

May 3, 2009
Houghton Lake UMC

Martha and Mary
Luke 10:38-42

by John Gleason

Good Morning.

I am Chaplain John Gleason, of the Roscommon County Jail. I also represent Forgotten Man Ministries. I would like to thank Pastor Long for asking me to fill the pulpit for him today.

I would like to share The Prayer of the Holy Spirit with you:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle them in the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I chose my topic today after reading the story of Martha in the book titled Principle Preaching by John Bisagno.

JESUS AT THE HOME OF MARTHA: Luke 10:38-42

I find the study notes from The Quest Study Bible very interesting. It says:

(1) What was wrong with Martha's hospitality? (verse 10:38-41)

Nothing was wrong with her hospitality. However, her priorities were out of order. She was so concerned with the task of serving that she missed the greater importance of taking time to sit at Jesus' feet. Life's greatest priority should be to take in and reflect upon what God would have us do.

Another note:

(2) If we all adored Jesus as Mary did, who would do the work? (verse 10:39-42)

Mary did more than just sit at the feet of Jesus. She undoubtedly took her turn at serving. The tension was caused not by Mary's unwillingness to help, but by Martha's excessive preparations. Jesus said such extraordinary efforts were unnecessary. Our adoration for Jesus should lead us to service—but in an appropriate, not extreme way.

Now I let me pick this scripture apart a little bit. How would you feel if Jesus or the President of the United States came to your house?

(Verse 38) “As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.”

What would you do if Jesus or the President of the United States came to Houghton Lake and walked down your street? Would you watch him walk by, or would you say Lord, or Mr. President, please come to my house for dinner?

(Verse 39) “She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he said.”

Would you be like Mary and hear everything that they had to share with you, or would say to your husband, “Talk with these people, I have to prepare a special meal for them”?

(Verse 40) “But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, ‘Lord don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me.’”

Can you imagine how nervous the wife would get when things weren't coming together quick enough, and she yells out to the husband, “Let the kids talk to them! I need help in the kitchen!”

(Verse 41) “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “You are worried and upset about many things,…”

The husband goes into the kitchen and tells the wife everything is going to be OK, not to panic and get so upset, be cool.

(Verse 42) “...but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her.

Think about how this wife felt after this important guest left. Maybe she wished that she had thrown a frozen pizza in the oven and joined every one in the living room, to hear all the things that this important person had to share with them.

After giving all the above some serious thought, and if Jesus, or the President came to my house, I would invite him in, then ask him to sit in the recliner and kick his feet up and relax. Then I would ask my wife Jan to get us some coffee and cookies. If she said there weren't any cookies, then I would ask her to go to Tops bakery and get some of the biggest cookies and best donuts that the owner Sue makes. Then we could all kick back and have a great visit.

Can you imagine what it would be like to have Jesus visit your home?

How would your home look?

Would you still have the same magazines lying on the coffee table?

What channel would you have your TV on?

Would you be drinking coffee, pop, or a cold beer?

What would you do different?

I can't imagine what it was like for the disciples when they were with Jesus, listening to all his teachings, seeing Him perform all those great miracles. To have Jesus teach them the parables himself, then explain in depth to them what they each meant. Think what it must have been like for Mary to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his teaching. Think how great that must have been to walk along side of Jesus in person.

Jan and I really enjoy Pastor Long's teachings, a lot of the time we stay for both services, that way we get a double dose. We are truly blessed in this area. We have a lot of wonderful pastors in the different churches. I had the opportunity recently to visit some of these churches while I was promoting for the Forgotten Man Ministries Stewardship Dinner. I would like to thank all of you for your support, and donations we raised over \$2,500.00 dollars.

Stop and think of how many times you have heard sermons or scriptures read and thought, "I really needed to hear that today." I had a pastor tell me one time that as he was about to start his Sunday morning sermon, but the Lord told him to put his sermon aside and have everyone in church pick up their Bibles and have everyone just read a verse. It didn't matter what they read. When it came time for a lady sitting at the back of the church to read, she couldn't she was crying. So the pastor went back and asked what was the matter. She replied, "I needed to hear all this today. I have been going through some struggling times." That was the first time that lady had been to that church.

Psalm 118:24 is the best way to start your day. "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Then receive the blessings of the day in verses 25-29.

"O Lord, save us. O Lord, grant us success.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you.

The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."

The more we are giving praise and thanksgiving to the Lord the closer we are to him, and the more we will hear him when he speaks to us. Martha truly loved the Lord, or she wouldn't have invited him and done all that hard work to prepare a meal for him. Bisagno says she was a industrious and hospitable woman, but unfortunately, a good deal of what she was doing was for Martha as well as for the lord.

