

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on July 17, 2022:**

**"Hospitality or Hostility?
Luke 10:38-42)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us through the story of Mary and Martha the importance of first prioritizing our relationship with the God the Father before we serve others.]

Introduction:

- So, how many of you think you know the story of Martha and Mary?
- How many of you think it's a story of hospitality?
- How many of you think it shows a little hostility?
- It's not a story about either/or – it's about yes/and.

- These stories since Luke 9:51, where Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem, are called "the travel narratives."
- Jesus is living out his declaration, "As you go, make disciples."
- And, as Jesus is going from Galilee to Jerusalem, He is making disciples along the way, because He's teaching those He's meeting.
- These travel narratives, you could say, are about radical and transformative discipleship.

- Earlier, the Samaritans had affronted Jesus and the disciples immediately wanted to call down fire and brimstone upon them.
- But Jesus stopped them and showed them how to react with hospitality instead of hostility.
- We could sum up last week's story as "the good disciple" as Jesus showed the way of being and acting out how to be a disciple.

- Pastor Craig used the title for today's message, because recently the GCI Home Office's president Greg Williams had an interview with Warren Kim, the new president of the National Association of Evangelicals, which we've been a part of for a number of years now.
- Warren commented that, as he looks at churches today, the number one challenge that we have is – is letting others, who are not familiar with the church, know that the church is a place of hospitality rather than hostility.

- He feels that church pastors think they have to sell people on faith, when, in fact, that most people are looking into the church from the outside, think that they're not welcome and think that they would be perceived as being hostile towards the church.
- In the past, the church operated as a place of hostility towards outsiders, even though that wasn't their intent.

- Now, let's read about Jesus, with His disciples and followers, meeting Martha and Mary in their home, in the context of radical discipleship.

Luke 10:38 (NASB), Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village;

- Now, Luke doesn't define the village, but we know from John that she lived in the town of Bethany, a few miles east of Jerusalem.

38b) and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

- Now, what does this tell us? It shows Martha's hospitality and also that she owned a home, which was not the norm, at that time.
- And, since she invited Jesus with His disciples to come into her home, it must have been quite a large home, because Jesus was traveling with 80 to 85 followers.
- So, Martha, along with her sister, Mary, had some substantial financial means.
- This also tells us why Martha got a little anxious about serving everyone.

39) And she had a sister called Mary, who was also seated at the Lord's feet, and was listening to His word.

- Let's notice that Mary has no speaking parts in this story.
- Now, this phrase, "seated at the Lord's feet", implies a mode of discipleship.
- So, Mary was in the state of discipleship from Jesus, which was also out of the norm, because women at that time were not disciples by the rabbi, only men.
- Jesus, it seems, was always going against the religious cultural norms of His day to set the stage of ministry of loving God and neighbor should really be about.
- So, if Mary is a student, then Martha is a server.
- And so, Martha is on the go as she's got to set up the food to be served to all her guests.

40) But Martha was distracted with all her preparations;

- So, Martha is probably at the point, we would call, exasperation, when she spoke to Jesus.

40b) and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do the serving by myself? Then tell her to help me."

- When we're overwhelmed with circumstances, it can so easily become all about us.
- Now, Martha knew who Jesus was, because they had a loving relationship with each other.
- We know that Jesus also had a loving relationship with Mary and Lazarus.

41) But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things;

- Jesus didn't answer Martha in a scolding way, but with compassion and understanding.
- Some translations use the word "upset" instead of "distracted".
- The Greek word can mean "uproar".
- So, Jesus is helping Martha to see her situation in a different way.

42) but only one thing is necessary;

- Jesus is really saying that there is only one thing that is truly important.

