

## When Jesus Comes Calling Luke 10:38-42

### Introduction

Every now and then a new word comes into the English language, which makes me wonder what took so long for it to be “invented.” Once such brilliant word is

HANGRY

Do you know what it means to be “hangry”? It’s the anger you feel because you’re so hungry that you can’t think straight.

- Couples should never try to have an important discussion on an empty stomach.
- Parents ever try to reason with their children when they’re hungry.

Everyone is just going to end up “hangry” with each other.

Our sermon text today records an example of someone who was hangry—only her hanger (if that’s a word) didn’t stem from the lack of food. She was hangry because she was busy preparing food so that everyone else in the house wouldn’t get hangry for lacking food.

Who was this hangry person? It was Martha, a follower of Jesus who was just trying her best to be a good hostess.

According to WikiHow, in order to be a good hostess ...

... you have to be warm and welcoming and make your guests feel right at home. This means introducing them to each other, offering them food and drinks, and generally creating an environment for fun and merriment. As long as you prepare in advance and can have fun while also keeping an eye on the party, you’ll be a stellar hostess... (wikiHow)

Martha was a good hostess. But she wasn’t getting any help with her hostess-ing efforts.

There have been a lot of sermons preached and books written on the differences between Mary and Martha over the years. These sisters are often contrasted as though each of us as followers of Jesus must pick a side. It often gets presented as a choice:

*Will you be a worker like Martha or a worshiper like Mary?*

I fully agree that each of us has a different personality and different gifts, but it would be very wrong to interpret this story about these two sisters in a way that creates an either/or situation. The story isn’t about which woman is wrong and which woman is right. In other words, you don’t have to pick side. The world and the church need both.

One of the many hymns written by Charles Wesley says it perfectly:

*Faithful to my Lord's commands,  
I still would choose the better part;  
Serve with careful Martha's hands,  
And loving Mary's heart.  
("Lo! I Come with Joy" by Charles Wesley, 1747)*

So what is the point of this story? Is it to make the Marthas of this world feel guilty, or to make the Marys feel superior? I don't think so. Let me make a couple of observations. I will use the description of Martha in verse 40 as my basic text:

*But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. (Luke 10:40)*

### **OBSERVATION #1: MARTHA DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE**

Let's begin with the second half of that statement: "*all the preparations that had to be made.*"

Hospitality was, and continues to be, an integral part of Eastern culture. We saw that truth in the Old Testament reading with regard to Abraham. When his three visitors arrived, Abraham rushed to get them water to drink, and water to wash the dust off their feet. He found them a shady place to rest and ordered up a steak dinner – all this for people he didn't know.

Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way. (Genesis 18:4-5)

They were strangers passing by. But to do otherwise was rude. And no one in that culture would be intentionally rude.

So it was with Martha. Jesus had come calling, and no doubt His 12 disciples were present with Him. Jesus plus 12 equals 13. Add in Mary, their brother Lazarus and Martha herself, and our total is now 16. There could have been several others as well. We don't know.

- Somebody had to get all these people something to eat, something to drink.
- Somebody had to clean the toilet, fold the laundry, make up the guest bedroom, empty the trash – all those things that every one of us does whenever company is coming.

For Martha, getting take out at Bob Evans or renting rooms at the Holiday Inn Express for her guests were not options. The things Martha did were the things that had to be done. To do otherwise would have been a major social faux pas.

I can just hear my Mom: "*That laundry is not going to fold itself.*"

If you have been inclined to think poorly of Martha in the past, I hope you will apologize to her. Nothing she was doing was wrong. With the possible exception of getting a bit

snippy with her sister, all that Martha was doing fell into the category of "it had to be done."

Personally, I think that is why it is so easy to relate to Martha. We all know what it is like to be so swamped with obligations that we don't get to do what other people get to do. We would love to sit down. We would love to slow down, but there are these things that we have to do. Somebody has to do them, and that somebody is us.

*Those things we feel we have to do will always crowd out the things we want to do.*

Charlie Hummel wrote a little book on that subject, titled "*The Tyranny of the Urgent.*" His book begins:

*Have you ever wished for a thirty hour day? Surely this extra time would relieve the tremendous pressure under which we live.*

You can hear Martha crying out "How am I ever going to get all of this done?"

All of which brings us to the first half of the description offered in verse 40:

## **OBSERVATION #2: IN SERVING JESUS, MARTHA IGNORED JESUS**

*But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. (Luke 10:40)*

The text calls her "distracted." In verse 41, Jesus describes her as "worried and upset."

*"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things ... (Luke 10:42)*

For Martha those preparations became a distraction. In her quest to SERVE Jesus, Martha was missing the chance to be WITH Jesus. One author writes this:

*Certainly a meal was in order, but what we do with Christ is far more important than what we do for Christ... Few things are as damaging to the Christian life as trying to work for Christ without taking time to commune with Christ.*

Spending time with Jesus is at the heart of all that we are and all that we do in the Christian life. It is important that we be hard at work, serving Him. But before we can serve Jesus as we should, we must spend time with Him and learn from Him.

As a familiar verse in John's gospel reminds us:

*...apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)*

It was the hymn writer William Longstaff who captured that thought in a hymn we have often sung:

*Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.*  
(*"Take Time to Be Holy"* by William Longstaff, 1882)

Serving well begins with sitting well. It is vitally important that we spend time "at the feet of Jesus" every single day, letting Him speak to us through the words of the Bible.

*Unless we meet Christ personally and privately each day, we will soon end up like Martha: busy but not blessed.*

## **APPLICATION**

One of the very most important principles of studying the Scriptures is to make sure we read the passage within its context. We need to know what happens before and what happens afterward. The writers, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, carefully craft the message they are conveying. There is a reason why this story is in Luke chapter 10, not Luke chapter 12 or Luke chapter 17.

The "before" of this passage is our text from last week: the story of the Good Samaritan. You may remember that the text last week began with a Cliff Notes version of the Ten Commandments as expressed by the "expert in the law." He summarized it like this:

*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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27)*

In that section of the Luke's Gospel we were introduced to two men, a priest and a Levite. These men were too busy loving God to show any love toward their neighbor.

Today we meet Martha. She was too busy loving her neighbor by being the perfect hostess, to show any love toward God by listening to Jesus.

We cannot neglect either loving God or loving neighbor.

Don't let the "things that have to be done" crowd out your time alone with God. It is near impossible for you to be in tune with what Jesus is doing around you if you are not giving Him the time to speak into your life. The sequence is clear: Loving God comes first and is then followed by loving your neighbor. The two cannot be separated, but loving God comes first.

The Christian life is to be a balance of Mary's approach and Martha's approach.

I leave you with this quote:

*You and I can lose sight of who we are and whose we are very easily. The good things in life – family, job, community service, even the ways in which we serve God – can begin to choke our God's life in us. But as we make God and His presence in our lives our primary focus, we discover that He is the key to everything. (Bruce Larson)*

Amen.