What do you think, when the Lord got after her instead of making Mary go and help her? What would you have done if you were there in that house visiting? Would you have offered to help Martha, so Mary could stay where she was listening to the Lord?

Do you think that Martha reminds each of us that our strength can become our weakness when it is carried to extremes? I know for myself when I get to doing too much my lovely wife might say, "Don't you think that you are overdoing it?" I usually reply with a BIG SMILE, "Yes, Dear, you are probably right."

As I studied this passage for today, I thought I could easily have changed the name Martha to John. When I was young, I was taught the importance of showing respect to God, and to be sure to go to church on Sunday. All that I learned about God I had in my head but not in my heart. There was a time when I wasn't right with God, and didn't go to church on Sundays, instead I was working, making all that double time money, or I was fishing. I used to do a lot of Great Lakes walleye and salmon fishing.

When I first started working on Sundays instead of going to church, I would feel funny inside knowing that I should be in church and not at work. Then after awhile, it didn't seem to bother me so much. My life turned into a real mess and it wasn't until I hit bottom that I finally got some help.

Bisagno tells us that heart, mind, body and soul are out of sync when you are out of tune with God. To be out of sync with Him is to be out of sync with the forces of the universe. When you are not in tune with God, your soul is in agony, your mind is in distress, your home unstable, your finances in disarray, and your judgment clouded. But let God's power flow through you, and everything changes. The safest place in the world is wherever God wants you, and the most dangerous place is out of His will.

That describes how a lot of what my life was like when I was away from God. Today when I first wake up in the morning, I say Psalm 118:24. I rejoice and give thanks to God for this new day. Then I follow Matthew 6:33, seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all His Righteousness, and He will grant your requests. Then while I am having my coffee, I read the Upper Room or the Daily Bread devotionals. I really enjoy these devotionals because they deal with issues that are common to most of us. I like the scriptures that go along with the readings. I enjoy the quietness just meditating about what the readings were about.

Or you can do like it says in (Matthew 6:6):

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Sometimes I have to do that, go into my office shut the door and prepare my lessons and talks with no distractions. Try it some times it does draw you closer to the Lord while you are praying. When I don't start my day right with Lord, I feel lousy and things don't go right. I feel my best during the day when I am reading my bible, or doing studies in preparations for my jail lessons.

Martha really missed out by not postponing the meal until later in the evening and joining Mary and listening to Jesus teach. She could have heard the greatest teacher of all times teach.

We try to teach the inmates in jail the importance of starting their day right with God, and spending time during the day while they are just sitting around, to read their Bibles, and communicate with God. Then at night time while they are lying on their bunks after the lights are out, is a good time to thank God for his blessings of the day, and ask forgiveness of their sins.

That is a great time to spend with the Lord. There shouldn't be that much noise, as you are lying there talk over things with the Lord, tell Him what is bothering you. Listen for that gentle voice of God, maybe that is when you will hear Him best. Ask God to give you a good night rest, so that you can wake up in the morning refreshed.

Some of the men and women tell us how they are sharing the Daily Breads among themselves in their cells. This past Tuesday one of the men who assists me at the jail asked if he could share with the men what he read in the Daily Bread that day. So when we got to the jail, and I said an opening prayer, and we had taken the prayer requests, I asked him to share what he had read. He mentioned the words "Daily Bread," and a couple of the inmates spoke up and shared what the scripture was and the story was about out loud from memory before he could read it. I thought that was really great.

Last year we had an African American man come up to the jail from downstate. This gentleman was a very pleasant person. He came to church services and participated in the scripture readings, also got involved in a lot of the discussions about what the scripture might have been. He went back home a few weeks ago, a couple of weeks before he went home he asked me if he could share something. I told him to go ahead.

He shared with us a story about his ride up north in the patrol car. This was a very strong man. He said that he could handle him self on the streets if needed to. He told us that that ride up north was the scariest time of his life. Here is how he described it: Here was a big African American man going into a jail up north, he feared how they would receive him, would they call him all kinds of names, or maybe even try to start a fight with him. Would you believe that when he got to his jail cell area, the men greeted and shook his hand, then they gave him one of the extra Bibles that was in the cell. He rededicated his life to Christ while he was in jail. Before leaving, he thanked every one for being so kind to him, and he was looking forward to getting home and going back to church with his family.

A few months ago, a young African American came to our Tuesday night church service. All he did was cry during the entire service. I offered to talk with him. He said no. There were two other African Americans men at that service, so they went over and talked to him. Before he left church that night, I gave him a Bible to take with him. I suggested to him to read the book of John.

