

## **Are you Martha or Mary? – Too busy for God?**

Luke 10.38 to 42

I would like you to show a little scene from the film 'chicken run' which many of you may have known but if not, you may be able to somehow relate to it.

We mustn't panic!!!! Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

### **Ever felt this way?**

I think I felt like this a lot of times in my life and still do here and there.

Monday morning for example, the mountains of work on the desk somehow do not disappear over the weekend, do they? Then phone is ringing straight away at dot of 9am of course it is a problem; then a lot of e-mails to go through; 5 colleagues ask you about something at the same time; phone ringing again.....and somehow I hear myself saying 'you must not panic' and then normally more likely inside of me I go ahhhhhhhhhh.....the Lord is my strength I hear myself saying but still somehow not sure what to do first.

I am sure you can tell similar stories from work or from home. You just came from work, trying to prepare a meal for the family; one kid is screaming the other runs off somewhere and the other just decides to give you a big hug and do not want to let go and there is much more in your mind to do after the meal.....I must not panic.....ahhhhhhh.

I wonder how Martha felt. Jesus' time as we know was not the age of mobile phones where he would phone Martha to say 'yes we are now one hour walk away just finished preaching we are all quite hungry and I see you in an hour'.

It just says "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. In other translations it says: 'As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem...'. "

Martha and Mary lived in Bethany with their brother Lazarus. Bethany was the first place you would come to if you are on the way to Jerusalem just after the “wilderness”. It is located to the eastern side of Mt Olives overlooking the Jordan valley. If you have been to Israel, you would know how this place looks like today and where Martha’s house was.

It is believed that they were friends of Jesus and as we know the three of them are mentioned later in the bible few times. But this story we only find in Luke.

It is most likely that both sisters heard Jesus preaching before as well.

Also in another translation it says Martha welcomed THEM into her home.

We don’t know what Martha was doing at the moment Jesus and his disciples and maybe few more followers arrived. We do not know exactly how many they were but properly minimum 13 of them. Have you ever prepared a meal for around 15 people without knowing that they are coming? (We do not know from the passage if Martha knew or not but let’s say she did not know) would you feel if they would just show up??? Maybe like ....we mustn’t panic....ahhhhh???

Martha was doing what a good Jewish woman would do, to be a good host, preparing food, try to serve him with the best she can. And what is her sister Mary doing? “Just” sitting at the feet of Jesus. If I put myself in Martha’s shoes I would think: “Why is she not helping me? Can she not see that I need help? Look now the vegetables are almost burned!!! Come on, help!

It is the tradition that we must be good hosts we are a well known family here. We cannot risk that the people hear that our family is not able to serve the guest well. And why is she sitting there? Listen to the Lord? That’s not respectable for a Jewish woman to listen to teaching with all the other men. It is men’s stuff.

And what is Jesus doing about it? He is after all a Jewish “teacher” why is he not saying anything? He should tell her off and tell her to be a good Jewish women and servant. Does he not see that I need

help? Well yes maybe I would like to sit there too but who is doing the work? I have to say something!!!!”

And then she says: **“Lord don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”**

Wow! I do feel for her but how brave of her too.....she recognized Jesus as Lord because she calls him Lord doesn’t she? And in the next sentence she tells the LORD what to do and tells him to tell her sister to help her. That is quite something isn’t it; to tell the Lord what to do and what to say? Are we not sometime like that? At least she was earnest and real to him. But I think in that moment she was convinced that Jesus would tell her sister as a Jewish Rabbi to help her. Otherwise why would she have said that?

And what happens next?

Jesus answered: **‘Martha, Martha you are worried and upset about many things but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her’.**

Wow what an answer. Absolutely unexpected for sure. If I was Martha, I would have said ‘What?’ Sorry can you repeat this please? What did you just say?

She was hoping for help here and now she is the one being “told off”. Isn’t she? How would you feel? I think I would be shocked, angry, confused, disappointed and hurt.

