


South Bay Community Church
Sermon Reflections
The Urgency of the Mundane
4 July 2021
Rev. Gerald Ashby

Check in, Opening Prayer

Scripture Text: Luke 10:38-42

Song:  Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand - Diana Ross

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Sermon Preamble

At South Bay Community Church, God is doing things in new ways. In our relationship with Jesus, it is critical that we are open to doing ministry in new ways as directed by God. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching, open to the new way of ministry. Martha, her sister, was distracted from God's new way by continuing to do things the same old, mundane way. We, like Mary, must remain open to the better way of listening to God as He directs us in new ways of ministry.

Martha focused on preparations and service for Jesus and other guests in her home

Martha wants to be a good host for Jesus and his disciples. "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him" (Luke 10:38). Many of us are familiar with the expectations to clean the house or to serve the guests when company is coming to our house. The household residents assume that the guests expect to be well taken care of. However, Martha's guest in her home is the creator of all, and Jesus could easily take care of her.

Mary focused on asking Jesus for help while sitting at Jesus's feet and listening

Mary, the sister of Martha, was intent on allowing Jesus to do something new in her life and ministry. "Martha had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said" (Luke 10:39). Asking and listening to Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit keeps us open to doing new things in life and ministry in accordance with God's Will. The Spirit guides us to ask Jesus, the living Word, for help. Asking Jesus for help is much more than asking Jesus to help us find lost keys. It is asking Jesus to guide us in innovative ways beyond the mundane in life and ministry.

Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus was totally radical for her time because in biblical days, women would not sit with men.

Martha, as distracted, asks for Mary to help in preparations and serving Jesus

"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'" (Luke 10:40). Martha is distracted, but she asks Jesus if Mary can help her in the preparations for guests in the home. Martha is open to help from Jesus, but she has concerns about preparations and service for Jesus as her guest. Relative to Mary's help request, this is the wrong thing for her concerns. Mary does not respond to these complaints by Martha.

Jesus responds that Mary's listening was the good portion

What was the better thing to do? “ ‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but few are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her’ ” (Luke 10: 41-42). Martha was trying to ensure, through the lens of hospitality, that all needs of the guests are taken care of. Mary, through her fellowship and love of Jesus, is spending quality time with Jesus. Jesus responds that Mary is doing the better thing. The priority is on what Jesus has for our life and ministry. For Mary to get all that Jesus has for her, Jesus welcomes Mary to sit at his feet and learn. Mary prioritizes her relationship with Jesus regarding her life and ministry.

Example of New Ministry Opportunity in the South Bay Community of Believers

In our community of believers, we must place priority on the ministry opportunity without getting caught up in doing our ministries the same way. For example, at South Bay, there are two Adult Sunday morning classes, separated by gender, on the biblical perspective of current events. One of the topics was women with the issue of blood, requiring discussion of chronic illness and self-checking mechanisms. The teacher of the women's class has been Debbie Smallwood, a gifted Bible teacher and medical professional. Even for the men's class on this topic, Debbie Smallwood is uniquely gifted to teach this lesson on women with the issue of blood. The men can devote extra time to study, or the men can be open to God doing something different in that situation by asking Debbie Smallwood to teach both men and women for that week. Mary, listening at the feet of Jesus, is open to something new. We must remain open to God doing something new in our lives and ministries.

God is doing something new today

God is doing something new today with His Church. With the expansion of the virtual church, the gospel ministry of our local church is being shared all over the country, even internationally. God is doing new things in the Church. At South Bay, our community ministries have opportunities to change the lives of those we may never see or hear. In our individual ministries, God is doing something new in us to bless those people to whom we minister. Yes, God will do it if we are open to serving in a new, real way.

In comparison with God's new way in life and ministry, household chores should have a diminishing demand on Martha and ourselves. The Word of God has the first priority, and for the disciple learning and obedience to God's new way comes first.

Conclusion

What can you do differently to bless somebody who hasn't been touched by your ministry? As the hit song says, “Reach out and touch somebody's hand,” consider ministry in new ways directed by God. We will reach somebody we have not reached before. Let us be open to allow God to do something new. In our individual ministries, let us adopt the radical change that God needs, so that our individual ministries might be blessed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Martha focused on preparations and service for Jesus and other guests in her home

- Is there a “to do list” when guests are coming to visit your home? If so, can you understand Martha’s priority in preparation of the home to receive guests and service for those guests?
- Can these mundane tasks be a distraction from opportunities to learn from Jesus like Mary sitting at His feet?

Mary focused on asking Jesus for help while sitting at Jesus’s feet and listening

- When have you set aside mundane, old ways of tasks in order to spend time guided by the Holy Spirit to listen for a new way from God?
- When have you actively listened to God for a new way in life and ministry that is more than mundane help like finding your lost keys?
- Which sister is taking the role that prioritizes being a disciple of Jesus? Is it Martha distracted by mundane household chores or is it Mary sitting at the feet of the teacher, Jesus?

Martha, as distracted, asks for Mary to help in preparations and serving Jesus

- What distractions of mundane tasks have taken priority over the role of a disciple in listening to God for a new way in life and ministry?
- Martha was so distracted that she showed resentment from the apparent idleness of her sister from doing the household tasks. Have you felt resentment toward a neighbor or family member who prioritizes listening to God for a new way over performing mundane tasks?

Jesus responds that Mary’s listening was the good portion

- In His response, Jesus starts with a double vocative of repeating “Martha, Martha,” not admonishing her, but expressing empathy.. Have you experienced this kindly mode of a teacher addressing the student in making a key point? What emotions are expressed in repeating the name?
- In preparation and service for His visit, Jesus declares that the concerns of Martha are too many, and only one thing is needed. For example, serving one simple dish would suffice. Have you gone to endless, unnecessary trouble in preparation letting it take priority over listening to God, when a simple task would suffice?

Example of New Ministry Opportunity in the South Bay Community of Believers

- In our local community of believers, are there any opportunities that would benefit your life and ministry from not continuing the same, old, mundane ways, but instead listening to God for a new way?

God is doing something new today and conclusion

- Martha and ourselves must now learn to give the Lord, His Word, and the Kingdom of God priority even over loving service. As we grow in discipleship of our Lord, what actions and attitudes will help us in establishing the proper priorities?