

## Living Life With A Purpose.

Text: Luke 10:38-42

1) Nervous Tension Over Things

Suggested Hymns:

2) The One Thing That Makes Things Meaningful

191, 588, 500, 290, 579

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 10:38-42, <sup>38</sup> *Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.*

<sup>40</sup> *But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."* <sup>41</sup> *And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.*

<sup>42</sup> *But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Many people in these pressured days are confused as to the real purpose of living and are saying that life isn't worth living.

Then suddenly when some serious illness strikes or an accident befalls them, they ask to be rushed to a hospital and seek the care of the best available doctor so that their life may be spared. Suddenly life has become much more worth living than they had been willing to admit.

You can't help wondering if such people know any real purpose. It will always be so until a man meets up with God and receives Him into his life. Then life becomes worth living. Then he sees why he is here, and what God has a right to expect of him. He begins to know the joy of living when he looks at it from God's point of view, and goes at it God's way.

Surely, we need to ask our Lord to keep our vision clear in the midst of the daily demands made upon us. In this familiar text the Lord shows us in the lives of two sisters how life can be lived, with a purpose. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Living Life With A Purpose Nervous Tension Over Things**

It was a great and exciting day for Mary and Martha when our Lord stopped at their home for a brief visit. They both wanted to make it the grandest day possible. Both wanted to honour Him, and both went at it in their own way. Martha especially wanted it to be a visit long to be remembered, and so we find her at her speciality out in the kitchen, preparing food in an elaborate way, and setting the table until at last she was distracted with much serving.

With so many things in the fire that needed her attention all at once, she was at her wits' end. She wanted the meal to go off well, but it was too much for her to handle alone. The preparations, the pots and pans, the table setting, the meal so occupied her that she lost sight of the real purpose of Christ's visit.

You see her nervous and distraught, trying to get Mary's attention, beckoning her with an urgent call. For out in the living room was Mary, comfortably seated at our Lord's feet, listening to Him, His Word, His teachings, and it got to be too much for Martha. Almost in tears she bursts in and scolds: ***“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.”***

Imagine the incongruity of it all! Martha anxiously preparing bread while the very Bread of Life Himself was in her house. She who had started to serve our Lord with a meal had become so involved in the preparation that the meal became the all-important matter of the moment.

Martha's life was way off centre. Anxious and vexed, her nerves stretched to the breaking point. Martha was fast running out of fuel, so that our Lord, instead of commending her for her zeal and concern, rebuked her, ***“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. <sup>42</sup> But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”***

It is this sin of activism, being too active, being too busy, being always on the go, that can cause us all to lose sight of our real purpose in life. Our Lord wasn't belittling Martha's work nor discouraging her desire to have the dinner run off smoothly, but in her service the meal itself became the chief thing.

Martha became so wrapped up in the material that she didn't have time to listen to Christ. Now there is a place for the material. Our Lord Himself could not function without food, and neither can we. To say that you love God and then deny a cup of water to the thirsty, to let the oppressed go on in their bondage without lifting your finger in protest is to deny God and His love.

It is usually through the material that we express the spiritual. A kiss is physical, but through it you express your love. You need a rose or a sunset to express beauty. You need a hymn to express your praise of God. But without the spiritual the material is only a shell, a crust, a form without content and meaning.

There is much of the Martha-spirit in us all. We can be so distracted by our much serving that Christ is forgotten and we find our energies drained and life goes stale.

Day in and day out we work to hold on to our job, to advance ourselves in business and income, struggling under the pressures built up in the office or the strains of production in factory and shop, and by the end of the week we feel the need for rest and yearn to get away from it all.

And there is so much around the house that demands our attention — the lawn, the garden, the patio, the car, and the entertaining. All these have their place; all are important. But if these are the things that consume our energy and strength, if they are the goal of our living and striving, then how poor we are in the sight of God.

Scripture says in Matthew 16:26, <sup>26</sup> *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?* And so our Lord says, *“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you.”*<sup>1</sup> In one stroke it can all be taken away, and then what do we have? What can sustain us? At the hour of death we are stripped of our earthly baggage.

Our age is crowded with Marthas, both male and female, who are losing their souls even though they are engaged in programs of useful activities.

Our Lord told us about it in the parable of the Great Supper: the elaborate preparations He had made for our salvation, the incredible cost of reconciling us to God, but those who had been invited begged to be excused. They had things to do, useful and worthwhile things. You remember the excuses — one had just purchased a farm and was eager to see it; another had bought some cattle: and another had just married a wife.

Or as our Lord puts it: *“What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?”* and all the while forgetting that *“your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things,”*<sup>2</sup> forgetting to seek Him and His kingdom. *Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*<sup>3</sup>

It was the kitchen that separated Martha from God. It was work without Worship. Not that she didn't know Him, but she was missing Him in a vital, personal relationship. It happens to us every time we place our work with a dollar sign, or our pride in our home before God.

It happens to youth when outings and recreation come first, or in our quest for knowledge when we pass up Jesus who is the Knowledge. If we are too busy to worship God, then we are busier than we have a right to be, than God expects us to be.

It isn't without purpose that God gave us the Third Commandment, *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”* Right after the commandment to have God first in our lives comes this commandment so that we may have opportunity to know Him and so serve Him rightly.

*“Six days,”* He said, *“you shall labor and do all your work.”*<sup>4</sup> And one day He set aside so that we may have our souls refreshed, the batteries of our spirit recharged, our heart's window cleaned as He meets us in the Worship Service of the church for the refuelling of our lives.