When I read this the first couple of times I was always thinking...it is so unfair what Jesus says to Martha. She works hard, she wants to serve him well and Mary is just sitting there.

But what did the **“just sitting there”** meant at that time for a woman?

At that time women were not allowed to be taught the Holy Scriptures.

Before then a rabbi would not call women, teach them and allow them to follow him.

So Mary did something quite “revolutionary”.

So it seems in the first view maybe that she just not want to attend to her duties or that she might be just lazy but that is not the case. It must have taken her quite a bit of courage to do it. All the male disciples, her sister in the background obviously would not have been happy about what she was doing. But for her it was not important what other people think. She chose her priority. She put Jesus and his word first. She chose to listen and to learn from him. She maybe sensed that the opportunity to listen and learn from Jesus the Lord and God in his personally presents on the earth was something very special and maybe time limited. Maybe she heard Jesus say that he will be not for much longer with them. She chose the spiritual food before the food for the body. She chose a new part even if that meant to act contrary to her culture and her upbringing as a Jewish woman.

In the NIV translation it says that Mary has chosen the “better” thing. The authorised King James Version says “has chosen that **good** part.” The original Greek word used is AGATHOS what means good. I believe this translation is more precise and my further remarks are based on the original translation.

So there is no competition between the sisters and it does not mean that serving and preparing food and to be a good host is not good. Jesus does not judge Martha. But he is defending Mary and is saying what she has done is a good thing too. And at this moment he put women equal to men to follow him as disciples in the same way. He made clear through his answer that it is good if a women get taught the Holy Scripture, been called and to follow him. That properly not only shocked Martha. I guess the other disciples were surprised too.

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I can remember my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. I invited all my friends for a birthday brunch. And I spend so much time to prepare all this food. Because I was already a vegetarian and really into healthy food I wanted to convince my guests that healthy and vegetarian foods can be so tasty and varied. So I spent hours in the kitchen the day before

and on my birthday as well. I was so busy with serving and looking after that all my guests have food that I almost had no real conversation with anybody. I had as well a lung infection and was so tired after all the work and I hardly enjoyed my birthday.

I am sure my guests would have enjoyed the birthday celebration with less food and more of me but I set my priorities wrong. And maybe I wanted to show-off a bit, all for the wrong reason. And I did think why nobody helps me I have so much work. But no one asked me to do all this in the first place. It was me. I was my choice. And I regretted that I was too busy to talk and spend some time with my guests. Have you ever felt this way?

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What did Jesus mean with the “better thing” / with the “right thing” with the good part? And what does it mean today?

When my brother died few weeks ago and I had to organize the funeral etc. Your support, the support of my church family and friends, colleagues helped me a lot but without Jesus I would have not been able to go through it. Only Jesus could carry me. Only Jesus could wipe away the tears, only Jesus could give me rest and peace. Only Jesus can heal my or your broken heart.

If Jesus is the only one who can give real comfort, real healing, real peace, real love, real grace, forgiveness and real joy is HE not the most important in our lives?

But do we treat him always like the most important in our lives? Years ago, I thought if only I could have a boy friend I would be happy. After I had a boyfriend I was thinking if only I could have the right job. Then I had the job but still felt this emptiness.

I still have friends they think if they just would have this or that, and then they would be happy. But find out after they got it, it does not bring fulfilment.

But even as Christians so often daily life seems to consume us with busyness. Busy at work, busy at home, busy at church. Sometimes we start to “replace Jesus” with all sort of things. We lose the focus on him. Maybe we try to serve him in all kinds of busy ways but miss out to actually spend enough time **with** him.

Sometimes we may only focus on looking forward to our holidays we have planned, yes if we are only on this Island again with the sunny beaches everything will be fine. We will be happy again.

But what happens if the holidays are over? Maybe a nice suntan, maybe some pictures, maybe if we are really lucky we might have made new friends. But beside this not much will be left.

Sometimes we may think if we could afford this fantastic dinner again we had the other time where we just had such a brilliant time. But a dinner is bringing us only a very short term satisfaction. Doesn't it?