42b) for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

- Now, in the past, we've talked about concentric circles of discipleship – there's knowing, doing and being.
- And in the center where the three circles overlap is the word discipleship, which is what the three words are describing.
- We, also, used the words, upward, inward and outward to describe discipleship.
- These are various ways we talk about the faith, hope and love avenues.
- Now here, Jesus is prioritizing the student over the server, but He is not saying that a student is much better than a server or worker.
- Rather, Jesus is saying that knowing, being and doing is all required for discipleship, but that we can't be engaged in truly serving and loving others until we have first engaged in loving God.
- Until we have first prepared ourselves in the upward or in the knowing state, we can't truly and effectively be engaged in the doing.
- If we become involved in the doing, before we get involved knowing God, then it gets a little twisted.
- Now, if Martha had been engaged in that student role first, she may have had a different response about Mary.
- Pastor Craig then asked this question, “As a pastor, would I rather have workers or would I rather have students?” His answer is, “Yes!”
- Yes, things need to be done, but things also need to be learned, too.
- It's not that reaching out to our neighbor is all important, but it's also important that we engage in worship, that we engage in learning.
- And to do that, we have to first set up the video camera and screens and the audio system for services to happen.
- So, it's not an either/or proposition, it's a yes/and proposition.
- So, when we think about Mary and Martha, it's not either/or, it's yes/and.
- Jesus is teaching us that we first engage in a relationship with the Father, because it's out of His love, flowing out of us, that we will be able to serve others.
- If, we first don't do the upward and first do the knowing, then what happens is that we jump right into the doing and then get a little snarky about it.
- So, the lesson for us today is not that Martha was bad and Mary was good, Mary simply prioritized what she was doing – it was first in relationship before serving.
- Now, both needed to be done, but for us today, it's important to know that unless we first engage with God through conversation, curiosity and contemplation, then the serving ends up out of our humanity.
- But, we want the Spirit to simply flow through us and represent the love of the Father, because that's when it truly makes a big difference.

42b) for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

- So, Jesus tells Martha that He's not going to tell Mary to get into the kitchen to help you, because she's doing right now what she should be doing.

Concluding comments:

- So, let's sum all of this up.
- Was Mary good and Martha bad? No.
- Do we want servers or do we want students? Yes.
- In our discipleship, do we want servers or do we want students? Yes.
- And, in our discipleship, where do we focus our priority on first? Upward.
- It makes a lot of sense, because when we first focus on a relationship with God, then our relationship with others is taken care of.
- And, when we're first focused on a relationship with God, we don't have to be so concerned about who are neighbor is, because our neighbors are going to come to us.
- And the Spirit will lead us and we'll have the opportunities to live that out.
- So, when we have first focused on our relationship with God, then our relationship with others will take care of itself.
- Our relationship with God involves conversation – prayer, it involves curiosity – study, it involves contemplation – meditation.
- And, when we place those things first in our discipleship, when we show that we're loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, then we can love our neighbor.
- We don't try to put loving neighbor first before loving God, because then our humanity takes over and things start to get a little sideways.
- But, when we let the Spirit do His work in our discipleship after we put God first, then our discipleship comes together and we can truly live out radical discipleship.
- That's the message for Martha, because she was trying to rely on herself too much and not relying on her relationship with Jesus.
- Putting God first is truly how we can live out our mission statement – “Loving God and loving others without fear, shame, guilt or doubt.”
- As we let God do the work, which is His work, and simply participate by coming alongside Him and letting Him take the lead, then things happen in a supernatural way.
- So, the message of Mary and Martha isn't either/or, it's yes/and.
- It's not good or bad, both serving and being a student are needed, but we need to learn to prioritize by putting God first.

Closing Prayer:

Eternal loving Father, Son and Spirit, Father, we love You and thank you so much for the transformation that You are bringing about in our lives and the opportunity we have to serve others.

Father, we thank You for helping us to be good neighbors here at the Y and to reach out to others just to share Your love. And amazingly, You invite us to come along and participate in what You're doing.

We thank You that we have servers. We thank You that we have students. And we thank You that we can place our relationship with You first and foremost so we can then truly love our neighbor.

We thank You for all these things and pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.