

Sermon Handout: Sit Down, Be Still, and Know

July 20, 2025

Luke 10:38–42

Sermon Summary

From a Wesleyan theological perspective, this passage beautifully illustrates the balance between faith and works, grace and response. John Wesley emphasized the importance of both personal holiness and social holiness—living in deep communion with God while actively expressing that love through service. In this story, Mary models personal holiness by sitting at Jesus’ feet in attentive love, while Martha reflects the drive toward service. Neither is inherently wrong, but Wesleyan theology reminds us that our works should flow from grace, not anxiety. Wesley taught that God’s prevenient grace is always drawing us near, inviting us to a relationship rooted in love before action. When Jesus tells Martha that Mary has chosen “what is better,” He is highlighting the priority of abiding in God’s presence as the wellspring of all faithful living. This moment is not a rejection of service, but a reordering of the soul, an invitation to let love lead, so that both our sitting and our serving are grounded in grace.

Context in Luke’s Gospel

It’s no accident that Luke places this story immediately after the parable of the Good Samaritan. That parable emphasizes action, “Go and do likewise.” But in the very next scene, Jesus shifts the focus to being, “Sit and listen.” These stories together remind us that discipleship involves both service and presence. Luke is teaching us spiritual balance: pouring out for others and pausing to be poured into by Christ.

Digging Deeper

The Greek word used for Martha being 'distracted' is **perispaō**, meaning to be pulled or dragged away. Her attention was divided, even though her intentions were good. This happens to us too. Our work, even for the church, can pull us away from the very One we’re doing it for.

Mary, on the other hand, chose to sit at Jesus’ feet, a phrase used to describe discipleship. In that cultural context, this was radical. Women weren’t usually invited into theological study, yet Jesus not only allows it, He praises it. This speaks volumes about how Jesus values everyone’s spiritual growth, regardless of gender or societal role.

Modern Application

We live in a culture that rewards productivity, hustle, and constant motion. But spiritual depth doesn’t come from busyness. It comes from intentional presence. Sitting with Jesus might look like quiet prayer, Bible reading, journaling, or even taking a walk in silence with Him on your mind. It might mean setting boundaries around your time so your soul can breathe.

Words from Jesus

“You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.” These words are just as relevant today. Jesus isn’t scolding Martha, He’s lovingly reminding her (and us) that His presence is the anchor in our chaos. Choosing the 'better part' doesn’t mean we stop serving, but it does mean we serve from a place of peace, not pressure.

Key Points

1. Presence over performance: Jesus invites us to be with Him, not just work for Him.
2. Discipleship is both/and, not either/or. We need the heart of Mary and the hands of Martha.
3. Mary sitting at Jesus’ feet was an act of bold discipleship. Jesus welcomed her in that role.
4. Martha wasn’t wrong to serve. The issue was her distraction and frustration. Jesus gently redirected her.
5. The most spiritual thing we can sometimes do is rest and listen.

Reflection Questions

- Do I identify more with Martha or Mary in my spiritual life?
- When was the last time I sat quietly with Jesus, with no agenda?
- What are the things that pull my attention away from Jesus?
- How can I make room this week to listen more and do less?

Living It Out

Try setting aside a few minutes each day this week to sit with Jesus. Turn off distractions and simply pray, read Scripture, or be still. Let His presence fill the space where your to-do list usually lives.

Encouragement for Today

You are not loved for how much you accomplish. You are loved because you belong to Jesus. So if your heart is tired and your schedule is full, hear this: Jesus is inviting you to sit down. Not because He needs a break, but because He wants to be with you. That is the better part. And it will not be taken away.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for caring more about being with us than what we do for You. Help us slow down, notice Your presence, and choose what is better. Teach us how to serve with joy and rest with peace. Amen.