



Empowering People to Change the World

## **One Needful Thing – Seeing & Hearing**

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### **I. Message**

- a. If you have your Bibles, you can turn with me to Mark Chapter 14 and put a finger there. Then open your Bible to Luke Chapter 10.
- b. Not long ago, in a leadership class, we were asked who our heroes in the Bible were. The people we look up to and want to be like. I think it's hard for me to pick just one, but the first one that comes to mind (other than Jesus) is Mary of Bethany.
  - i. Her life eternally portrays one who loved Jesus with all her heart and offered her entirety to Jesus, without reservation. Scripture provides three stories that give us a window into her life and heart. In all three scenes, we see this young woman (probably a teenager) at the feet of Jesus. In all three scenes, we see her completely dependent on Him to act on her behalf.
    1. She sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His word despite the criticism of her older sister (Luke 10:38-42).
    2. She fell and wept at the feet of Jesus before He raised her brother Lazarus from the grave (John 11:28-45).
    3. She anointed His body from head to toe and wiped his feet with her hair despite the scolding of those gathered around Him (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8).

**“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much servicing, 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.’ And Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her’” (Luke 10:38-42).**

### **II. Setting of Luke 10**

- a. This scene takes place in Bethany, a town outside of Jerusalem, six months before the crucifixion during the Feast of Tabernacles (September or October).
  - i. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the forty-year pilgrimage of the Israelites in the wilderness and also looks forward to the time that God would *tabernacle* among us on Earth.

- ii. Along with Passover and the Festival of Weeks, it is one of three notable pilgrimage feasts found in the Bible when all Jewish men were expected to come before the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem. These men would come from whatever towns they lived in and set up makeshift booths for a week made from the branches of four different trees. They would be expected to bring tithes, offerings, and attend Temple services.
- b. In **John 7**, we hear Jesus say that He will not go up to this feast with everyone else, because “His time had not yet come.” What He meant is that though His brothers were urging Him to perform miracles and make Himself known in Jerusalem as the Messiah, He knew that if He went with the pilgrim throng to celebrate the feast, He would provoke the rage of the Sanhedrin to kill Him. He knew that this could not take place until the Passover, so He delayed going and instead spent more time with Mary and Martha in their home (Lazarus would have pilgrimaged with the men while women were not allowed). This is what Martha is getting ready for. All their friends were going to be staying in the booths made from the branches at the side of their house and Martha was likely in charge of the dinner plans. She was getting ready to host everyone and she wanted the service to be perfect.

### III. The Call to Hear

**“As [Jesus] prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. ... a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’” (Luke 9:29-35).**

- a. I believe this story is about hearing. Three times, the audible voice of the Father is heard during the life of Jesus. The first, His baptism when the Father says, “This is My beloved Son with Whom I am well pleased!” The second, this passage on the mount of transfiguration, and the third, in John 12, when the Father’s voice “thundered” and said that He will glorify His name.
- b. In only one of the three times the Father spoke, did He give an instruction to the hearers. The first and third time, were really Him speaking to and about Jesus for those around to hear. Only on the Mount of Transfiguration did the Father give a two-word instruction **“Hear Him!”** Of all the two-word instructions He could have chosen, “Follow Him”, “Love Him”, “Serve Him” He chose the word “Hear”.
  - i. There is one audible command given by the Father in the Gospels: **“Hear Him!”**
  - ii. Jesus said to Martha that **“one thing is needed”** to **“hear His word.”**
  - iii. Jesus only talks about this one thing once. There can only be one thing that is *the one thing*...hearing His word.
  - iv. This is what was so special to Jesus about Mary’s heart posture, she was hearing Him.

#### IV. David's One Thing

**“One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple” (Psalm 27:4).**

- a. David's “one desired thing” was the same “one thing” that Jesus declared was the only thing needed. Except here, instead of hearing, David is *beholding*.
  - i. **The One Thing is really a two-fold posture of the heart: to direct the eyes of our hearts to Jesus and seek to hear His word.**
- b. John 1 tells us that Jesus is the Word of God. (He is referred to as the Word, Wisdom, Light, and Image of God). How do you rightly orient yourself to a Word or Wisdom? You hear it. How do you rightly orient yourself to an image or light? You see it. Therefore, regardless of whether He is speaking or not, Jesus is **God Spoken**. Just looking at Jesus is hearing God's Word.
  - i. **Hearing is Beholding. Gazing is Listening.**

**“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).**

**“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).**

#### V. Looking to See & Listening to Hear

- a. Ten separate times in scriptures, Jesus asked, “Have you not read?” to people who read the scriptures regularly. Of course they had read it, but they weren't reading it to *hear him*.

