

Loving God and Neighbor

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 10, verses 25 to 42. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? And he answered, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.

And he said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

Jesus replied, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

[1 : 19] But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

And the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, The one who showed him mercy.

And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise. Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

[2 : 20] And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. 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. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.

Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her. This is God's infallible and authoritative word. The elusive pursuit of immortality has been at the heart of humanity's spiritual aspirations throughout history.

And that's because God created us for eternal life. But as Genesis chapter 3, verses 22 to 24 teach us, he mercifully cut us off from that possibility of eternal life because of our sin, because we rebelled against him, lest we live forever in our state of rebellion and separation from God.

God cut us off from that possibility. And ever since then, so many people have sought immortality apart from God, even though it is only to be found in him.

[3 : 48] And the Jews, likewise, are preoccupied with this question. And verse 25 says that, Behold, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test. The lawyer in view here is not an attorney that we think of when we think of here the word lawyer, but a teacher of the Jewish law.

It's a religious scholar and an expert of the Jewish Torah, the first five books of the Bible. And he stands up from the midst of the crowd and questions Jesus. Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

So as a Jew who believed in the promise of the resurrection life spoken of in Daniel, the book of Daniel, the scribe wants to make sure that he doesn't miss out in the end. How can I make sure that I will be raised to inherit that eternal resurrection life in the end?

And Jesus answers his question with a counter question in verse 26, as he often does. He asks him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? This is a significant question because as Jesus says this, he reveals his belief that the answer, the correct answer to describe this lawyer's question is provided in the revealed will of God in the Old Testament scriptures.

He points the Bible scholar back to the Bible. And the lawyer actually gives the correct answer. Jesus points that out in verse 28.

[5 : 11] And the answer is what we now know as the greatest commandment. In verse 27, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.

Or the command which we had as part of our call to worship earlier today from Deuteronomy 6 verse 5, The love of the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind.

That comes from Deuteronomy. And the command to love your neighbor as yourself comes from Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18. So in sum, in the entire Old Testament, there were 613 commandments.

And all of those were summarized in what we know as the Ten Commandments. And the Ten Commandments are really distilled in this greatest commandment. The first four of the Ten Commandments, which deal with our relationship to God, how we have to relate to Him, are summarized in the command to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And the command, the last six of the Ten Commandments, which deal with our relation to one another, is summarized in the command to love your neighbor as yourself. And that's why this is called the greatest commandment.

[6 : 21] It's the greatest commandment, not in the sense that it's one of many. It's like the best among all the other commandments. It's the one command, rather, that encompasses all of the other commands. And that's why in Matthew 22, 40, Jesus writes that all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

And that's why Paul writes repeatedly that the whole law is fulfilled in these double love commands. So then what then do these all-important love commands mean?

When it comes to loving God, what's emphasized is the totality of devotion. We have to be totally devoted to Him. Notice the four times the word all is repeated.

We have to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind. The word heart refers to the inner person. It's the seed of our thoughts and our beliefs, as the Bible uses the word.

That's why in Luke 1, 51, and Luke 2, 35, it speaks of the thoughts of people's hearts. It's the inner person. The word soul refers to the spirit or life of a person.

[7 : 29] Strength refers to our might or energy. And mind refers to our cognitive faculty. And in English, we use these terms in vaguely interchangeable ways, don't we?

We say things like, put your heart into it. Put your soul into it. Bear your heart to that person. Bear your soul to that person. What's on your mind?

What's on your heart? Do it with all your strength. Do it with all your heart. So we use it interchangeably, and it's actually very similar in the Bible. These terms are used interchangeably in a lot of places.

So it's kind of hard to pin them down and define it clearly and say, this means that, and that means that. And they overlap. And so what's being emphasized here is not that we are to use these four different faculties to worship God and to love Him, but rather that we are to use the totality of all of our abilities, all of our faculties, all that we are to love Him and follow Him.

It calls for a reorientation of our whole selves to God's purposes and priorities. As I like to say, I frequently, that loving God, following Him, being His disciple, is not a part-time preoccupation.

