



Distractions

Luke 10:38-42

DISTRACTIONS. We all get them in life – things that stop us from doing what we planned – whatever our desire might be, whatever our ability might be, whatever the cash and equipment we have – it's quite easy to be distracted and all sorts of disasters might happen.

I always find driving a commentary on the world. When it comes to distractions, being distracted while driving can have serious consequences. Too often distractions can be because we decide to allow something to distract us, either because we act in haste or are just stupid. **DOG ON LAP.** You wouldn't do this really would you? I hope someone took this picture just for fun. That said we do have a big dog that likes sitting in the master's seat. You can imagine the accident there would be if you were driving along the motorway and your dog tries to sit on your lap!

Seriously though, the Police are always telling us how dangerous driving using a mobile is **WOMAN WITH MOBILE** and some huge fatalities have occurred in this country because people have been distracted by a mobile.

There are some people who make a living out of distraction. **WOMAN AND DUCKS.** Pickpockets do. So distraction is something that can have consequences for our lives, sometimes even fatal consequences.

I don't know what you make of the passage we read today. We all know that Jesus is wise and all that, but why didn't he tell Mary off for not helping her sister serve dinner. **INCONSIDERATE MARY** How inconsiderate of Mary to sit at Jesus feet, listening to what he was teaching when there was cooking to do and washing up to deal with. Couldn't she have waited until later?

THE NIV puts verse 40 in a slightly different way to what we read. It says *Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.* She was distracted by the arrangements. Surely Luke is being a bit harsh here. Here was Jesus, the great Rabbi, honouring them by accepting Martha's invitation to their home. Wow what a privilege!

HOOVER Have you ever had anyone important come to your home? What do you do? You tidy up. Clean the house thoroughly. Maybe do some repairs. I had parents who were very fastidious people. I can remember each time they visited us that we spent a week cleaning the house up, just in case they found some speck of dust on our furniture. I can imagine Martha doing the same. Then making sure that she had all the best pottery out, the finest food and all the rest of it. And while she was playing a good host, there was lazy old Mary listening to Jesus and not handing round the nibbles or taking the tea and coffee orders! Doesn't that just get you when people don't pull their weight. You can see why she was upset.

And Jesus criticises Martha and not Mary even though it seems on the face of it, she was only trying to be a good host. What's going on here?

MARY AND MARTHA CHRISTIANS?

Some people try to explain this passage in terms of making the difference between what they call Martha and Mary Christians. *Martha welcomes Him by offering hospitality - good food - good wine and a comfortable place to stay. Her sister Mary welcomes Him by sitting with Him and listening to all that He has to say. As is so often the case, different ways of doing things leads to annoyance and argument. Martha is so preoccupied with organising the meal that she forgets her role as friend and listener. Mary is so preoccupied with her role as friend and listener that she forgets that Jesus might need something to eat!*

So what they conclude is that if you are a Martha Christian; practical and servant-like; gifted with hospitality and practical skills, beware that you don't spend so much time doing that you never spend time with God. And if you are Mary Christian, beware that you don't spend so much time with God, that you never actually get round to serving Him – you know the saying – so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good! Actually that isn't a scriptural saying. I'd say that if you look at scripture, the most practical and useful people were those that spent a lot of time with God.

But I don't think that this passage is about different types of Christian. The story is much simpler than that. Martha and Mary (and their family) wanted to welcome Jesus into their home. Why? Why did anyone want to invite the great Teacher, the great Rabbi, the miracle worker into their home? I'd argue that it wasn't that they thought He needed to taste their wonderful cooking, or share a glass of the finest wine, or recline on their comfy new sofa from DFS.

Here was the issue for them - WHY WAS JESUS THE GUEST – WHAT WAS HE DOING AROUND THEIR TABLE? Surely it was because He was the man of God and they wanted to know what God was imparting to them. Here they were – having personal quality time with the Son of God. That's more than most people had. Of course they had to feed Him and give Him the guest bedroom, but Mary saw the significance of it – and she was going to milk it for all it was worth – spending quality time with Jesus.

Scripture here is very significant. We read that Martha was *upset over all the work she had to do (GNB)* or in the NIV that she was distracted. In fact the Greek word to describe how she felt is *PERISPAO to draw away, to be distracted, to be over-occupied, too busy, about a thing (BDB/Thayer)*. This is at the root of the difference between Mary and Martha. Mary understood the significance of having Jesus in the house and focussed herself on that. Martha was distracted, preoccupied with something else. It wasn't just a case of her being flustered by having a very special visitor. Here's Jesus' words: *"Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed.* Her mind was focussed elsewhere. Other things – plural – filled her mind so she never saw what was really important. In fact Martha goes as far as blaming Jesus for distracting Mary and not making Mary help Martha! *"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!"*

And Mary got things right. She received something from Jesus that was eternal and no-one could take away. She saw the significance of the opportunity and took it.

WHY IS JESUS THE GUEST – WHAT IS HE DOING HERE? This is a story about distraction. And it's significant to us, because Jesus is in the house. He's right with us in His temple – our bodies. He's right here amongst us as we worship this morning. Are we listening at His feet – or are we distracted.

All human beings distract easily. BABY We learn distraction from an early age. Our parents teach it to us. Look at anyone with a small child who starts to grumble. What do they do? They distract it. You know shake the rattle, point to something they are interested in, get out their favourite toy – anything to get them off the thing they are grumbling about.

And it goes right through life. We are so easily distracted from that which we need to focus on. And what could be more important than Jesus. What focus can be more important than hearing the voice of God speaking to us? Mary understood that significance, Martha was distracted.

What sort of thing is distracting us this morning. The devil likes to distract us so that we don't listen to God, although actually it takes very little to distract human beings. Sometimes it can be

MINOR THINGS – music, other people's behaviour

MAJOR ISSUES – health, family problems

LOSS OF PERSPECTIVE

It's amazing how when most Christians run into problems and issues that distraction kicks in quickly. They try to sort the problem, or get angry, or get depressed. The problem builds up and builds up. What can start as minor can end up as a situation where Jesus can't be seen at all. And what happens is that they are like Martha and blame Jesus for all of their problems. But were they listening in the first place?

Listen to the voice of Jesus – He’s speaking; are we listening, or are we distracted? That’s our challenge. When we came for worship this morning, we came before God. What has He said to us? If you are a believer this morning, you have the Holy Spirit within you. What’s He saying?

What’s distracting us? Let’s ask God to show us those distractions, but most of all, to free us from those distractions.

Prayer

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MRBC Felixstowe July 18th 2010
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