

Two Sisters, Two Choices, Two Portions  
Luke 10:38-42  
Sermon Prepared for WellSpring Church  
May 22, 2011

1. Introduction

a. Engage: Life is filled with choices. Some easy and inconsequential. Others difficult and of lasting import. Some are so hard we call them dilemmas, which I have heard defined as two options, both seeming good. The way of wisdom is to choose wisely. Some of us may remember the scene in Indiana Jones and the Holy Grail—"He chose poorly."

i. Think of some of our own choices

1. Some are quite insignificant—breakfast this morning.
2. Others have lasting consequences.—wedding today.
3. Between the good and the evil
4. the good and the bad
5. the good and the best
6. One man's word over another's
7. keeping your word or giving it up—Psalm 15:3
8. the now and the later
9. Fear of God or the Fear of Man. (Proverbs 9:25)
10. Pleasures of Sin or Suffering for God's sake (Hebrews 11:25)
11. Praise of man or the approval of God.
12. John 6:27 Labor for the bread that gives life, or the bread that only satisfies for today.
13. partial good now of a full good forever
14. between the word of man and the word of God

ii. The Bible calls us to make choices

1. Josh. 24:15
2. I Kings 18:21
3. Jer. 21:8
4. God and his word—family and friends
5. hay, wood, stubbles or gold, silver precious stones

iii. Paul's Great Cry in Phil 1 live is Christ, to Die is gain.

iv. The choices we make have eternal consequences.

b. Review: Neighbor Love and how it acts

c. Preview: Another look at love, this time it is Savior Love and Self Love

d. Text: Luke 10:38-42

e. Big Idea: There is a choice the lasts

2. Two Sisters

- a. The setting here is certainly to show that some people did welcome Jesus and his disciples. Contrary to the Samaritan village, and in focus of the call to go to a home that offers hospitality.
- b. First we meet Martha
  - i. householder (oldest of three siblings living together--)
  - 1. Widow?
  - 2. Oldest so she got the house?
  - ii. hospitable
    - 1. What is hospitality?
      - a. Opening one's home and showing kindness and welcome and acceptance to others—especially those who are not related or who do not have the opportunity to return the kindness.
      - b. Scripture references
        - i. I Peter 4:9
        - ii. Heb. 13:2
        - iii. Matthew 25:35
      - c. Elders must be hospitable—required esp. of leaders
        - i. I Tim. 3:2
        - ii. Titus 1:8
      - d. Churches must be hospitable as well
    - 2. What are some of the hindrances?
      - a. Busyness—working wife—Sunday like every other day.
      - b. too many friends and family
      - c. fear that you don't have enough,
      - d. embarrassment
      - e. Pride, showing off what you have, what you can do.
    - 3. How sweet for the one who
      - a. came into this world on a night when there was no room for his pregnant mother
      - b. who himself said the Son of man has no place to lay his head
      - c. to be welcomed into this home!
  - iii. Harassed—Jesus tells her she is anxious and troubled.
  - iv. “Were this only account us of the two sisters, we might even doubt Martha's calling into the kingdom. The contrast between the one and the many is put so strongly, and the good and everlasting portion is so expressly assigned to Mary, that we might almost fear lest it pertained to her exclusively.” [A. Moody Stuart, The Three Marys, Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984, first edition 1862) page 159]

- v. And Loved by Christ. (John 11:5) “It is no surprise that he should be the friend of Mary, who sat at his feet and heard his word, and who made him the noblest offering that ever cheered the man of sorrow on earth. But we are apt to wonder if he should be on terms of equal friendship with the anxious and bustling Martha, so troublesome in her very kindness. Yet so it was; Jesus loved Martha and her sister. Nor was his love estranged by her officiousness, so contrary to his own quietness of spirit; he reproves it, yet does not cease to receive the hospitality which gave occasion to the busy carefulness.” [A. Moody Stuart, The Three Marys, Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984, first edition 1862) page 153]
- c. Second we meet Mary
  - i. She who wept as she anointed Jesus feet with perfume and wiped them with her hair in John 12
  - ii. Happy to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen
    - 1. She put her soul’s need and her desire to know Jesus and to be near Jesus above her relationship with her own sister!
    - 2. Notice how Martha names Jesus in John 11 “Teacher”
    - 3. Notice where Mary goes when Jesus arrives at the tomb of Lazarus—to his feet.
  - iii. She moved into first place the next time we encounter these two sisters.
- 3. Two Responses
  - a. Martha serves with distraction and comes up empty
  - b. Mary sits with single hearted focus (Psa. 86:11-12) and is filled
- 4. The Storm:
  - a. “Lord don’t you care?” Here are some mistakes-sins that Martha has made that we each one are either in danger of making or have already made.
    - i. She thought Jesus needed to be served.

“Martha thought Christ had need of her and of her services...she may be taken as doing many things in the service of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of pleasing and honoring him. The case is a sadly common one; of doing much for Christ, yet caring less for Christ himself, his teaching, presence, and fellowship. Absent from Jesus she was working for Jesus, and she grudged to be left by her sister unaided in the work. She imagined that Christ had great need of her services, and that it would please him best to provide many things to honor him...

It is far easier and more natural for every one of us to seek to serve Christ, that to be willing to be saved by his service and suffering for us. The doctrinal knowledge of truth often makes no practical difference in this respect; and the soul seeking salvation ever attempts to make itself acceptable to Christ. It

is an exceeding great joy, when we discover that Christ has no need of us and our labors; but that we need him, and that without any works of ours he gives himself freely to us." [A. Moody Stuart, The Three Marys, Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984, first edition 1862) page 169-170]

- ii. She might have even thought that she would receive blessing by her service, a reward, notice, a commendation.
- iii. She was distracted with much serving (Jesus adds anxious and troubled). This word distracted means drawn away. Philip Ryken says she lost her focus. I'd say she has the wrong priority. Oh how easy it is to become distracted in life— anxious and troubled about many things, drawn away from the true priority to a lesser one.
  - 1. Spurgeon reminds us that there is nothing wrong with serving, it is the fact that she grew distracted in her serving. Women have walked away from sermons on this passage feeling beaten down for their right care for their family's needs.

See "One thing needful" <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1015.htm>

- 2. This is so easy to do. The urgent takes the place of the important, the squeaking wheel get the grease. this is why it is important to know why you are doing what you are doing.
  - 3. She lost her priority
- iv. She also lost perspective. She looked to herself, to her work, to her goals, to her plans and put them before everything else— she gave in it seems to self-pity. "I wouldn't have to do so much if someone else would pick up the slack. No one knows how much I do, no one cares, not even God. God don't you know how much I am doing for you? Don't you care how much I am working, toiling, sacrificing?
  - 1. It seems like this is what will always happen when we make things and ourselves the priority of our lives...
  - 2. My own experience with self-pity. We try to pay ourselves for what we think we should be getting.
- v. She moved into resentment. Why, she wonders am I in this situation? Why am I getting behind? Self-pity moves to resentment and blame.
  - 1. Marriage—50/50? self-interest versus other interest.
  - 2. Work—unappreciated—do your work as unto the Lord
  - 3. Church
  - 4. Ministry
    - a. Sunday School
    - b. Musicians
    - c. Deacons on a work day

5. Pastors—I can't tell you how susceptible I am to this kind of distraction, self-pity, resentment and blame. You don't know the battle that someone may be fighting here—this is one of my battles—because my priority is not on the joy of being with Jesus and the joy of working along side of him, but instead my focus becomes my sacrifice, my cost, my lost earthly pleasures. You may see yourself here, but I can't imagine any one is a bigger failure in this area than I am.
6. And what a tragedy when our loss of priority, our wrong perspective, and our self pity and our passion take us away from the only source of Joy we have—sitting at Jesus' feet and drinking from the well that never runs dry, feasting and the bread of life saying with David "One thing I have desired..."

"Mary self-righteously assumed that her sister ought to be serving Jesus in the same way that she was. This attitude is common in the church, especially among people who think they are working hard in Christian ministry. We assume others should have the same priority that we have, and we look disapprovingly on their lack of commitment. Why isn't every volunteering to help? Why aren't there more people supporting this ministry? Why don't people notice what I am doing? Whether we are involved in children's ministry, or adult ministry, or adult discipleship, or mercy, we resent it when people do not make our ministry their priority." (Philip Ryken, *Luke* page 557)

"Martha was so sure that what she was doing was what Christ most needed and wanted. We are like that. It is so natural to think that Jesus needs our work and that he cannot do without us. The preacher wonders what would become of the church without him (and perhaps the people dream of what it would be like without him!) The elder thinks that if her were removed the whole place would crumble. The evangelist imagines that no one would be converted if her were to retire. How self-deceived we tend to be. A fly on the wall of the church might as well imagine that everything going on below him is dependent upon his presence and would cease if he them flew away." (Kent Hughes, *That You may Know the Truth, Vol. One*, 397)

- vi. It doesn't take long for this to happen. First we lose our priority –In Martha's case it was her desire to serve and welcome Jesus. Martha's busyness and sense of purpose kept her away from Jesus. We should not allow anything to keep us away from God and his word, the time and place of public worship. A.W. Tozer said that anything that keeps me from the bible is my enemy. What ever that thing is that stands between you and worship is a distraction. Then we lose our perspective and we become susceptible to self-pity. From there it is a slippery step to resentment, anger and blame. There is a real

ugliness here. There is no attractiveness in this kind of ministry or serving.

vii. The worst part here is that she ultimately blamed Jesus for her situation. This where it always goes. All of our complaints and grumbling, all of our self pity and resentment are directed at God.

b. Martha, Martha

i. What do we have here?

1. Here is reproof—you are looking at this wrongly
2. here is caution—your soul is in danger
3. Here is compassion—how do you hear him speaking?  
Compassion and love
4. here is an opportunity to return to the proper focus.

ii. He doesn't take sides!

iii. He points to what Mary has chosen—the one thing necessary.  
What is this?

1. Seeking Jesus? Nearness to Jesus?
2. Attending on his Word—(See Luke 11:27-28)
3. Filling the true need of her soul with the only means of satisfaction.

iv. He points to what Martha has chosen, the many things that are not necessary

5. Two portions

a. What is a portion?

b. One that cannot be lost.

- i. Psalm 119:30, 57, 173
- ii. Good abiding
- iii. filling peace giving

c. [Which means ] there is one that can be lost. Martha loved her cares.  
She chose her portion

- i. many thing
- ii. many cares
- iii. may burdens
- iv. and she would not have been happy without them
- v. but she is not happy with them either.

d. What will you choose for your portion today?

- i. Love of Self
- ii. Love of Jesus—the love that never quits