[8 : 44] It's an all-consuming affair that requires total allegiance. When it comes to loving our neighbors, what's emphasized is not the totality of devotion, but selfless service.

We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Some people over-psychologize this verse, and they say that this means we must first love ourselves, because how can you love someone else unless you love someone as yourself unless you love yourself?

And they use this verse to teach the importance of self-love or self-esteem, when that's precisely the opposite of what this verse is commanding.

The verse does not command self-love. It assumes self-love and teaches us to subordinate our self-love to neighbor love.

We naturally have our own interests in mind as human beings. We're naturally selfish. But Scripture commands us to look out not only for our own interests, but also for our neighbor's interests.

[9 : 49] Instead of being selfish with our time, with our relationships, with our money, we should be selfless toward our neighbor. It requires us to sacrifice. So to put it another way, to summarize the greatest commandment, it means to love God with our whole selves and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

That's really the main point, main point of this passage. But that's still pretty abstract, isn't it? What does that look like? And so Luke actually helpfully illustrates the greatest commandment in very concrete terms in the following two stories.

first is the parable of the Good Samaritan in verses 29 to 37, which show us what it looks like to love our neighbor as ourselves. And then, in the following story of Martha and Mary in verses 38 to 42, Luke teaches us how we ought to love God with our whole selves.

So let's first look at what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves in verses 29 to 37. He says in verse 29 that the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, who is my neighbor?

The lawyer wanted to prove himself right. He wanted to show himself to be righteous. So he asked a follow-up question, who is my neighbor? Expecting Jesus to kind of narrow down the definition a bit, narrow the scope of the commands to make it a little more feasible, accessible.

[11 : 17] He's my neighbor, my own family. Or maybe the people that live in the immediate vicinity. The ones in my condo. Or maybe only my fellow Jews, which is how most rabbis during this time interpreted that command.

This lawyer wants and expects Jesus to restrict the definition of neighbor in a way that allows him to demonstrate that he has kept the greatest commandment. Oh yeah, I love my fellow Jews.

I love my fellow people. We're also tempted at times like this, aren't we, to adopt the minimum requirement mentality in order to justify ourselves.

Hebrews 10, 24 to 25 commands us, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works and neglecting to meet together, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

Scripture commands us not to neglect meeting together, but what exactly does it mean to neglect the meeting together? We try to define it.

[12 : 23] Surely, attending worship service once a month can't be considered neglect, right? If I always attend Easter and Christmas services, that's infrequent, sure, but that's not neglect, right?

Well, I'm not part of a local church, but hey, I watch live stream services online and listen to sermon podcasts. Surely, that meets the requirement, doesn't it? We try to find the minimum requirement because we want to fulfill it and say and justify ourselves.

2 Corinthians 9, 6 to 7 says, the point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver.

Okay, so God commands us to give to the church, but how much should we give? What's the minimum requirement? If I give a couple bucks every week cheerfully, that's enough, right?

Tell me, how much do I need to give? I hear this question a lot. How much do I need to give? 10%? Just tell me, I'll do it. Tithing means maybe I'm sowing bountifully, right?

[13 : 36] Is it okay to give 10% after taxes? Okay, fine. I'll give 10% before taxes. Well, then I've done it, right? That means I've sown bountifully. I've met the requirement.

Instead of wanting to obey God to the fullest, instead of wanting to remain in the center of his will, we look to fulfill the minimum requirement so we could get a passing grade.

We're like a person who's trying to find all the loopholes in the tax code so we can pay as little tax as possible. That's not how Christian obedience is supposed to be and that's exactly what this lawyer is trying to do.

So who exactly is my neighbor? Tell me exactly. Restrict it. Define it. Narrow it down for me so that I can fulfill it and feel good about myself and justify myself before the eyes of men.

And Jesus replies in verses 30 to 35 with the famous parable of the Good Samaritan. Begins this way. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed leaving him half dead.

[14 : 40] This is a very realistic parable. The journey from Jerusalem to Jericho includes what is called the passage of blood. It's called that because there were so many robberies and murders that took place on that road.

