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## **As For Me And My House We Will Sit At Jesus' Feet**

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

(adapted from [Pastor Phil Huebner](#))

The smell of a slightly toasted, still warm baguette is wafting through the air. You carefully slice each piece to be exactly the same width—occasionally you even measure to make sure. Your china has already been placed at the table. Each plate is precisely the same distance from the edge of the table. The forks are appropriately on the left, with the salad fork on the outside, the dinner forks on the inside, and the dessert is properly placed above the plate. Your homemade French onion soup has its spoon waiting on the right with a knife to its inside. The napkins have each been folded meticulously and pushed inside a ring to look like a bouquet of flowers and then placed outside of the forks to the left of the plates. The crystal has been polished. The candles have been placed—near the centerpiece, but not too close so they don't start a fire. The lighter is next to the table on the hutch, ready for action. You move to the light switch where you slowly slide the dimmer down. Not too dark—that says romantic. Ah, just a hair above that—that says elegant. You walk to your stereo. Time to start your carefully chosen mix of music—a little Frank Sinatra with a splash of Al Jereau and a healthy dose of Kenny G.

But there's so much to do yet! The pillows in the living room need to be fluffed and straightened. The kitchen has not been swiffered, and the bedrooms have not been vacuumed. The cream for the dessert hasn't been whipped, and the strawberries still need to be sliced. There's a streak on the patio door that really should be wiped yet. And oh, has anyone checked the temperature of the meat lately? "Mart, I could use some help? Don't you know how much still needs to be done?"

There's a certain familiarity with the Gospel today, isn't there? The famous sisters of the Bible, Mary and Martha, were preparing for a special meal. The house had to be cleaned. The food had to be prepped. Lots of cooking needed to be done! But only one was doing all the work. Martha was hustling and busting. Martha was scurrying around the house. Martha was preparing. Martha seemed to be the only one that cared. Ugh!

Didn't Mary get it? They had a guest coming to town! This wasn't the neighbor coming over. This wasn't the in-laws. This wasn't their brother Lazarus' good old

college buddies coming to hang out for a while. This was the Teacher! This was Jesus! You can't have a more special or important guest than that! Of all the times that Mary would choose to be a bum and just sit around! Didn't Mary get it? We ought to commend Martha. She was doing an admirable thing. This was a special guest, and she recognized that. She wanted to make special preparations. The end of verse 40 mentions, *"all the preparations that had to be made."* The Greek word for preparations is a word that also has to do with service and with the concept of ministry. Martha was being a humble servant. Martha was putting others first. Martha was respecting her guest. Martha was doing a form of ministry. Martha was serving. We hear nothing about Mary serving. Enough was enough though. *"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

Jesus' response sounds like a moment from the Brady Bunch, "Martha, Martha, Martha." Jesus is about to scold Martha, but he does so in the most polite and loving of ways. He says her name, not just once but twice, to show his care and concern. He continues, "You are worried and upset about many things," as if to say, "I understand. I've seen you running around the house today. I can tell you are very busy and working very hard. You must have a lot on your mind." But then comes the scolding. This is not a response like he once gave to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" This is not like he spoke to the Pharisees, "You brood of vipers," or "You hypocrites." No, this response is much more gentle, almost a simple reminder. *"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."*

Martha hadn't made terrible decisions. Martha had made good choices. Martha chose to be a "hostess with the mostest." Martha chose to do a form of ministry. Martha chose to serve. Martha even chose to do those things for Jesus. Those are good choices. But that's not Jesus' point.

Martha may have made good choices, but Mary made a better choice. Those other things were important, but Mary chose the one thing that was necessary. Those other things were good, but Mary chose what was better. Mary chose something that wouldn't be gobbled up and consumed. Mary chose something that wouldn't be over in a few hours. Mary chose something that would not just become a fun memory. Mary chose to be around Jesus and to listen to Jesus. Jesus' words and teaching was the only thing that was really necessary at that dinner party. Jesus' words and teaching were the only reason why the table talk had any value. Jesus' words and teaching could never be taken away from Mary. Only One Thing was

Needed, and Mary chose it. Martha made good choices. But Mary made the better choice.

We relate so well to these two sisters. Sometimes we are just like Mary—so eager to listen to Jesus and his Word. Other times, unfortunately it's usually more often, we are just like Martha—distracted by other things of the world. It's not that Martha was an unbeliever. We have every reason to believe that Mary and Martha were both already believers and followers of Jesus. But Martha simply lost track of what was most important in life. She made good choices, but she didn't make the best choice.

We do the same, probably more often than we know it. Good choice: Showing love for our family and taking them on vacation; Better choice: Going on vacation after church OR Going on vacation and finding a UM Church around the country and going to that church. The better choice is taking advantage of every opportunity to hear the Word of God and teaching our family that we ought to try to never miss church. Good choice: Having our children in athletics and allowing them to excel in what they are good at; Better choice: Having our children play in their games, but skipping the games and not church when they are scheduled for the same time.

