

# Conversation with Mary & Martha

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Preacher: Gordon R

[0:00] This is a sermon from King's Church West Northean. Okay folks, well, so good to pray together.

! I know we don't do it very often on a Sunday afternoon, but it's great to connect with the Lord together. So thank you. So we're continuing our series today, and you may be pleased to hear, because of that huge update, it's a bit of a shorter message today, but one that I think is really important as we keep moving into all that God has for us.

And we're in Luke 10, verses 38 to 42. So a little short passage of scripture that has some really brilliant things in it for us to look at and learn from Jesus.

And we're just asking this question, this whole series of how does Jesus kind of deal with the people he meets, and what can we learn for ourselves and the people around us and people who don't know Jesus? And this is the story of Mary and Martha.

So it goes like this, Luke 10, 38 to 42. As Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Cato Village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

[1:09] 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.

She came to him and asked, 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 are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.

I wonder which are you likely to associate with? We've got the sister Mary sitting at the Lord's feet listening to what he said, and Martha is doing the hoovering.

Or she is, I don't know what it looked like to be in the house this many years ago, but she's definitely busy. She's preparing the house to make sure it's ready, the preparations that had to be made.

[2:15] My hunch is you might be doers, but actually let's see, shall we? Who do you associate with in this story, okay? Mary sitting at the Lord's feet, do you think, oh yeah, I totally get her in the story?

Or are you Martha, I just need to get things ready. Like, okay, hands up. You'll know what Jesus has said. He's going to see the answer first. That's the problem, isn't it?

But let's be honest, okay? Hands up. Are you more of the distracted doer, Martha, preparing for what has to be made? Anyone willing to say? I know I am. Yeah, absolutely. Okay, that's what I thought.

Okay, good. I'm not going to ask the Marys. We know who you are. You're sitting there feeling quite smart because Jesus approves. Okay. So, loads of us. The default is, I love doing.

We look at the story of Martha and Mary and we think, yeah, Martha, you're immature or you've not got it sorted or you're just doing the wrong thing. But I love, it's Spurgeon, he said.

[3:12] Her fault was not that she served, nor was it that she served too much. We serve him. Him. Jesus, Lord of Lord, King of Kings. How could we serve him too much?

Right? I mean, surely it's impossible. If he's as great as we know he is, surely we can't serve him enough. And she appears to be preparing the house for him. Spurgeon says, I serve should be the motto of every Christian and the princes of heaven and princesses too.

She is a legend of the faith. Her maturity wasn't the issue. Her fault wasn't her hands. It was her heart had become kind of cumbered is one of the translations or distracted.

There is, Jesus spots some really important things in the very careful choice of words that he uses that I want us to look at to say, what is he really saying to people who are racing around really, really busy?

I've got to be honest with you. You've just heard us do the building update. I've been really busy. I stand here with tired eyes and tired legs. I'm in my 40s, so that's pretty normal, they tell me.

[4:19] But, you know, I've been a busy man. And I know you guys are hardworking, busy people. And also, where we live on the planet, in this place, at this time, means you probably have this plague of busyness.

And if you don't, you're probably the exception. We know there's loads of stats about how hard we all work in our kind of culture and in our age. And we are busy people.

Culturally, we're busy. In our heads, we can be busy. In our hearts, we can be busy. So Jesus chooses three key phrases that he uses to reveal what's really going on and what he wants for her and what he wants for Martha and what he wants for you and me.

And we're very simply today, we're going to look at those three words in the text and we're going to kind of get into them a little bit deeper and allow ourselves to be the one Jesus is speaking to.

To say, do you realize what's going on and do you realize what you need? So firstly, Jesus says, you are worried. Now, my Greek is shocking. So forgive me.

[5:24] I've got notes, extensive notes to try and get this right. But it's peripatō. I thought it sounded Italian, if I'm honest. But peripatō is a very specific word that he uses. And it means pulled apart by many things.

Okay, it means, I mean, I imagine it as almost a five-way tug of war. Because if I thought of the priorities for the average person, like we're not just thinking I need to prepare the house. We're probably thinking I need to prepare the house.

I need to look after the children. I need to plan my work for tomorrow. I need to think about my job and my future and my finances. And we're, you know, that feeling, right? Of like, I'm pulled here. I'm pulled there. I'm pulled there. Peripatō has that sort of hint of fragmentation.