The winding desert road going down from Jerusalem to Jericho was surrounded by caves which made ideal hideouts for robbers, highway robbers. And this man in the parable runs into such robbers and they steal his stuff and leave him half dead and this man is now fighting for his life.

If no one comes to his rescue he will die. But what good luck it says in verse 31 not by chance a priest was going down that road.

A priest a minister at the temple of God. Surely this man of God will come to the aid of this dying man but in a surprising turn of events it says that the priest when he saw him he passed by on the other side.

He intentionally avoids the man. Various reasons are possible but we're not told exactly what it is so we can't know for sure. Perhaps he's fearful that there are more robbers just like the ones that attack this man and they don't want to he doesn't want to risk going anywhere near there.

[15:52] Perhaps he thinks the man might be dead because he's half dead he looks dead and he doesn't want to risk ritual impurity by coming into contact with the corpse since he's a priest. Whatever the reason the priest doesn't want anything to do with this dying man.

And verse 32 continues so likewise a Levite when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side. Moses' brother Aaron his family and their descendants had the exclusive right to be priests in the temple of God.

But the rest of the members of the tribe of Levi to which Aaron belonged took on lesser responsibilities around the temple and functioned as basically assistance to the priests. So they were also privileged they were a privileged class of religious elites.

But the result is likewise disappointing. The Levite did get a little closer than the priest. It says that he came to the place and saw him but just like the priest he passed by on the other side.

And at verse 32 comes the twist of the story. After the Jewish priest then a Jewish Levite you would expect simply a Jew a Jewish lay person.

[17:06] You'd expect kind of an anti-clergy story where a priest and a Levite had failed but this common faithful Jewish man comes by and does the right thing.

You see it's not about your titles. It's about being faithful. That's the story you would expect. But instead it says a Samaritan. In the Greek the word Samaritan is awkwardly placed as the very first word of the sentence unlike the words priest and Levite earlier in the earlier preceding verses.

It's fronted there for emphasis for shock value. This wasn't the case earlier but now after the priest goes by on the other side the Levite goes by on the other side they both it says they saw the man and then they walked by on the other side but a Samaritan what is a Samaritan doing in this Jewish parable?

I mentioned last week briefly that we know from the gospel of John that there was really bad blood in history between Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles they were half half breeds as Jews would call them.

Instead of worshipping at Mount Zion in Jerusalem they argued that true worship should be held at Mount Gerizim in Shechem. For these reasons Jews not only viewed these Samaritans as ethnic half breeds they also saw them as religious heretics their deviants.

[18:38] So this is the point where you would expect the hero of the story to come and resolve the tension that's been building up but out comes a Samaritan and the Samaritan goes the full lengths to care for this dying man.

It was said of both the priest and Levi that they had seen him but they passed by but the Samaritan when he sees the man it says he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. So it's unclear what kind of cloth he would have had available to bandage this man's wound. He had to use some from his own cloak or maybe the turban or a piece of the linen undergarment to bind up the wounds.

He does that but as he does that he also treats the wound. He uses his own supplies. He uses the oil to soothe the wound. He uses the alcohol the wine to disinfect it.

And the oil and wine would have been his own provisions for travel but yet he gives it up in order to serve this man. And then since the man is in no shape to walk he comes down his own animal probably a mule which means he would have to walk the rest of the way and then he brings this wounded man to an inn and continues to take care of him.

[19 : 59] As if that weren't enough most people would have could have left the man there and left and gone his way and never come back and people would have still praised him for being a good Samaritan.

But he doesn't stop there. He says in verse 35 the next day he stays overnight the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper saying take care of him and whatever more you spend I will repay you when I come back.

Since the wounded man had just been robbed he has no money to pay his way. And so the Samaritan seeing that the innkeeper would be reluctant to care for a man who can't pay for his stay he pays two denarii up front that's the equivalent of two days worth of wages full days worth of wages which would have been enough to pay for about 24 days at this kind of inn in this day and age.

But even that's not the limit of this Samaritan's generosity and hospitality he assures the innkeeper in verse 35 take care of him and whatever more you spend I will repay you when I come back.