**“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:39-40).**

- a. What causes us to look, but not See? To listen, but not Hear? To read the Scriptures, but completely miss God's Word?
  - i. For Martha, it was her ministry (a spirit of religion/duty, fear of not doing enough).
    1. Look back at our anchor passage. She is busy serving, which is the word *diakonia* where we get the term deacon from. This is the same word used throughout the New Testament for *ministry*.

2. Martha was the one who invited Jesus in, but once He was there, the work of the ministry became a distraction from one needful thing.
3. But what if we invite Him in and forget to sit before Him and listen? What if we forget to behold Him? What if we forget to be with Him where He is?

ii. For John the Baptist, it was a jail cell (a spirit of offense, fear of death).

**“And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me” (Matthew 11:2-6).**

1. Jesus gave John the key to unlock the prison of offense in his heart so that he could see again. You don’t have to be free from the prison cell to be free from fear, offense, lust, or deception (FOLD). Simply close your physical eyes, see Jesus and hear Him, and He will release His life unto you.

iii. For the Disciples, it was their preferred outcome (a spirit of unbelief, fear of the future).

**“And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, ‘Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.’ But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.” (Luke 9:43-45)**

1. Many times, Jesus tried to tell them that He was going to die, but they could not hear Him. This was just one of many times. I believe that their preferred outcome: a conquering King that would overthrow the Roman Empire, prevented them from hearing what Jesus was plainly telling them: “I’m going to suffer and die.”

#### VIII. Only One Person Heard Him - Mary

**“While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper, He was reclining at the table, and a woman came with an alabaster vial of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the vial and poured the perfume over His head. But there were some indignantly remarking to one another, ‘Why has this perfume been wasted? For this perfume could have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed for Me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body**

**beforehand for the burial. Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her” (Mark 14:3-9).**

- a. The alabaster vial of spikenard—we know it was likely her dowry and worth a year’s wages. She was living in a time where being a woman meant you were powerless without a husband or a father. This was the only security she had for a future that was stable. This dowry would ensure that she would be married to a consistent and wealthy man who would provide for her. By breaking it open, she is saying “my future isn’t a man that I’m going to marry...Jesus, You are my future. I give up my story to be a part of Your story.”
- b. We don’t know for sure what Jesus said to Mary in the booth attached to her house where she sat at His feet six months earlier. But we can infer from His response “she has anointed me for burial”, that she was the only one who truly **heard Him** when He said “I am going to suffer and die.” This was not just a spur of the moment response. Mary thought about what He said... “I am going to suffer and die” for six months before His death. Then she saw Him raise her brother from the dead and thought about that for weeks beforehand.
  - i. **Mary’s extravagant offering was the fruit of extravagant hearing.**
  - ii. And this extravagance is normal in Heaven. God doesn’t go around telling the four living creatures to cry out “holy, holy, holy”. They simply behold His beauty and it provokes the most extravagant cry they are capable of. Twenty-four elders throw their million-dollar crowns on the floor every time Jesus walks in the room. When we truly behold Jesus in the fullness of His glory, we will offer the most extravagant gifts we have to offer. Whatever is at our disposal is broken and poured out before Him when we see Him. What will you waste at His feet? Are you willing to waste your future for this beautiful man? Are you willing to give your time and attention? Will you skip a meal once a week to consume His word instead?
- c. **Breaking the flask over Jesus, the house filled with fragrance – the fragrance of her love for Him – and both Jesus and Mary were covered in the testimony of how precious He was to her. The rest of the Passion Week, to Gethsemane, and then to the Cross, He would smell her love. One who loved Him, saw Him, and truly heard His word.**

#### IX. Response - Friends of the Bridegroom

**“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled” (John 3:29).**

- a. How do we respond to this call to a life of one needful thing? We live to be friends of the Bridegroom. Oh, to be a friend of Jesus! One who would stand and hear Him! One who

would rejoice greatly because of His voice! Oh, for my voice to silent that His voice could be heard!

- b. I want to be someone who dwells in the House of the Lord not to be busy with serving in ministry, but to waste my life sitting before him, gazing on His beauty, and hearing Him; being caught up in His story and His future instead of being preoccupied with mine. I don't want to worry so much about my duty to make things perfect that I overlook the perfection of His presence.
- c. Response to three groups of people:
  - i. You are hearing the voice of the Bridegroom for the first time today and you want to respond. You have never given your life to Jesus and want to give Him your future today like Mary did for the first time.
  - ii. You are busy with the work of ministry like Martha and you want to recommit to a life of one thing focus. You want to commit to Beholding and Hearing as the primary goal of your life.
  - iii. You feel like John the Baptist when he was in prison. You need the hope of seeing and hearing the miraculous works of Jesus to restore your faith today.