The next week he came back feeling better. After a couple of weeks he started sharing in the readings and the discussions. A week before he went home, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He said that he was glad to be going home, and to go to church with his mother. He would never go to church with her before he came to jail.

The reason that I mentioned these men is to show how through the Bible the other men are sharing Christian love with them. It changed their lives and drew them to Christ and His Redeeming Love.

Last Sunday night at the church service for the women in the jail, there were two new women. Near the end of the service, one of my assistance shared the prayer of repentance and salvation with one of the new women, and she asked Christ back into her life again. We gave both of the ladies Bibles. On Thursday I went up to the jail to counsel two ladies, and while I was there, I shared the prayer of repentance and salvation with one of the ladies, and she asked Christ back into her life again. I had a good time sharing scripture with them, showing them where they could find the different verses in the Bible that dealt with the issues that they were dealing with.

Both women were really excited to have Christ back in their lives again, and eager to read the bible, and started praying again. I told them that I would come back next week and counsel them some more.

I think that it is really an exciting time when you share the prayer of salvation (Romans 10:9-10) with some one and they are sincere about it. You can see an instant glow about them, a sudden happiness comes over them. Romans 10:9-10 reads:

“...If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved...”

For some of these men and women who come to the church services, it is the first time they have ever heard someone ask for prayer requests. They are not sure what it means, so we explain to them that it is OK to ask for prayers for family members, spouses, kids, maybe even parents. We explain to them that the prayer requests are taken to the Wesleyan Church the next morning to a fellowship time, and the men pray for the requests. I often let Marcia and Margaret (our prayer coordinators) know when there are special needs requested.

They have a lot of questions as to what goes into a prayer request,

Is there a special way to talk to God?

How do I know that God hears my prayers?

Why doesn't God answer my prayers?

Why would God take be back after the way I neglected him for so many years?

God is always there waiting for us 24/7 to call on him. I like these verses in Psalm 119: 145-152:

“I call with all my heart; answer me, O Lord,

and I will obey your decrees.
 I call out to you; save me, and I will keep your statutes.
 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
 I put my hope in your word.
 My eyes stay open through the watches of the night.
 That I may meditate on your promises.
 Hear my voice in accordance with your love;
 preserve my life, O Lord, according to your laws.
 Those who devise wicked schemes are near,
 but they are far from your law.
 Yet you are near O Lord, and all your commands are true.
 Long ago, I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever.”

I would like to share a couple more stories with you. When my daughter Michelle came up north to pick up Gary, our grandson, to take him back home after spring break, we went out to eat. When the food arrived, our five year-old granddaughter asked if she could say the prayer. We held hands, and this was her prayer:

“Dear Jesus, thank you for everyone around the table, it makes me very happy. Amen.”

A few months ago when we were down visiting our daughter Stephanie, our seven year-old granddaughter went up to her room and came back down with her Bible. She said, “Papa and Jan, would you like me to read to you what I have been reading in my Bible?” I said sure, so she read to us what she had been reading for the past couple of days. That was really great. She said that she tries to some of the Bible everyday. I really get excited and happy when I hear these little kids pray and read from the Bibles.

Last Saturday they had a baby shower for Andrea, our youngest daughter. First they took a picture of me and “Andy” to see who was larger. Then they had people guess how many sheets of toilet it would take to go around Andy. Jan wrapped the roll around me, and I was one sheet larger than my daughter, so I got a lot of razzing. We all had a great time. She might have her baby as earlier as next this week. That is the first pregnancy test I won.

I think that Eric, our youth leader, and his helpers do a great job at the schools as they reach out to the school kids with the FCA and the JAM programs. I think that the Sunday School teachers and their helpers do a great job with educating the youth here in the church.

This Thursday, May 7th, 2009, is a very special day to set aside and if possible come to Houghton Lake High School as the students celebrate The National Day of Prayer. There will be a student-led National Day of Prayer Rally. It will be from 10:30 to 12:30. This is during all three lunch periods for the students.

I think that the great lesson to have learned today from the example that Mary has shown us is the importance of staying close to Jesus feet, to be always reaching out to Him. Learn to cast your cares on Him, and you will have a lasting relationship with him. After we have sat at His feet, he then asks us to go and share His love with others.

THE GREAT COMMISSION (Matthew 28:18-20)

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

I want to give God all the Praise and Glory, and Thank Him for having me as one of His servants. Now let us close in prayer.

Dear Gracious and Heavenly Father, I ask that you teach all of us to be like Mary, to have a great hunger and thirst for your Word. Now I would like to surrender this day into your hands and care. In Jesus name. Amen.

The altar is now open if there is anyone who would like to come forward and pray.