Please don't discontinue your care for this man and if I don't return before the money I paid you runs out be assured that I will return don't expect anything from him I will guarantee your compensation personally take nothing from him take everything from me.

[21 : 22] And after that shocking twist to the story Jesus asks a very pointed question verse 36 which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers and the proud Jewish lawyer can't bring himself to say the word Samaritan.

He replies in a roundabout way verse 37 that the one who showed him mercy and Jesus said to him you go and do likewise.

verse 37 can be translated more literally this way the one who did mercy it's the same word the word do the one who did mercy and Jesus said to him you go and do likewise there's an emphasis the repetition of the idea of doing and Jesus is driving home a point and notice how masterfully Jesus turns the lawyer's question around because what was the lawyer's initial question it was who is my neighbor he wanted to define the terms and delimit the concept of neighbor so that he can justify himself and say that he performed his minimal duty but Jesus shifts the focus from defining who it is to doing the word do has come up twice already in verse 25 the lawyer asked what shall I do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said in verse 28 you have answered correctly do this and you will live and here in verse 37 he says follow the one example of the one who did mercy you go and do likewise instead of trying to qualify bible's demands on your life instead of trying to limit it confine it make it manageable focus on obeying it the real question is not who is my neighbor it's am I a neighbor don't ask who your neighbor is be a neighbor love and serve whomever you come across that has a need that you can meet your neighbor is not just your fellow countrymen your neighbor is not just your blood relatives your neighbor is not just those who share your ethnicity or race your neighbor is not just someone who shares your theological views or your political opinions your neighbor is not just the people who look like you and speak like you your neighbor is not the people you like the people you love to serve it's anyone who has a need that you can meet that you come across and there's a wider lesson here for Jesus his disciples as well because

Jesus has repeatedly up to this point in chapter 9 and 10 told his disciples that to be a follower of Jesus is to represent Jesus and since Jesus represents God the father they too as disciples of Jesus represent God himself and that's why he said in Luke 9 48 and here and also in Luke 10 16 the one who hears you hears me and the one who rejects you rejects me and the child of God the disciple of Christ by virtue of his or her identification with Jesus by virtue of their union with Jesus through faith carries with him or herself the dignity and authority of God himself and that means by implication what we do for any of the followers of Jesus we do for Jesus himself in addition to that wonderful truth Jesus repeatedly pronounced fearful judgment on those who reject him and his followers he taught his disciples to wipe the dust off their feet as they leave towns that reject them and their message as a sign against them as a testimony against them that they will be rejected and condemned by

God on judgment day should they persist in their stubborn rejection of Christ so in light of all this you can kind of see why the disciples might have a misunderstanding and we saw their misunderstanding earlier in chapter 9 verses 51 to 55 when they came to a Samaritan village they're at a Samaritan village and they reject them and the disciples are understandably upset and they asked and they but Jesus rebuked them and this parable of the good Samaritan serves as a corrective to them yes those who reject Christ and his disciples will face judgment but that will be at Jesus second coming and not his first coming and Jesus comes first in grace to save and then he will come again a second time in glory to judge but for those who live between those two comings we are to be messengers not of bad news but of the good news of

[26 : 45] Jesus Christ the message of salvation so yes we are to love and serve our brothers and sisters in Christ as if we're serving Christ himself and we would but because they represent Jesus but this does not mean that we are not to make this point Jesus intentionally uses a priest and a Levite as negative examples in this parable because if anyone in this culture in this time would have been considered lovers of God it would have been the priest it would have been the Levite but they failed to observe the greatest commandment why because they did not love their neighbor as themselves Jesus is here explicitly rejecting the kind of mystical spirituality that is divorced from service to mankind this lawyer had devoted his life to studying

God's word his laws and that's excellent and we should all strive to do that and maybe many of you have read the Bible through many times from cover to cover but if you profess to love God but your love for God is not evidenced by your love of neighbor then your love of God and love of neighbor go together loving our neighbor as ourselves is a necessary expression of our love for God then in verses 38 to 42 Luke gives us a picture of the opposite imbalance and teaches us what loving God with our whole selves looks like he says in verses 38 to 39 read with me now as they went on their way Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house and she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching earlier in

