Satan wants us to think that we don't have time to read the Bible – that that time does not exist! So here we are in a nation where most of us have 5 or 6 or even 20 Bibles in our homes, but we don't have time to read, because we need to get up and do this or that. Do we see how that works? I can have a pile of Bibles over at my house, there are billions of people in this world who don't even have one Bible, there are some nations where it is illegal to even own a Bible, but if Satan makes me think that I am too busy, that puts me in the same category with those don't even have a Bible. In our society, we have the idea that we are too busy for spiritual things. But let us never forget: If we are too busy for God, then we are too busy. And if we are too busy for God, then it is a sin to be busy. And like Martha, we need the reminder that ***"only one thing is necessary."***

When it comes to setting priorities, I want to point out something else from the Lord's reply here. Notice the Lord's praise for Mary, as he said that ***"...Mary has chosen the good part."*** Here is just another reminder, then, that we choose what we do in this life. If we are busy to the point of distraction, it is because we have chosen to be busy to the point of distraction. Isn't that what the Lord is saying here? If we are to give the Lord the attention he deserves, it will be because of a choice on our part. If we run out of time and fail to pay

attention to God, it is because we have chosen to do so. If we are too busy to worship and study and pay attention to God, we are too busy.

Conclusion:

As we close our thoughts on this passage, I would ask that we all respond to the lesson here by asking ourselves how we're doing in this area. Do we take time each day to spend some time at the Lord's feet? Do we spend some time every day with God in prayer? Do we spend time each day reading the word of God? For most of us, if we don't, the reason is: We are too busy. If we think we are too busy, I hope that we will take a moment to reevaluate how we choose to spend our time, and let us choose, like Mary, ***"...the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*** Mary made a choice, and it was apparently a choice that stuck with her for some time, because each time we see her in the gospel accounts, we find her at the feet of Jesus. We have this passage, and then we have the scene at the death of her brother Lazarus. Martha ran and met the Lord on the road first, she told Mary, and then Mary went out, and this is what the Bible says in John 11:32-33, ***"Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled."*** And then (in verse 35), the Bible says that, ***"Jesus wept."*** Of course, we know from the rest of the chapter that Jesus ended up raising Lazarus from the dead. But that is the second time we have Mary at the Lord's feet.

And then, Mary is found at the feet of Jesus again, in the next chapter (in John 12). This is something that happens less than a week before the crucifixion. This is John 12:1-3,

Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Mary, therefore, can be found at the Lord's feet three times in the New Testament. Mary understood that putting Jesus first was a choice. She knew that sitting at the Lord's feet was more important than anything. The question this morning is: What about us? Are we focused on what is truly important? We know that as we drive it is very important to stay focused on our driving. It is important that we do not get distracted. But it is so much more important that we stay focused spiritually.

As we close, I would like to change the graphic up here as a reminder, and I'd like to do this more often at the end of our time together each week, just to help us understand what God is inviting us to do. God sent his only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He took our place on the cross. This is the good news (or the gospel). In response to that sacrifice, we obey the good news (we obey the gospel), and we obey the good news by reenacting the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in our own lives. We die to sin; that is, we repent – we turn away from sin. We then allow ourselves to be buried with Christ in baptism. We are dipped under the water. The root of the word "baptism" refers to something being dipped or immersed under the water. At that point, we are then raised up out of the water as we begin the Christian life. At that point, we are born into God's family and the Christian life begins. If you have any questions, we hope you will let us know. If you are already a Christian and need us to pray about something on your behalf, again, let us know – write your concern on one of the cards in the pews and bring it or send it to the front or even give it to me after the

service. But, if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com