Of being like, just almost like you would pull a pizza apart. You know, it's not together. It's like, getting this direction, that direction. If you have a pulse, I reckon you are peripatō.

You're pulled apart. You're in a five-way tug of war. Dragged, pulled, weighed. The effect of that is a kind of fragmentation of the soul, where we have many tasks to complete, many voices to listen to, many different directions, many priorities.

[6:34] And I think that's exactly what Jesus is seeing here. He's saying the exact phrase there is, you are worried, verse 41, and upset about many things.

That many-pulled worry. And then he says this. He says, but few things are needed.

And this need is Kraya. And if you have a pulse, I reckon you also, you're Kraya. He is, he's saying deep need.

He's not saying, you know, you're pulled apart in many directions and you have this other thing you could choose as well. He says Kraya, which is like we need water or air.

It's like essential, deep need that we can't keep living without. And he almost, there's a little hint there that he's actually saying you need one meal.

[7:33] You're looking for all these other things that are up-occupying, but you need your needs met by this one thing. Basic human necessities, he's spotting. He's saying you're pulled in many directions, but you have an essential need.

And that essential need is this. Jesus says one thing, Henos, is needed. So not only if you have a pulse, I think we're peripatō.

We're pulled in lots of directions. If you have a pulse, you're Kraya. You actually have a deep need that is so really essential. He says one thing is needed.

That one thing is this, Henos, Henos. One, one is needed. Not many, just the one. It's dangerous when a preacher starts to talk about hand gestures when Jesus is speaking.

But I'm going to do it because I know you can hold it lightly. I kind of imagine him going, like, look, peripatō, you're pulled in all these directions. The hovering, the washing up, the looking after, like, whatever, whatever. You have a need.

[8:41] One thing is needed. I'm pretty certain he's pointing to himself and saying the Heno. I'm the one. I am. You need me. Because it is Jesus, being Jesus, has left, has said, there are many things that you are torn apart by, but one thing you need.

And he leaves it ambiguous. It's ambiguous. It's totally ambiguous whether he means just himself. Is his presence all we need? Is it his word that we need? Or is it the impact he has on us that we need?

He, you know, every commentator I've looked at says the same thing. Jesus, could you not have, like, just said, me, me, it's not me, you need me. He doesn't do that because he loves to leave the answer a little bit unspoken and leave us to realise it.

But it's clear in this play on words that many things worry us. And we need to be the one who sits at his feet. I don't know if it's to be in his presence because that's enough, or if it's the words that he wants to speak to her that she needs, or if it's the impact he'll have on her.

But he's clearly contrasting the two of them and saying, there are so many things that can worry you. Sit at my feet. Don't add me to your two-list.

[9:55] Make me the centre that holds all the rest together. In the same way that a spoke doesn't, it's not, sorry, the hub in the centre of a wheel is not the spoke. It's the thing in the middle that makes everything else possible.

Jesus here is pointing to himself as the more important one above all the pressures of life. And you and I know that when we turn to him, everything changes.

When we turn to him and we know he's with us, we can endure real hardship. We can endure real frustration. We can find peace in really difficult situations because we know he's the one, the one thing.

He's the water of life and the bread of life. He is better than all those things that pull at us and pull us here, there or everywhere else. When you think about these conversations with Jesus, we often try and ask it in the context of sharing faith or living life with others who don't yet know him.

I reckon this is a point of shared experience. Not just you and I are periopato, but our friends are too because our culture pulls us all in many directions and has many shiny things that excite us and things we have to work towards and keep going, or we feel we have to work towards to keep going to achieve.

[11:18] So we start with a shared point when moving this from this conversation into our lives with our friends. We also have friends who probably find that Jesus is one of many things that they could think about and maybe they're just not choosing to deal with who he is or what he says or how he might change their life.

But one of the best things I think we can do in modelling or in living out this conversation with Jesus is to be found at his feet, is to be found not piously or publicly like the kind of Pharisees or Sadducees, but to just be people who have spent time with him because when we then go into the world, people who don't know him, they spot that and they're confused because they're like, how can you endure that?

How can you deal with that situation? How can you face that and have peace or certainty? That's the most amazing thing. And we see it in each other and we've been with Jesus.

We are fuller of life and we shine like stars for the world to see. We found at his feet. One of our kids is so unashamed about the fact that we're going to church that I find it really challenging.

Do you know? And gosh, that's a humble brag, isn't it? I've just realised it wasn't meant to be at all, but it's like one of my kids, isn't it? No, what I mean is, so when our neighbours say, what are you doing on Sunday afternoon? I usually say, we're just a bit busy actually.

[12:48] And Toby, he'll say, oh, do you want to come to church with us? We're going to church. And I'll be like, oh. Hey guys, I'm a church leader and I find that, so I don't know how you find it.

But he regularly just does this kind of, why don't you come? It's the most normal thing ever that we go and worship Jesus. I think, that's cool. I wish I was a bit more like that. And I think he's made doing this, he knows it's what he needs to be, where he needs to be, to be with people who love Jesus.

And, or I don't know about you, but do you ever feel guilty when you should be doing something really useful at home, but you end up reading your Bible instead? It's okay, you're at the feet of Jesus.

That's what it looks like. Now, do help with the chores, particularly guys, if you're like me and you don't particularly enjoy them, do help with them. But also, you should, like, make sure you make time to be at the feet of Jesus because it's better for you and your family and your neighbours and your friends if we're found at his feet, making him the one thing, not pulled apart by the many things. We need both roots and fruit. And I think I've got a picture to come up of a random fruit tree. There you go. Now, I'm slightly worried the kind of particularly great sort of, well, folks who love gardening might find that there are exceptions to this rule.

[14:13] But as I was thinking about this, I was thinking about the one who is busy and pulled apart and the one who sits at the feet of Jesus and makes him the one thing that meets her need.

To do it, one of those follows the other. One of them doesn't follow the other. Like if I plant this tree when it was much smaller, thank you Google images, but if I put this in the ground, root first, it's going to suck up the goodness of the ground and it's going to bear fruit.

There are other variables involved, I know, but the principle remains the same. It's designed to take the goodness from the soil and the leaves are designed to get the goodness from the sun.

However, if like me, you've ever planted a bulb upside down, they have to work flippin' hard to end up the right way up.

Like they can, but they don't always. You get this little shriveled up plant that tries really hard because some idiots put its root upwards and its shoot pointing downwards. Here's the thing. If you're rooted in him, you actually can't not bear fruit. Like I would argue that it's very hard. If your roots are in him, you're at the feet of Jesus.

[15:16] The serving should and will happen. However, I know, I imagine you know, that being very busy, even with things that you know he's called you to, they don't actually grow devotion that well because it's really hard work to do it the other way around, to be running around, working really hard, meeting everyone's needs if you haven't sat at his feet and been with him.

One leads to the other. Being with him leads to serving others. Serving tends to lead to us being busy and distracted. The difficulty and spurgeon I've borrowed from this as well.

We'll finish in just a moment or two. But spurgeon also says this, which I kind of was relieved by, if I'm honest. He says, the more spiritual the task, the sooner we get tired of it. And the choicest fruits are the hardest ones to rear, to kind of see grow.

Vital spirituality, sitting at the Saviour's feet, is the first thing for our soul's health, for his glory and our usefulness. It's so hard to just spend time being with him and yet, roots lead to fruit.

Planting fruit in the ground does have seeds and it might eventually get there. Let's not overthink that analogy. Okay, so my question, I guess for us today, based on this text, is, is as simple as this.

[16:41] How will you be found at his feet this week? Where will you make time? What will you prioritise him above? Maybe in a new way. Because I know a lot of us spend time connecting with the Lord.

What will it look like for you to really be found deeply devoted to him? Getting yourself rooted in him and trusting him that he will grow fruit in you as a benefit of that.

Because many things, peripato, many things will pull us. One thing, henos, is needed to be found at his feet.

Now, rather than me just give that to you as a question, we're going to put it into practice, which is why we've left worship to last, because we love to just be found at his feet. And one way we do that is to worship together.

It's to just enjoy him and to allow our heart and soul to find its happiness in him. So I've asked Luke if we could have the bulk of worship now as a response to just say, God, in all the goodness you've shown in finances and all the goodness you've shown in looking like we're taking on the building, in, we find ourselves needing to be at your feet, Lord.

[17:56] So let's worship together, shall we? Thank you.