Luke 8 we saw that women were among Jesus wider group of followers which would have been shocking in this day and age and here we see an even more explicit statement of that truth Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to this teaching this is the language of discipleship that occurs again and again throughout the gospels she is one of the disciples sitting at Jesus feet and learning from him his followers taught men and women are heirs of the heavenly inheritance in

Christ Jesus the equality of men and women that our culture assumes owes its existence to Christ teaching there would have been many in this context who would have been scandalized by Mary's boldness and even more by Jesus acceptance of her but among her fiercest critics we find her very own sister Martha it says in verse 40 that unlike Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching 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 hosting a large group in your house is not a small feat many of you guys have done it some of you guys do it probably a little too frequently we don't know how large a crowd is here but at the very least we could assume that

Jesus and his inner circle the 12 apostles were present so that's at least 13 guests and some of you have cooked for a group that size before and it's a difficult work a former seminary professor of mine marveled at this kind of hospitality he said he called it a minor miracle he said a good cook can take cold food and get it into the refrigerator at one time the hot food in the stove at another time and it all comes out at the same time and everybody has a good time isn't that amazing but it doesn't always go that smoothly some of you have also experienced how hard it is to juggle several things at once in the kitchen by yourself oh no the dough is rising a little too much that that meat is burning in the fire that soup is boiling over and you're scurrying over in a hurry and trying to take a plate and then you drop it of course because you're in a hurry and it shatters on the ground and you're starting to feel a little bit overwhelmed

[33 : 11] Martha was having one of those days she's overwhelmed she's distracted and she remembers wait I have a sister Mary Mary doesn't respond so she sneaks over to the living room takes a peek and behold you should be here this is your place where she's sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus listening to him Martha is slaving away in the kitchen and here's Mary just sitting doing nothing to make this party happen and so Mary is indignant she loses it when she sees Mary notice she doesn't even go to Mary discreetly and be like hey Mary can you come over here and she goes straight to Jesus right up to him and she says this to Jesus

Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone tell her then to help me do you feel Martha's frustration here because I do I have a lot of sympathy for Martha I think many of you do too I think Cambridge is a city full of Martha's I'm one of them there's no doubt that Martha felt that Jesus would be sympathetic to her concern don't you care Jesus she knew Jesus cared for her so she asked Jesus to send Mary back to the kitchen to help her fully expecting that Mary would listen to Jesus but Jesus answer is as firm as it is gracious he says in verses 41 to 42 Martha Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things but one thing is necessary Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her the double evocative

Martha Martha it indicates earnestness and it communicates emotion Jesus is not just coldly rebuking and rejecting her this is a protection of Mary yes but it's also an invitation to Martha Martha Martha and Jesus contrasts the many things that Martha is anxious and troubled about with the one thing that is necessary what is this one thing that is necessary Jesus explains further Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her Mary had chosen to be with Jesus Mary had chosen to listen to Jesus and that was the one thing that was necessary Martha I did not come to your house so I could eat your food I came to your house to be with you that you might listen to me that you might follow me that you might learn from me this is the good portion in the context of a meal the word portion refers to a serving it's a serving of food so it's kind of a figurative use of the word it recalls

Deuteronomy 8 verse 3 and he humbled you and let your hunger let you hunger and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord early in verse 39 he said that Mary sat at the Lord's feet listened to his teaching the word teaching there literally is word she listened to Jesus word Mary was listening to Jesus word eating the word that comes from the mouth of the Lord and she had chosen the better dish that was the better portion the bread of God rather than the bread of man and she says he says that will not be taken away from her you might recall from the story of the transfiguration in Luke 9 35 when God the father spoke and affirmed and approved and endorsed Jesus he said this is my son my chosen one listen to him and immediately before today's passage in