Or if we are a kid you would say or think 'If my mum only would get me this fantastic toy'.

Or if we are grown up maybe we think if I only could have this nice car, house.....

It is nothing wrong with holidays and nothing wrong to do nice things or to buy a new car or have a nice house but it should be not our only focus or not our first priority.

But it is very easy to compensate every day's frustrations with the wrong things, wrong food, too much TV, video games, work and busyness.

What are we doing with our busyness? Running around in circles? Even if we run we are still in that circle going nowhere or how J. John puts it 'even if we win the rat race we are still a rat'.

Are we hiding ourselves in busyness not to be confronted with ourselves and confronted with God?

Do we only feel that we worth something when we are in demand, when we feel we are "needed" and when people rely on us?

When I heard the news that my brother died I was on a business trip in Berlin. One day before the biggest and most important yearly trade fair in my industry. Everyone is there who you have to see and who would want to see you. It is a very busy time. It was the first time in 16 years I missed that fair.

What do you think? Did the fair with their 1000 exhibitors and visitors close down or not open without me? Did the company I work for close because I was not there for 3 weeks?

No, of course not.

Why do we always think we are irreplaceable? Of course we are all very special to God each one of us in a unique way but is there really no one else who can help out sometimes if it becomes too much? Is all the work we do that stress us out really necessary? Are our priorities right? What is really important? Why do we still worry about so many things?

Jesus says in Matthew 6. 25 **'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air they do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly father feed them. Are you not much more valuable than them? Who of you by worrying can add a single hours to his life?'**

And in those three weeks, Jesus gave me the strength for each day anew; the strength was not for the three weeks at once but one day at a time. Everything that was important and priority before were not important anymore and each day was a new day. I did not think about the next day or weeks. Just day by day.

What is the most important thing in a football game?

Yes the football!!

What happens if the players do not focus on the football? If the goal keeper would just focus on the audience for example?

What is the most important in our lives? JESUS!!!

He loves us that much - that he died for our sins on the cross so that we can live.

What happens if we do not focus on him? We get lost. We get into trouble.

Do we focus on Jesus enough? Is **HE** our number one?

If he is the most important in our lives and if he is the only one who can comfort, heal, love and save us-

What stops us from putting him first, to spend enough time to read his word, to listen to him, to talk to him, to tell him how we really feel right now?

It is like having a conversation with our best friend and would ask how you are and we would get the reply, yea I am OK. As a good friend we hear straight away that our friend is not ok but that she may not want to tell us how she really feels. Would you not be disappointed about this? That your friend does not trust you enough to tell you how she is really feeling, what really troubles her, what makes her really happy and what she really enjoys?

It is the same with Jesus he does not want to hear – yes I am OK when you are not OK. He really wants to know how we are. And by the way he knows anyway but he wants to hear it from us as well. He wants that ongoing deep relationship with us. Not only on Sundays. The living God is for every day, for every hour and for every minute.

What do we have to **lose** if we give our lives to Jesus? Nothing!!!

But we can win everything; feel loved as never before, feel the joy which was not known before, forgiveness and eternal life with our

Lord. Yes, hard times too but – he will be with us in any circumstances.

And if we are Christians and drifted apart and started to focus on something else or have started to put something else as number one – what stops us to return back to God’s open arms today? Why not chose today to give him the first priority again to put him back in our entire life’s situations.

Jesus says: “Mary has CHOSEN the good part” .....so we have the choice. We can make this choice today.

And then Jesus promises us: ..... “And it will not be taken away from her” so it will not be taken away from you too if you choose Jesus as your “number one”.

### **What can we take home from today’s message?**

Do not worry! God takes care of us!!!

Make Jesus number one

Listen to his word – learn from him

Have an ongoing earnest and real relationship with him

Spend time **with** him and not “only” for him

Chose the good thing – even if it is inconvenient and pushes you out of your comfort zone.

If you do so - be sure, it will not be taken from you – because this is what Jesus has promised!

Are you Martha or Mary?