

National Junior High Sunday 2023

“Worried and Distracted,” based on Luke 10:40-42

Sermon Notes

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Theme verse: Luke 10:40 – 42 (NRSVUE)

⁴⁰ “But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.” ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—indeed only one.^[a] Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Suggested scripture reading: Luke 10: 25 – 42 (NRSVUE)

Read these scripture verses many times in preparation; try reading different versions and/or paraphrases. ([Biblegateway](#) can be a helpful, free online tool.) As you read and think, take notes. What sticks out to you in the story of Mary and Martha? What questions would you ask Jesus about this teaching if you could?

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.^[i] “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷ He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

²⁹ But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with

compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him.^[k] ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus’s^[l] feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.” ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—indeed only one.^[m] Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Key themes and guiding questions:

- **Doing and being are both part of following Jesus faithfully** – Biblical scholars tell us that the parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of Mary and Martha are complimentary¹; they complement each other.
 - In verse 25, we hear the question “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The answer is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” (verse 27)
 - The story of the Good Samaritan helps us understand what it means to love our neighbors. This parable helps us understand that doing, that taking action is a necessary expression of love.

¹ New Interpreters Bible, Volume IX, page 231.

- The story of Jesus' visit to Mary and Martha reminds us of what it means to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind. This story reminds us that being, that investing in relationship with Jesus is also a necessary expression of love and should take priority.
- Together, these stories help us understand the fullness of following Jesus and the promise of eternal life. We must act in ways that are consistent with loving our neighbors, but most importantly, we must have a relationship with Jesus.
- **Expectations of others causing distraction and worry** - Offering generous hospitality in Jewish life is a key expression of faithfulness. Martha was offering Jesus and the other guests the best hospitality she could. However, when she prioritized this cultural expectation, she didn't have time to be with Jesus and learn from him. Jesus says she was worried and distracted by the cultural expectations of her rather than being able to concentrate on him.
 - What distracts and worries you?
 - Have you ever felt like Martha? Have you ever been worried and distracted by others' expectations? What were the expectations? How did that feel? Do you think anyone who hears this sermon will also have felt like Martha?
 - How is Jesus calling you (and the rest of the people you are speaking to/with) to prioritize relationship with him over other things? What specific ideas come to mind? What might you have to "let go of" in order to concentrate on Jesus' teachings?
 - How can you (and the people listening to the sermon) be more like Mary? What specific ideas come to mind?
- **Discernment** – Jesus *doesn't* tell Martha to stop taking responsibility seriously. Jesus *doesn't* tell Mary she never needs to help Martha again with providing hospitality. Jesus *doesn't* say to hold off on helping neighbors until we have the perfect understanding of who our neighbors are or how exactly we should help them. Jesus does seem to be telling us to prioritize relationship with him, in all the forms that

relationship can take (individual and group: prayer, Bible Study, etc.). If we spend time in relationship with Jesus, it will be clearer when and how to act in loving ways to “our neighbors.”

Sermon outline/tips:

The following outline is one way that a Jr. High student (or several) could choose to structure a sermon.

Start with a story

- This is often a good way to start a sermon. Your story could be about worry, distraction, or another way you feel like/understand the perspective of a character in the story.

Restate/reflect on the theme

- Use the theme statement to your advantage! Nobody will remember everything that you say in your sermon. But if you emphasize the theme statement, chances are, most people will remember that phrase: “Worried and distracted.” Talk about it!

Get the congregation involved/thinking

- You can keep the congregation engaged by giving them something to think about. Ask them questions! Come up with your own or use any of the questions above that were helpful to you in thinking about this story.
- Check out the ideas for Creative Worship Elements. Would any fit with the direction of your sermon?

Discuss the scripture

- Return to the theme scripture (Luke 10:40-42) and surrounding verses. It’s ok to re-read it during the sermon! It’s ok to include the Parable of the Good Samaritan and information on the relationship between the two stories.
- Analyze what the scripture is saying.

- Consider what other faithful people think about the scripture by looking up a specific passage. (Remember to give credit for a thought/reflection if it isn't yours to begin with. Look back at page 2 of this document for a simple example.)
 - Your pastor likely has a set of books called a “commentary,” like *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*.
 - There are also places online to read what scholars and theologians think. One to try is [The Working Preacher](#).
- Highlight a few of the key themes discussed above.
- Ask your pastor for additional help about explaining what the scripture.
- Restate the theme verse.

Share another story

- Stories are often helpful for bringing a sermon to a close. You could share a story about a time when someone's choice was more like Mary's, or a time when you can imagine someone making a choice like Mary's in the future. Again, this could be about you, a family member or friend, your church or community, or about a historical or fictional character.

End

- You can end your sermon with a simple word or phrase, like “Amen” or “may it be so.”
- You can also lead the congregation in a prayer related to the scripture and theme.