Luke 10 22 Jesus said all things have been handed over to me by my father and no one knows who the son is except the father or who the father is except the son and anyone to whom the son chooses to reveal him Jesus is the son of God and it's his exclusive prerogative to reveal God the father to us and therefore we are to sit at his feet and listen to him Jesus said to the lawyer that if we love God with our whole selves and love our neighbor as ourselves that we would inherit eternal life this is not a form of works righteousness that if we will be saved by the good works that we do we're saved by the grace of God and here's how those two work together because loving God with our whole selves is an expression of and it's an entailment of listening to Jesus and following him that's why 1st

[38 : 59] John 4 15 16 compares them this way whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God God abides in him and he in God so we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God abides in him if we confess Jesus then God abides in us if we love God then God abides in us and these are parallel statements because Jesus is God's chosen representative and to believe in him and to follow him is to love God and we have all failed in this regard to love God with our whole selves and to love our neighbor as ourselves and we were therefore cut off forever from the prospect of inheriting eternal life but that's why God the father sent his only son Jesus to die for us to save us so that he might represent us so that we don't stand for ourselves in the court of

God's judgment but that Jesus might stand for us because Jesus in his life he said he obeyed his father and loved his father perfectly that's what we should have done but we did not love him perfectly but Jesus did but even though he obeyed perfectly he loved God perfectly he died he didn't need to die he was the one human being that didn't need to die but he died so that he might take our place because that's what we deserved and he was raised from the dead to make us alive in him again and he fills us with the very living spirit of God so that we might inherit eternal life and so that in this life even though imperfectly we might truly love him with our whole selves and love our neighbor as ourselves that's the good news of Jesus Christ that's the word of Christ that we have to listen to the parable of the good

Samaritan rejected the idea that we could love God without loving our neighbors the story of Martha and Mary teaches us not to neglect the love of God for the love and service of our neighbors and there's an order and a priority to that hospitality is not a light thing in the ancient world it was prized very highly in fact being hospitable is a consistent biblical requirement for an elder a pastor of a church but even serving others must not displace the priority of listening to God and his word verse 40 says that Martha was distracted with much serving the word serve is the same Greek word that also means to minister it's the word that sometimes gets translated as deacon ministry is a good thing serving is a good thing but if it leads us to be distracted with much serving if it makes us anxious and troubled about many things these are warning signs that we are losing sight of what is most important and

I say this we have a church full of very hard working servants with amazing deacons in our church but I don't want the busyness of our service to distract us from listening to Jesus it's easy for us as a church to give in to the idolatry of more let's do more let's have more more programs more ministries more people but sometimes less is more and if there are ways to simplify our gatherings so that more people can be attentive to God's word I think we should strive for that so many of us work ourselves down to the bone work work work serve and serve and serve as if our validation before the eyes of

God depend on that performance that success as if we're really convinced that God needs us God does not need us he can raise up rocks to sing his praises if he wanted to it says in Luke 19 40 he can accomplish his sovereign purposes without us but he chose to save us because he loved us we are not his hired hands we are his children Jesus said I do not call you my servants I call you my friends so are you spending time at his feet are you spending time in his presence do you listen to him through the reading of his word do you talk to him through prayer do you love him with your heart soul mind and strength and I don't mean that just we automatically because we live in the

[44 : 47] United States of America we automatically understand that to mean individually personal devotion time personal prayer time in fact most of the time those kinds of commands are given in scripture it's corporate even here Mary is sitting in the group of disciples among the disciples at the feet of Jesus do you prioritize that time because unless our hearts are pulsating with the love of God you cannot love your neighbor as yourself because unless you have listened to the word of God you cannot rightly do the works of God because unless you have been ministered to by God you cannot minister for God we have to love God with our whole selves love our neighbor as ourselves brothers and sisters I want you to feel freedom and release from this liberating truth because you don't need to be busy in yourself trying to prove yourself to the

Lord you don't need to be anxious and troubled for many things you don't need to be distracted with much serving because the hard work of being accepted by God the hard work of being able to be admitted to his presence that hard work has been done by Jesus on the cross and because he said it is finished we can now sit at his feet we can listen to him here to on his them