We long for faith, we say, so that we will worry less. We marvel at a youth like Joseph, so hated by his brothers that they could have killed him, sold as a slave in a foreign land, sentenced to a dungeon rather than to displease God and corrupt himself and wrong his master — yet in the face of all these adversities he faithfully carried out his duties.

Or you think of a man like Paul, so dedicated to the Lord Jesus that stonings and beatings and shipwrecks were treated like minor irritations as long as he could keep on preaching the Gospel.

We long for a faith like that, but it doesn't come by tending lawns and gardens, by relaxing out on the patio before a portable barbecue or by knocking a little white ball into a little round hole in par. No, ***“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”***<sup>5</sup>

Yes, our Lord says in John 6:63, ***The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*** Yet what has been happening to us? We have too many Marthas who let the kitchen, the house, the pleasures of work, the pleasures of relaxation separate them from their Lord.

Why do so many people have no time for family devotions and private prayers? Why do we spend more than sixty hours each week in sleeping and eating to refresh our bodies and then find it so difficult to find a few hours for worship and Bible study to refresh our souls?

We make a great effort to become as rich as possible in material goods, but we remain spiritually poor. We spend much time in improving and growing in our job and profession, but we remain novices in religion.

We remain spiritual midgets because we are distracted from the really important Word of our Lord by being busy with things of lesser importance. Our souls are starving while we are troubled with much serving. And then what happens? Like Martha, our work loses significance and meaning when we are separated from sitting at Jesus' feet.

This is the big problem of our day. Not only are we busy and distracted, but we can find no eternal meaning in what we do. So we grow weary of working at the same machine or assembling the same parts: we tire of the routines at the office; we grow dissatisfied and irritable on the job, and in the home.

Our work has lost meaning and significance because we have left out the Lord, who alone can oil our lives with gladness. After a long flight an aeroplane needs ground service before it can take off. Failure to service the plane is courting disaster.

## **2. Living Life with a Purpose**

### **The One Thing That Makes Things Meaningful**

We find Mary putting things in their proper place in her home in Bethany. She received the Lord Jesus into her home not just as a guest but as the King enthroned in her heart, as the Bread of Life that supplies the deepest needs of the soul.

The Bread of Life had come, and so supper could wait a little. She did the really important thing. For her home became a sanctuary where God could come near with His saving mercy. As He came to that home in Bethany, even so He comes to us in this hour.

With incredible mercy He enters into our life as the Saviour and gives us sinners His marvellous assurance that through His suffering and death on the cross our sins are forgiven, that we can be His children with all His almighty resources at our disposal to see us through until we see Him face to face in the many mansions of the Father's house.

He comes to you through His Word with the one thing you need with that good portion which no man can take away, with the divine food that renews the spirit and restores the soul.

Is it sin that troubles you? Then confess it to Him and hear Him say in Isaiah 1:18, ***“Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*** And in John 8:11, ***“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”***

Is it worry over bills, your job, your health? Then listen to Jesus who says ***“All things work together for good to those who love God.”***<sup>6</sup> ***The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.***<sup>7</sup> ***“Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”***<sup>8</sup> ***And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”***<sup>9</sup>

Putting Christ first. We cannot grow spiritually if we deny ourselves the food that alone can make us strong. The incidence of breakdowns and crackups, neurosis and heart disease, alcoholism and divorce point up the spiritual starvation of our age.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:6, ***6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled***, while those who hunger after everything else, no matter how thick their steaks, how elaborate their homes, how bulging their wallets, will go away empty.

But it is never enough to say that we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. We need to give ourselves to Him as Mary did, sit at His feet, learn more and more of Him and His way, believe His promises, and live by them. Then we shall experience the blessed truth that we have a treasure that no man can take away.

Yes, storms will come, trials will ring around us, but we will be able to live meaningfully. Fears and anxieties may attack us, but they cannot overcome us if our hearts are set on Christ, who is our Strength.

There is a word here for parents and for the church. There is a “but” here in our text - the “but” of Christian education, the “but” of training the children in the things of Christ.

Martha was worried and anxious about many things, even as parents are about their little ones. We want the best schools for equipping them for life. We want them to be active in clubs and sports. All these things are important and have a part to play in developing children to maturity.

But there is one thing that is needful. No matter how brilliant the children may be, how adept at social grace, how versatile in sports — if they do not have the Lord Jesus, if His way is not their way, if they do not seek His kingdom, then all our labour is in vain.

It isn't the “know-how” that is all important, but the “know-what” — knowing what to do with what you have for the glory of God. Let us not think that Mary was a do-nothing person. Yes, she sat at Jesus' feet, she worshiped and because she worshiped, she could serve with a purpose.

It is Mary whom we find pouring costly ointment over our Lord's feet, while He was yet alive to prepare Him for His burial. You see, our problem is not how to make atomic energy, we know how; our problem is to know what to do with it, and only the love of Jesus can teach us that.

And so it is with everything else in life. Put the “but” into the education of a child - but one thing is needful the Lord Jesus. His love, His mercy, His kingdom — and if you do that, at whatever cost, no one, not even Satan, shall take it away from him.

Yes, if we are not to lose the great purpose for which God created and redeemed us, that of fellowship with Him: if we are not to be distracted by the cluttering things of life, then there is one thing to which we need consistently to give our lives, and that is: hear the Word of God and keep it. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> John 6:27

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:31-33

<sup>3</sup> Matt 6:25

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 20:9

<sup>5</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>7</sup> Luke 12:7

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 6:32

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 28:20