

## Lingering At His Feet

Luke 10:38-42; John 11:20-35; John 12:1-8

Over the past six months or so I've been spending a lot of time reading through the Gospels. Something that kept coming to my attention as I read was how often I found people at the feet of Jesus. Sometimes they are there in desperation. They needed something from Jesus. They are absolutely desperate for Him to make something in their lives whole again. Other times they come with reverence and humility, in worship.

This morning we are going to talk about what it means to live a lifestyle of lingering at the feet of Jesus.

While we don't have time today to examine all these accounts, I do want to focus on one particular person in the Gospels that is found at the feet of Jesus every single time she is mentioned. Mary of Bethany. Mary, a close friend of Jesus, understood the virtuous lifestyle of sitting at His feet. Today we will consider 3 accounts of Mary at Jesus' feet. Each time, Mary's posture illustrates an important aspect of lingering at Jesus' feet.

We begin in Luke chapter 10, verse 38.

*<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."*

This is classic sibling strife. Martha, being the good host that she is, is busy in the kitchen preparing food for Jesus and his disciples. After all, hospitality was something that Jesus valued and encouraged. In fact, the passage right before this one, we see Jesus teaching about a Samaritan of all people who showed the upmost love and care for someone he did not know. This Samaritan was commended for his hospitality to a man who needed care. So we might assume from this that Jesus will commend Martha, and rebuke Mary. Perhaps He would say something along the lines of, "Martha, you are so right. How silly of me to be sitting here talking to your sister, when she should be in the kitchen helping prepare food. Mary, please go help your sister in the kitchen". But to our surprise, Jesus' answer is much different. He says this in verse 41:

*<sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

Do you see how gentle Jesus is with Martha? Jesus notices her anxiety in the kitchen. He knows her worry and concern for the food preparations. He does not say that these things do not matter. After all, someone does need to prepare food

for the guests. Indeed, this is a noble task. These “many things” were not bad in and of themselves. But Jesus notices something deeper in Martha. He notices a frantic heart. What Martha did not understand, was that the better portion was reclining at her dining room table just a few feet away. Now this begs the question, what does Jesus mean by the better portion?

In appearance, there wasn't much that differentiated Jesus from other house guests Martha would have had. His robe was probably just as sweaty and dirty from traveling as His disciples'. He was probably hungry and weary from travels, and so refreshments were indeed appropriate. Yet, *Jesus was no ordinary house guest*. This was the savior of the world. The bread of life. In John 6:48, Jesus addresses the surrounding crowd with these words:

*<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This (referring to His body) is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*

Martha is in the kitchen preparing food that would eventually leave one hungry again. In saying that Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her, Jesus is referring to the life giving food that only He can provide. *Jesus is the good portion*. There is a time for food preparation. There is a time to clean. These things are necessary and important. However, they should never be substitutes for lingering at the feet of Jesus. Mary chose the good portion. And this brings us to our first point:

### **Lingering at Jesus' Feet Means Soaking in the Words of Jesus**

Mary was enthralled with the words of Jesus. For Mary, there was nothing better to occupy her time than to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him. It is almost as if she hanging on Jesus' every word.

I understand Martha. I love Martha, and so did Jesus. I relate to her in so many ways. I am really good at doing things for God. When I see needs, I'll usually meet them. When there is a job to be done, I'll typically do it. But what if in my busy hurrying I am actually avoiding Him? What if, in justifying my busy mind by telling myself that I am “working heartily unto the Lord,” I am actually hiding from the one my soul loves?

Lingering at Jesus' feet requires unhurried time. I love the word lingering. Its definition is: To stay in a place longer than necessary, typically because of a reluctance to leave. How are you at lingering in God's presence? Are you like Martha, constantly busy getting things done, or are you like Mary, completely content in just being with Him? Lingering takes time. It requires us to be still in His presence. There may be places to go and things to do, but in lingering we are saying, “those things, though important, can wait. I know that Jesus is what my soul really needs right now.”

What does it look like for you to linger at Jesus' feet? What will it require of you? What in your life needs to change to allow unhurried time with God, in which you

are reluctant to leave?

We now turn to chapter 11 of John, in which John tells a story that gives us insight into a lifestyle of living at the feet of Jesus, especially in our disappointments. Lazarus, Martha and Mary's brother, is sick. Jesus loves Lazarus, but upon hearing about his illness, Jesus remains where He is and doesn't go immediately to see Lazarus. This is curious thing, for we've already seen Jesus perform miraculous miracles, healing the sick and restoring the lame. So when Martha and Mary send word to Jesus of Lazarus' illness, surely they believed He would come immediately and save the day.

But Jesus does not come, immediately at least. He stays for four days where He is. Eventually He does go to Bethany where Martha and Mary are, and finds out that Lazarus has already been dead for four days. Can you imagine what Martha and Mary felt? He healed so many other people before, why would He not come and heal their brother? Did Jesus not care for their family? Didn't He love them? Surely they were confident of this. But why didn't He save Lazarus? We pick up the story in verse 20:

*When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."*

It's difficult not to admire Martha's faith. Even in her pain, she still believed that Jesus was in charge. And now enters Mary into the story.

*28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept.*

In Mary, we see something unique in how she approaches Jesus. Mary ran at full speed out of the house. I can imagine Mary almost stumbling over furniture in her haste to see Jesus.

When Mary sees Jesus, she falls at Jesus' feet. Her words are the same as her sister Martha. After all, neither Mary nor Martha were blaming Jesus for Lazarus' death

Martha. After all, neither Mary nor Martha were blaming Jesus for Lazarus' death, but simply stated what they both considered to be a fact...if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. But she stops there. She doesn't continue on as Martha had. She waits, bowed down, humbled, with only the feet of Jesus visible beneath her tears.

Jesus' response to Martha and Mary is fascinating to me. Whereas Martha received a sermon from Jesus, Mary was shown emotion. Jesus wept. Here we find Mary, once again at the feet of her beloved Jesus. The same feet she sat at not long before, absorbing the words of her Savior. These were the feet of one whom she had put all of her hope. Yet at this moment, He had not come through for her the way she had believed He would. Mary was disappointed. Heartbroken. Crushed.

Yet...and this is crucial for us to understand...she remains at the feet of Jesus nevertheless. She does not hide. She does not run away. Upon hearing that Jesus is near, she runs as fast as she can toward Jesus and falls at His feet, completely vulnerable and exposed. She doesn't provide a quick answer, no nicely packaged theological assurance. She simply comes...and she lays at His feet. Once again, I believe that we can learn from Mary here.

### **Lingering Means Waiting In His Presence, Even In Our Disappointments**

In our disappointments, we can choose several paths. Sometimes we hide. The pain is simply too much that we cannot bear it. We run away. Or we can shove it down into a deep place in our being hoping that it never comes up. We think, it is easier that way.

But Mary shows us a better way. Mary did not know what would come of the situation. At that moment she did not know that moments later Jesus would bring her brother Lazarus back to life. This was all unknown to her. But...*she was there*. She ran to Jesus as though her life depended on it.

This year, it is highly likely that you and I will experience some kind of disappointment, big or small. This isn't something to be feared, but a reality of living in our fallen world. The question for us is this...when these disappointments come, to where will you run? To whom will you go? What will you do with your pain? Will you hide? Will you shove the hurt deep down so as to not feel it? Or will you, like Mary, make the bold and courageous decision to linger at the feet of Jesus and wait? God may provide an answer, He may not. But what if that isn't the point? What if lingering in His presence is enough? Resting in Him. Trusting in Him. For you, is He worth waiting for?

I'd like to examine one more story, one that happens after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. We don't know how long after, but once again Jesus is in Martha's home, and Martha is preparing food for Jesus and His disciples. Jesus is reclining at the table with His friend Lazarus. We read in John 12, verse 1:

*Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.<sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.<sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair*

*...and she poured the perfume on his feet and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” <sup>6</sup> He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”*

What Mary does here challenges me to the core. Mary is being completely vulnerable in this moment. She is laying it all out there. Not only is what she doing considered wasteful, but also embarrassing. Who pours perfume on a man’s head and feet while reclining at table and wipes them with her very own hair? And keep in mind, Jesus, though fully God, was also fully man. Which means His feet were probably disgusting.

But Mary saw something totally different. To Mary, Jesus’ feet were beautiful. And not only this, but to be at His feet was the most joyful place for her. Once again, we find Mary lingering at the feet of her precious Jesus, recklessly abandoned in her love and devotion to her Savior and Redeemer. For Mary, nothing else mattered. What people thought of her was of no concern. She did not care if people judged her for acting so foolishly. She loved Jesus. He was worth looking like a fool for. He was worth losing repute and her tarnishing her reputation. Just that she may sit at His feet. This bring us to our last point.

### **Lingering at Jesus’ Feet Means Vulnerability in Worship**

What does this kind of worship and devotion mean for us? Are we willing to look like fools for the sake of expressing our love for our Savior? When you come into this room on Sunday morning to worship, are you more concerned with what the person behind you thinks of you, or worshiping the Lord? Are you more concerned with the sound of your voice, or are you willing to lay it all out because you know that to Jesus, it doesn’t matter? Your voice is beautiful to Him. Jesus saw Mary’s worship and commended her. It is here I’d like you and I to wrestle with the question...What would Jesus say of your worship?

When preparing for this sermon, I asked myself the question, “What drew me to talk about this idea of lingering at the feet of Jesus?” I mean, why talk so much about feet? When reading the gospels, why did every instance in which someone sat or fell at the feet of Jesus stick out to me like it left off the page? Because I believe that God has been clearly saying to me, “Logan, pay attention to this. I want you to learn what it looks like to sit at my feet, to linger in my presence. “ I think God put this sermon on my heart because He knew I needed it! He wants me to learn to linger in His presence.

You see, lingering in Jesus’ presence takes time. It requires me to occasionally set aside very good things for something far better...the better portion. It requires that I run to God in my disappointments, rather than hide. It requires exposure in my devotion. In my love for God, will I choose to remain composed and put together, because that is the mature thing to do, or will I throw myself down at His feet because He saved me, and is absolutely and unequivocally worthy of everything I

because He saved me, and is absolutely and unequivocally worthy of everything I have to give Him, even at the cost of my reputation?

Will you join me in learning what it means to linger at the feet of the Savior? Will you pursue with me the joyful and virtuous life of lingering in His presence?

Today as we partake of the Lord's Supper, I'm reminded of Golgotha and those who witnessed Jesus' crucifixion. In Mark chapter 15 we read this:

*“There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome. When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, **and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem**”.*

While we do not know for certain, it is highly likely that Mary of Bethany was amongst this group of women who witnessed Jesus' humiliation and exaltation. Can you imagine what these women felt as they saw their beloved Jesus hanging on a Roman cross? They loved this Man. They adored Him and we are told that they even ministered to Jesus during His ministry. Mary, who weeks prior had washed Jesus' feet with her hair, was likely now staring at those same feet, covered in sweat and blood, pierced by a nail.

It is at this place I'd like us to linger as we take the bread and cup. Let us linger at the foot of the cross, where the precious feet of Jesus are pierced and bloody. This is our salvation. Our Justification. Our Redemption.