

New Year – A Tale of Two Sisters

Luke 10:38-42

INTRODUCTION:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way .”

These famous lines, which open A Tale of Two Cities, by Charles Dickens, hint at the novel’s central tension between love and family, on the one hand, and oppression and hatred, on the other. The book suggests that good and evil, wisdom and folly, and light and darkness stand equally matched in their struggle. The book makes prominent use of “doubles” to get & keep the reader’s interest.

We have a story in the New Testament that also uses “doubles”, as it were to teach us an important lesson. Luke contrasts two sisters, Mary & Martha and their relationship to Jesus on a particular occasion. I don’t want to say that one did bad and one did good. No, I would rather say one did that which was “good”, but the other did “better” or “best”.

Read **LUKE 10:38-42**

The focus of our passage today isn’t that we should not be concerned about household chores. No, it is making a point about discipleship.

Disciples of Christ need to choose the best over the good in this New Year.

I. **CHOOSING THE BEST MEANS BEING IN THE RIGHT PLACE** (39).

A. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus.

B. Martha went to the kitchen.

The Greek word here (parakathizo) doesn’t mean to just sit, but sit near. I think it implies that she got as close to the Lord Jesus as she could possibly get.

Sitting at the feet of your master was the proper place for a disciple to be. Paul said he was brought up at the “feet of Gamaliel” (**Acts 22:3**). Luke 8:35 tells us the man whom Jesus cast demons out of sat at His feet.

II. **CHOOSING THE BEST MEANS LISTENING TO THE RIGHT** voice (39).

A. Mary heard the Words of Christ.

B. Martha couldn't hear the Words of Christ (at least not very well).

While at the feet of Jesus, Mary “heard His word”. “Heard” = The Apostle Luke switches tense of the verb here to an imperfect tense which means this was a durative or a continual listening & hearing.... She listened with attentiveness to everything He said, and she didn't tire of His voice or of His teaching...

She sat close enough to really hear what He had to say.

It implies that she continued to think about them after He quit talking.

III. **CHOOSING THE BEST MEANS SETTING PRIORITIES AND WATCHING FOR DISTRACTIONS** (40).

A. Mary's priority was being close to Christ.

B. Martha's priority was serving Christ and others.

C. “But Martha was encumbered about with much serving...” Is serving bad? No, of course not. “Serving” = It is the Greek word diakonias. The feminine form of the word we translate deacon. She was being a servant.

We are told/commanded that we should serve one another. Galatians 5:13.

So, what Martha did was a “good” thing, so what was the problem?

It simply was NOT the BEST thing to do at this point in time.

We are told that Mary “chose good part” which means decided to do the “better” or “best” thing...

Mary made a choice = she knew there was other things that needed to be done, but she purposefully didn't do those things. Instead, she went and sat at the feet of Jesus.

“Good part” = “better/best part” (depending on what you comparing too).

I can't think of anything better than for a disciple to be sitting at the feet of Jesus soaking up every word that He spoke, so I think “best” is the best meaning behind “good part”.

Martha was “careful and troubled” by that which wasn't best. She could have “sat at His feet” too. However, she chose to do other things instead. She was busy with good things that needed to be done . . . But just not right then.

I have tried to explain the details of this rather simple story for you today.

You may be wondering why we are looking at this passage as we begging a new year.

I would hope you would see some practical application that might apply for you this coming year.

CONCLUSION:

Personal Applications from the “Tale of Two Sisters.”:

Application: I will tell you it is a lot easier to be a Martha than a Mary. It is easier to get involved with other things than to spend time getting closer to God through His written word.

Application: We need to make this new year a year in which we “get close to Christ, sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His words”.

Application: We can so busy doing things for Jesus that we fail to spend time learning more about Him. It is possible for service to Christ to degenerate into mere busywork that it is totally devoid of devotion to God.

Application: Don't let your service become self-service. Some people spell “service” as “serv-us.”

Application: Sometimes what we deem close enough in our own eyes is still too far away in God's eyes.

- Attending a service once a week may seem okay to us . . . But is it okay to God?
- Reading the Bible only occasionally may seem adequate to us . . . But is it adequate to God?

- Obeying the elders leadership when we choose rather than when they choose may seem appropriate to us . . . But does God see it as being appropriate?
- Holding a grudge and feeling ill-will against someone may seem justifiable to us . . . But does God accept our doing such?
- Giving is disproportion to what God has blessed us with may seem acceptable to us . . . But is it acceptable to God?
- Gossiping, tale-bearing, and spreading rumors may seem fine to us . . . But is it fine to God?
- Being dishonest in just a few things may seem justifiable to us . . . But is it acceptable to God?
- Telling the “little white lies” may not seem by us to be doing any harm . . . But does God see it that way?

Brethren, if we are not serving . . . The we are swerving around our duties to God!

- God chose the poor and the few to do His work because the rich and the many, being preoccupied, refused Him.
- Ability is wonderful . . . But God is more interested in your availability.
- Service is love and faithfulness dressed in work clothes.
- It is better to fill a little place right and a big place wrong.
- Its not a shame to have just one talent . . . The shame is not using it.
- It is no the hours you put in . . . But what you put in the hours.

We need to make this New Year a year in which we will set priorities to position ourselves closer to God.

- Every Lord’s Day for worship.
- Every Wednesday evening for further Bible Study.
- Every service of every Gospel Meeting.
- Every occasion our local congregation is called together by our elders.
- Regular Bible reading and Bible study in our homes.
- Regular time spent in prayer and devotion to God.
- Regular attitude and response to the question asked in **ISAIAH 6:8** – “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’”
- Draw closer to God as you draw closer to death, judgment, Heaven, and eternity.

God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation