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THE BEST PART

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As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a

*woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 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!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." **Luke 10:38-42***

The story about Mary and Martha is a typical example of the polarization we often see among believers. There is no doubt that both have accepted Jesus as their Savior. However some, due to lack of quality relationship with God, lose real life as out of some level of condemnation or

seeking personal gain, they work for Jesus choosing the worst part of Christianity. The best part is not in working for God but is in relationship with God.

From the pulpit we often hear that we should serve each other, yet what is often not emphasized is that we should serve Jesus. To serve Jesus does not only mean to evangelize but also to spend time in praising, prayer, and in relationship with Him.

There is an interesting situation just before this event, Jesus assured the teacher of law that if he wanted to have eternal life he needed to: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind..." (Luke 10:27)*

✦ **Jesus wants to have fellowship with His believers, His bride.**



Jesus wants to have fellowship with His believers, His bride. He does not care about the embroidery on her dress, the ring she wears, her shoes, or her flowers. What He is interested in is her heart – quality relationship.

It is the best part. Everybody can affirm that a marriage relationship is more important than fulfilling marital duties. What would happen if a marriage became a duty without quality communication? It would fall apart or maintain an external form but the life would disappear because of the lack of relationship.

This happens with many believers. It is easier for them to perform duties for Jesus or to serve others rather than have a relationship with Him. Faith is actual fellowship with God. Allegedly, about 85% of the population of Croatia is religious but how many of them know Jesus? Many would rather go to mass or a public meeting than sit at the Lord's feet and listen to what He teaches. It is easier to walk one's own way than the Lord's.

★ **She represents the Christians who welcome Him on the basis of culture or status the church can offer**

► **1. BELIEVERS SITTING AT THE LORD'S FEET HAVE CHOSEN THE BEST PART AND IT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM**

At that, time hospitality was culturally expected and it was a shame to turn away someone who was at the door.

Martha welcomed Jesus into their home. She represents the Christians who welcome Him on the basis of culture or status the church can offer. Some receive Him into their lives for the sake of their own temporary needs as a way of escaping a bad situation. However, rather than getting to know Him better and maintaining a proper relationship with Him they become religious and being worrying about unimportant details. Rather than spending time with Jesus, they spend time with books about Jesus gaining knowledge about Jesus, collecting wealth in Jesus' name, searching for a position in their church, or looking for from people. However, due to the lack of relationship with Him, they lose true life and consequently they loose Jesus as well.

How much time do we spend on passing things, which will simply disappear with His second arrival? Jesus clearly said: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For*

where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

For Christianity, the relationship with God is more important than doing works or obtaining something for Him. A quality relationship with God brings about quality results for His kingdom. We will not need to copy what others are doing because we will know what needs to be done and how it should be accomplished.

Therefore, we should know Jesus in person and have a relationship with Him if we want to enter God’s Kingdom. It is not enough to just listen to sermons, give our tithe and offerings, and attend teachings, dance, and sing. True life is possible only through personal communication with Him.

Jesus, in praying to the Father, said: *“And this is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)* The essence of our faith is to get to know Him; it’s not enough to become a church member and simply know information about Him. Believers who choose to sit at Jesus’ feet choose the better part, which is relationship, as Martha’s sister Mary did.

▶ 2. BELIEVERS WHO CHOSE THE BEST PART KNOW THEIR PRIORITIES

Martha was worrying about details. She wanted to please Jesus by serving; worrying

about things which at that moment were not that important. Her priorities were in the wrong place. Instead of relaxing and paying attention to the guest, she was so frustrated that she even asked Jesus to tell her sister to help her in her misplaced priority: *“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)*

The church would be more alive and effective if they took care to have their hearts ready rather than worrying about equipment and other lesser important things. How much power we would have to praise God if we spent two hours with Jesus instead of in front of the mirror polishing the outer man and trying to make everything perfect?

But the majorities are more concerned with the outer man than they are with inner. We are more concerned about whether people will accept us than how God looks at us.

True believers know how to choose their priorities – the best part will not be taken away from them, which is their relationship with Jesus.

✦ **A quality relationship with God brings about quality results for His kingdom.**



We may everything in life, our family, our career, our home, or even our sanity but no one can take away our relationship with Jesus.

He is the best part. At baptisms, we often sing the hymn “Take the whole world but give me Jesus”. Do we really mean it or do we find ourselves the very next day singing, “Give me the whole world but take away Christ”?

Are we so busy with the wrong priorities that we have no more time to sit at His feet and listen to His Word as before? Are we so busy with building His Kingdom that we forget the King alone?

Martha was so concerned about the guest that she neglected the guest! Therefore, Jesus says to her: “*Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:41-42)*. Mary’s priority was her relationship with Jesus Christ.

★ **The church would be more alive and effective if they took care to have their hearts ready rather than worrying about equipment and other lesser important things.**

When Jesus entered their house, he wanted to spend quality time with Martha and Mary. It was not that important to Him whether the house was clean, whether He would drink Nescafe with or without caffeine, with natural sugar or white; relationship with them was what mattered.

We ought not to go about our day trying to serve Him without first drawing our spiritual breath. Yet, how many times we do; we simply walk out of our house doing things at our own whims and discretion.

Sometimes days and weeks pass by before we stop and sit at Jesus’ feet. We serve Him until we are exhausted, we settle our own private problems and yet find that we have no quality time for Him or when we do spend time with him, it is superficial and short-termed with very low spiritual results.

Instead of choosing life, we chose to be “good people”, religious believers who have exchanged His power and true life for religiosity. There are many people like that – they serve God, do His deeds but do not know Him exactly. Their priority is not God but building houses, having many members, and being recognized in society.

On the last day they will tell Him that

they have served Him, done many various deeds, miracles, and signs; He will answer them, "I have never known you."

Although Jesus did miracles, signs, and helped the weak, he knew His priority – relationship with His Father. He knew that life had to be evident in His service, and this life primarily came from His relationship with the Father.

Jesus used to steal away from serving in order to be with His Father. For example, **Mark 1:35**: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." He knew His priorities, first the Father and then the action! In fact, when we keep these priorities by maintaining a quality relationship with God we will not wander and our thoughts will be clearly led. We will know what to do and will not do our own will but that which our Father reveals us.

Not only did He pray early in the morning but He also he often prayed immediately after serving by withdrawing in fellowship with the Father. Instead of spending time at the "Israelite open theatre" and afternoon coffee with His disciples and the converted, He ordered His disciples to go back to the other part of the lake and "he went up on a mountainside to pray." (**Mark 6:46**).

We can read in Luke that He was so popular that people simply followed Him and came to listen to Him and to be healed from their illnesses. The Scriptures say: "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." (Luke 5:16) rather than signing autographs and eating fish and chips with them.

Jesus did not watch movies all night long or order three pizzas to try to cure His depression after the treatment he received from the religious system; He knew His priorities and kept the night vigil with his Father. He was in relationship with power, life, and hope!

The solution to all personal problems is in relationship with Jesus. If we were with Jesus, we would be less jealous, depressed, and anxious; would not manipulate circumstances and people! People who choose the best part have life and know where their priorities are.

► **3. PEOPLE WHO CHOSE THE BEST PART KNOW TRUE VALUE AND DO NOT HAVE PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

Nowadays Christianity is full of employees, workaholics, and pastors with motives for income and glory. The reason for this is that they have lost their



quality relationship with God. Instead of a relationship with Him, they work for Him but mix true values with their own values and remain partly dedicated.

Such Christians serve for personal gain. They might look wise and clever on the outside because of higher education or money but the truth is that they do not know Jesus – they did not choose the best part.

After Lazarus had died, Jesus came to the village and called Mary. Although He met Martha who immediately gave the diagnosis of her brother, Jesus called for Mary and the Scriptures say that: *“As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him .” (John 11:29).*

Mary did not calculate personal gain but was simply ready to obey Jesus’ voice. I do not say that Martha did not believe but, according to what is written, we may conclude that at the beginning it was not quite clear to her. The Scriptures says for Mary: *“When*

✦ Instead of choosing life, we chose to be “good people”, religious believers who have exchanged His power and true life for religiosity.

Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept. ” (John 11:33-34)

It is interesting that Jesus wept. I believe that He did not only weep because of Lazarus or Martha; Mary’s tears touched him. Martha only gave details with her natural mind. *“Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days. Jesus said to her: “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:39-40).* I believe that Mary believed in her heart when she said: *“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” (John 11:32)*

True relationship with Jesus gives life. Religiosity, although appearing wise on the outside, has no life and brings no life. I am not saying that Martha was religious but she did not know her priorities. Even as she served, it seems that she did it out of duty and not out of relationship, which, I believe, was little bit deeper with Mary.

After that, when Jesus went to Bethany along with His disciples to have lunch with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus we see that Martha as usual was worried about details and served while her sister at the

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same: *“took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair ...” (John 12:3)*

Since this oil was produced in the mountains of India, it was very dear and costly. A liter of this oil had value of salary of several years.

At that moment, there were believers who had personal expectations; they did not dedicate themselves to Him. For example, there was Judas Iscariot who I believe represents many believers whose hearts have never been circumcised by Holy Spirit. He obviously followed Jesus

for personal benefit. The Scriptures say that from outside Judas was disciple but remained thief in his heart: *“This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief.” (John 12:6)*

Christians who choose the best part are not afraid to leave their home, mother, father or property for God; they know that everything can be taken away in a moment. They did not enter into

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relationship with Jesus with personal expectations. They know where true priorities and values lie– in relationship with Jesus.

What are our priorities? Where is your heart and thoughts? Do you really know Jesus or do you consciously or unconsciously pretend to know Him? It is not enough to go to church and serve the others; it is essential to serve Jesus even if you are never noticed or praised. It is crucial for eternal life.

Which priorities should we leave to follow Jesus? What is keeping us from total dedication? To be at His feet is more valuable and easier than building our own image. A man without relationship is a poor man! Without relationship, we are blind!

We should come to Him so that He can open our eyes and lead us back to life.

Today we must choose between work and relationship; instead of religiosity choose life. If we reject relationship with Jesus we may have possessions and positions, receive praise from people, or build buildings but one thing is for sure. We will not have true life; we will not be entered into His historical books as Mary was.

She did that deed out of love for Him; she chose the part that nobody could take away from her. We still remember her today because Jesus said about her and promised: *“I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.” (Mark 14:9)*

Let us choose today the best part! Throw away wrong priorities and come to Him!

★ Which priorities should we leave to follow Jesus?

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