

July 20, 2025

Luke 10:38-42

“Come, Sit at Jesus’ Feet!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Ave.
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

An American Christian author tells the following story:

Not long after moving to Chicago, I called a wise friend to ask for some spiritual direction. I described the pace of life in my current ministry. The church where I serve tends to move at a fast clip. I also told him about our rhythms of family life: we are in the van-driving, soccer-league, piano-lesson, school-orientation-night years. I told him about the present condition of my heart, as best I could discern it. What did I need to do, I asked him, to be spiritually healthy? Long pause. "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life," he said at last. Another long pause. "Okay, I've written that one down," I told him, a little impatiently. "That's a good one. Now what else is there?" I had many things to do, and this was a long-distance call, so I was anxious to cram as many units of spiritual wisdom into the least amount of time possible. Another long pause. "There is nothing else," he said. "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

That's a tall order isn't it?! We live in a fast paced society. A constant danger for all of us is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied, with you name it, that we will settle for mediocre living and poor spiritual health or no spiritual health at all. The irony is that all the conveniences of our luxurious society are designed to give us all the time we need for everything, but whatever time we think we have, we often waste it on mediocrity or less. The same American Christian author goes on to say: "We will skim our lives instead of actually living them." Isn't that the sad truth?! If it so happens that our life will flash before our eyes when we die I shudder to think of what we will have to see.

Jesus enters a certain village and a woman by the name of Martha welcomes him. Jesus accepts her most friendly and generous reception into her home and life. We are told that she has a sister by the name of Mary who sat at the feet of the Lord and was listening to his word. But Martha was *distracted* with much serving. That word *distracted* is a dandy! This verb portrays a person who is being pulled or dragged about on every side that results in an inner agitation and loss of focus. Sounds like us. It does not convey a simple busyness that happens with everyday living. No. It depicts a person who is absorbed with an extreme or excessive concern with something so that their attention is diverted from what matters the most.

What is unique in the text is that Martha was distracted with the service of hospitality. Therefore, what she was doing was not mediocre or a complete waste. She was serving Jesus, and we would expect others who were with him. And again our gospel lesson states that while she was "distracted with much serving" her sister Mary "sat at the feet of the Lord and was listening to his word." And so Martha goes up to Jesus and says to him: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Martha was *anxious* and *troubled* about many things. Those are heavy words. When it says that she was *anxious* it means that she was falling into pieces. When someone is falling into pieces, it means that

they are so upset that they cannot control their emotions, or deal with the things that they have to do. That's what it means when we read that Martha was *anxious*. And when it says that she was *troubled* it means that she was in an uproar. We would say that her anxiety had become so great that she was now making a scene.

The language of the text really paints a picture that hits home. We can be like Martha. Maybe we are a lot like her. In the many things of life, whether noble or mediocre or less, we can fall into pieces and become unable to focus and see what is most important. The help that we need in the many things of life is noted in Mary, who has traded the many things for the one thing needed. As one Lutheran commentary remarks: "The issue here is whether one is first to serve the Lord or first to be served by him." And sometimes, I might add, the issue can even be more far reaching. Do we allow the Lord to serve us and then we serve him and others, or do we just devote ourselves to mediocrity or less and forget the Lord and others all together? The hurriedness of our lives and our inability to sit at Jesus' feet at church, where there is preaching and teaching and the sacraments, needs to be addressed in our own lives.

I do not think that Jesus points out the example of Mary sitting at his feet to listen to his teaching as a dig toward Martha, although I suppose it might have felt that way to Martha in the heat of the moment. The truth is that Martha is to see her sister and understand that her sister means her no ill will. Martha is to sit down with Mary at Jesus' feet. It's as if he is saying, "Martha, if you really want to deal with your distracted ways, all the anxiety that it is causing you, and your desire to cause a scene, then sit at my feet with Mary. I can help you. My presence and teaching will be my hospitality to you, and this must come first before anything else and whatever you may intend to do. Let me first soothe your soul with me and what I have to say and give. Then what you intend to do for me and others will take on an entirely different outlook. And I'm sure that Mary will be overjoyed to help."

I know that I have just put a lot of words into Jesus' mouth, but the nature of what we are hearing in our gospel account lends credibility to the words. In his commentary on *Luke [9:51-24:53]*, Dr. Arthur A. Just writes:

She [Mary] sits at the feet of Jesus to receive divine service from him. Instead of trying to serve Jesus first, she allows Jesus first to serve her with his gifts. Hospitality to the Lord is first expressed in faith's passive acceptance of God's Word, where the gifts of God's kingdom will be found. After receiving the gifts, there will be time for an expression of hospitality in response (459).

Come, Sit at Jesus' Feet! Look at what he has to give to you in himself and his teaching. See the greatness of his love for you in the life he lived and the cross he endured to forgive you of all your sins and help you in every way. There is forgiveness and help in your distractions, anxieties, and troubles that you have caused for yourself and others. Jesus is saying: "when you see the forever paradise that is found only in me, it is time to ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life. The many things can wait. They are not as important you think. And without me, whether the many things are noble or mediocre or less, they are causing you distraction, anxiety, and trouble because you looking at them without seeing me and my love

for you. One thing is necessary. Consider Mary who chose the good portion. Yes, like Mary, come sit at my feet and choose [receive] *the good portion.*”

Just what exactly is the good *portion*? Here’s another word that is full of weight. The word *portion* points to something that has its origin in God who is good and is allotted. It is to share in something wonderful. One is either receiving the good portion, or has excluded themselves from it. To receive the good portion means to sit at Jesus’ feet and hear his teaching. To exclude oneself from the share is to be distracted, pulled, or dragged away by many things. What the good *portion* is, is well defined by what we read in Col. 1:12-14, which is incidently right before our epistle lesson for this morning. There Paul writes that the Father “... has qualified you to share [to have a portion] in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

It really is not a burdensome command is it?! Or, at least it isn’t supposed to be. No doubt though that our sin gets in the way. So when it feels as if it is a burden to come to church we should think of Martha who was distracted by many things. **Come, Sit at Jesus’ Feet!** Come to the *good portion* - the share that is yours - the inheritance of the saints in light. The Father through his Son in the flesh has truly delivered you from the domain of darkness (the distractions, anxieties, and troubles) and has transferred you to the saving rule of his Son. In him is your redemption - the forgiveness of sins - the one thing needed!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott