

What would you do if Jesus dropped by your house? You'd be nervous. You weren't expecting him, but this is Jesus, so obviously you'd invite him in. But you'd probably stall him just long enough so others could tidy things up and race to the kitchen to prepare a meal. This is Jesus! You want everything to be just right, but that doesn't leave much time to visit with him. Let's call that Scenario #1.

Scenario #2 goes something like this. Jesus drops by your house. You're be nervous. You weren't expecting him, but this is Jesus, so immediately you'd invite him in. Yes, the house could use some tidying up, but this is Jesus! Since you'd want to spend every moment with him, you don't have time to make a meal. So, you order a pizza and have it delivered. You don't want to take any time away from listening to Jesus and learning more about him.

How many would go with Scenario #1 ... the tidy house, the delicious meal? How many of us would go with #2 ... serve Jesus pizza on your messy couch, with pillows, blankets and toys scattered on the floor? This is Jesus! You'd serve Jesus pizza? Pizza is not the point of today's Bible Story, priorities are with Mary and Martha.

In case you forgot, the headquarters for Jesus' ministry was up north on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, in the city of Capernaum. Whenever Jesus travelled south to Jerusalem, he'd stay in Bethany at the home of his good friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

This particular visit would have carried some additional urgency. It would prepare the sisters for what would happen in the upcoming weeks: their brother Lazarus was about to die, and so was their friend and Savior Jesus. These things would put their faith to the test

When Jesus showed up, Martha made sure he got the royal treatment. She had hoped her sister would pitch in and help, too. But Mary made a bee-line for Jesus, eager to listen to his message about himself, and his sacrifice that would rescue and save sinners.

11 words describe what Mary did that day, **she sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said**, but those few words speak volumes of what is vital in your life and my life, and the life of every believer.

Mary's attitude toward Jesus' words is a model for everyone who calls themselves a follower of Jesus. Nothing is more important for the Christian than to focus our ears and hearts on God's Word.

In sharp contrast to Mary's focus, we're told **Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made**. Martha did value listening to Jesus, but her priority was making sure everything was neat and tidy with her worn out broom, and a meal would be ready to serve her guest of honor.

It bothered her that her sister didn't see it that way. That's why she asked: **"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?"** Martha clearly expected Jesus to agree with her: **"Tell her to help me!"** She thought Jesus would tell Mary: *"Go and help your sister. What we're doing can wait until later."*

In a loving way, Jesus takes direct aim at Martha's misguided priorities: **"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things**. The Greek word translated *"worried,"* could also be translated *"distracted."* It pictures a person's thoughts torn between this, or that, or the other thing. Martha was distracted. She was torn by the many things that needed to be done when Jesus stops by.

You know who loves distractions? Satan's ultimate goal is to distract us away from God. The more distractions he can toss our way, the less room it leaves for God's Word. Here are 4 of his successful distractions:

**1) The ones that take our focus off of God.**

Satan can even use good things, church-related things, to keep our focus off of God. You can serve your church, attend worship and Bible study, but are you focusing on the ministry that *involves* God rather than on God Himself?

**2) The ones that keep us focused on self.** When Satan distracts us with things, or our own

situation and circumstances, it turns our focus from Savior to self. As believers, we need to eliminate a focus on self, and give God his rightful spot in our hearts and lives.

### 3) **The ones that fill us with doubt and worry.**

Satan can fill our minds with all kinds of doubt and worry when we're focused on the distraction, rather than Jesus. Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on water to Jesus ... until he saw the waves around him. Keep staring at Jesus.

### 4) **The ones that steer us away from God's**

**voice.** There are so many voices speaking to us each day. Turn off the endless stream of information flooding our minds, and tune in your ears to God's voice. Create a place for his voice every day.

Since distractions and misplaced priorities pose a danger to our souls, Jesus points to Mary as someone who had their priorities in order: **but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.** Martha was distracted by *"many things,"* but Mary had chosen the *"one thing."*

Now to that all important question: What is the one thing ... that is needed, that is better, that is beneficial for the soul? Here are two answers that many have offered since Jesus first spoke these words: 1) *faith* and 2) *her eagerness to hear God's Word and take it to heart.*

Are either of those the answer this story, not a person's idea, offers? Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening **"to what he said."** Jesus' word is the **"one thing needed"** or **"what is better"** that Mary chose. It is the Word we read, listen to and study.

To make sure this is the best answer, let's run a little test. We know that Mary chose **"the one thing needed,"** or **"what was better."**

Right away that eliminates the *"faith"* answer. Neither Mary, nor any sinner could or ever did choose to believe. Faith is generated in the heart only by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace – the gospel in Word and Sacrament.

If we took the other answer: *her eagerness to hear God's Word and take it to heart,* that would give us the wrong emphasis. We'd be calling attention to what the Christian does, rather than to what God does for the Christian. And besides, that answer is also covered by the statement that **"Mary has chosen what is better."** With her God-given faith Mary chose to hear the Word.

Jesus adds his stamp of approval to Mary's choice: **"and it will not be taken away from her."** Through hearing his Word, faith received Christ as her Savior and all the blessings of his salvation. Those blessings remained hers, as she continued to hear Jesus' teachings.

We know that Jesus' promise came true for her. A few weeks later, Mary anointed Jesus and was publicly criticized for her wasteful act, Jesus defended her when he said that ***she poured this perfume on my body to prepare me for burial.*** That meant she understood that Jesus would give his life as a sacrifice for her and all sinners.

What about Martha? Did Jesus succeed in helping her rearrange her priorities, and remove the distractions? Yes! Martha took to heart what she had overlooked: Jesus came to serve, not to be served. We know that by the way she greeted Jesus at the time of her brother, Lazarus', death: **"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world."**

She was no longer the Martha who was distracted by many things, but she like her sister, she too had chosen the *"one thing."* She had absorbed Jesus' teachings and found comfort and strength at a difficult time.

How are your priorities? How about those distractions? Right now, you're seated at the feet of Jesus. But what about tomorrow? The next? How does one continue to give God's Word – the one thing needful – the place it deserves? By following Mary's example. Worship and Bible Classes here at church, aren't the only opportunities to sit at Jesus' feet. Every time you study God's Word at home whether your devotion is online, in a book or on your phone, you sit at the feet of your Savior.