It's not just with our families or children, though. Good choice: Working, earning a living, providing for our families, doing whatever we can to find work in this crazy economy. Those are good choices; Better choice: cutting work short by just a few minutes to attend a midweek Bible study. Good choice: Hosting a dinner party, showing love for friends, serving others; Better choice: Cleaning the house on Saturday night and setting the oven timers on Sunday morning so you don't have to miss church. Good choice: Supporting our veterans or a good cause like muscular dystrophy by participating in a bike ride or a 5K run; Better choice: Telling others, "That's important to me, but Jesus is more important. I won't skip church. I'll just give a gift this year instead."

You see, all of us are sinners saved by the grace of a forgiving God. But we are given free will, and that free will can lead us astray and cause us to fall into temptations. Not one of us is perfect. We all have done wrong. We all are sinners.

However, sinfulness constantly wants to take a hold of us. The devil would love for you and for me to follow all the passions of our hearts. Satan loves to distract us with so many things around us. I'm sure Satan loves modern 21st century living. We work, work, work, work. Then we have to spend some time with our

spouses and some time with our kids. Then we work, work, work, work. Once in a while we squeeze in a vacation. Just get away for a much-deserved rest. Enjoy the summer by going to the beach or water park.

Is there anything wrong with any of those things, Pastor Clarissa? No! Absolutely not! Those are all good things! But there is something entirely wrong with all of those things when they interfere with our relationship with God. Sometimes it may be apathy—we just don't care. Sometimes we may be angry with God and might just prefer to do something else. Sometimes we might get carried away with everything else in our lives and lose focus. Sometimes we forget. Sometimes we are just lazy.

I suppose you all could say, "Pastor, you just sound like a broken record. You always talk about coming to church and reading the Bible and coming to Bible studies." Well, if I do sound like a broken record, good! —"I'm too busy," "I don't have time for that," "I have to work," "I have a party to get ready for." I've even heard, "My pet needs me and gets lonely without me." All of those things are good. Most or all of those things are ways you and I can show love for others. Most or all of those things are ways for us to serve. All of those things are good for us or for others. But Only One Thing is Needed.

There is only one book that is completely and totally the Word of God—the Bible. There is only one place that we truly hear what God has done—in the Bible. There is only one book that reminds us that we are all sinners who so often fall short of God's demands—the Bible. There is only one book that reminds us that we sinners, who often let other things become more important in our lives, ought to receive punishment from God—the Bible. There is only one book that tells us that God did the unthinkable and the undeserved in sending his son Jesus to die for us—the Bible. There is only one book that reveals that Jesus' death satisfied God's demands for punishment and that now all sins are forgiven—the Bible. There is only one book that tells us how we can now grow closer to our God and Savior—the Bible. There is only one book that is able to give us true comfort, strength, and courage for our daily lives—the Bible.

You see, all these other things of life—these Martha things—they are important. They are good. They are valuable. Yet Jesus reminds us today, "But only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Be like Martha. Do those good things in life. Make good choices. Show love to

others. Serve others. But then also be like Mary. When the time comes, choose what is better. Choose the one thing that is needed. Sit at Jesus' feet and listen. Come to worship every week—our services are filled with the Word of God and based only on the Word of God. Stay for the Sunday school hour after worship. Will your Sunday be ruined and your opportunity to have some fun or to work be ruined if you spend two hours on Sunday growing closer to Jesus? I know it won't! We hope to start a Bible study class. We welcome ideas and suggestions for a Men's ministry, Young Adult ministry or any activity that can give us time at the feet of Jesus.

In 1990 a woman entered a Haagen-Dazs in the Kansas City Plaza for an ice-cream cone. While she was ordering, another customer entered the store. She placed her order, turned and found herself staring face to face with Paul Newman. He was in town filming a movie. His blue eyes made her knees buckle. She finished paying and quickly walked out of the store with her heart still pounding. Gaining her composure, she suddenly realized she didn't have her cone; she turned to go back in. At the door she met Paul Newman who was coming out. He said to her, "Are you looking for your ice-cream cone?" Unable to utter a word she nodded yes. "You put it in your purse with your change."

When was the last time the presence of God made you forget what was going on around you? Made you forget the dishes? Made you forget the ball game? Made you forget the bank account? Made you forget where...you put your ice cream cone?

Sitting at Jesus feet and listening to his Word should give you this type of experience. There you learn about God's boundless love for you. There you learn about your Savior who saved us from sin, Jesus Christ. There you grow in faith. There you grow closer to the Lord. Not one of those things happens anywhere else. This is how God operates in our hearts and minds. He doesn't zap us with lightning. He doesn't speak to us in dreams. He doesn't encourage us through horoscopes. He doesn't talk to us in nature. God tells you he loves in his Word. God tells you he saved you in his Word. God strengthens you with his Word. God sustains in you with his Word. Be in it. Be around it. Read it. Hear it. Study it. Sing it. Memorize it. Only One Thing is Needed. Choose what is better, and it will not be taken away from you.

AMEN