

Guest Preacher - Rev. Kenneth I Macleod

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 January 2025

Preacher: Rev. Kenny I Macleod

[0 : 00] And I want us this morning just to think for a little on this last section and looking in at verse 39. What it tells us here about Mary.

And she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. Now there are various places that we like to go to.

There are places that maybe there are certain places that you like to go for a walk. There might be certain homes that you like to go to.

We all have places that we say, I really look forward to getting back there. Maybe there's some place on holiday. Maybe you go there all the time because you found this place and you say, you know, I really feel comfortable.

I feel at home here. This is a great place. So we all have these kind of places in life. Well, for Jesus, he had his places as well.

[1 : 06] It's very obvious that the Garden of Gethsemane, although it was a place of real testing for him, where he was locked in prayer with his father and praying that the cup might pass from him.

We know that it was a place that he loved to go. We read about that, that Jesus often went there. He often went to the garden. So that obviously it was a place that he was fond of going to.

Another place that he loved to go to was this home in Bethany. This home, the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Now, the life of Jesus, as we know, was a life that was filled with sorrow.

It tells us in Scripture that he was a man of sorrows and he was acquainted with grief. And the life of Jesus in this world would have been a lot more sorrowful, but for the company and for the ministry of the women that followed him in the world.

Because when we read through the Gospels, we see so often of just how mindful they were of him, how devoted they were to him, and of how they ministered to him.

[2 : 21] And we have to thank the Lord for the ministry and the prayers of women over the centuries. And when we look through the Scripture, we see so many great women of faith, whether it be the Sarahs, the Deborahs, the Hannas, the Ruths, the Marys, the Elisabeths, the Lydias.

The Bible is full of great women of faith. And this woman that we come here, Mary Bethany, is probably the most spiritually-minded, discerning follower that the Lord Jesus had.

Now, it's very interesting. It tells us elsewhere that Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and the brother Lazarus. It doesn't often tell us about Jesus loving, particularly loving people, but he loved this home and he loved the people of this home.

He loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. It tells us that he loved John as well, the disciple whom Jesus loved. And this home will always be associated with the kindness and with the devotion and love that was shown to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as we know, often spent nights out in the open. Sometimes he spent all night in prayer out in the hill. Sometimes, as he said, the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay down his head.

[3 : 50] Sometimes, for Jesus, the stars were his sheet, and his Father's love is blanket as he lay down at night.

So, this home would be a very special home to the Lord Jesus Christ. And Bethany, of course, was the scene of one of the greatest miracles ever seen, performed by Jesus in the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

And Bethany, where this home was, was the last place that the feet of Jesus touched before he ascended up into heaven.

Remember, it tells us he led after the, remember, the resurrection, and as he was in that 40-day period, he kept showing himself to the disciples over and over.

It tells us even up to 500, Paul tells us. But it was only, well, it's got to remember, it was only the Lord's people who saw the risen Jesus. Those who didn't know Jesus never saw.

[4 : 54] Only his followers saw the risen Jesus. And in a sense, it's still the same today. Because it's only when we come to faith in Jesus Christ that we're able to see and to understand and believe.

And we find that Jesus, he led his disciples out. We're told that Jesus led the disciples as far as Bethany.

And lifting up his hands, remember it tells us, he blessed them. And while blessing them, he was parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

So the final place that Jesus walked in this world was Bethany. And a lot of people have thought that this was as a mark to the devotion and the love that was shown him in this very home.

That it was from Bethany that he ascended finally up to glory to his father. And it's a wonderful picture that we have of Jesus' ascension with his hands raised up.

[6 : 00] The hands, and although there's other things in it, we see certainly one of the things we see is benediction blessing. And that's how he's risen up. And that's how his hands are stretched out over the church.

As he parted from, he raised up his hands in blessing upon them. And we've always got to think of the risen hands of Jesus stretched out in blessing over us.

Because that's how it is today. Even maybe you don't feel blessed, but that's how it is. We know that he is seated at the right hand and that he is making intercession for us.

But the benediction blessing in his parting remains upon us. So, as we see, Bethany was the last place that the feet of Jesus touched before he left this world.

Jesus didn't ascend from Jerusalem. He didn't ascend from the temple. He didn't ascend from Jerusalem. They had crucified him there. He didn't ascend from Nazareth, the place he grew up, or Capernaum where he did the great works, because they had rejected him.

[7 : 09] He ascended from Bethany, the place where he was shown the greatest love and devotion. Now, as we come to this home, we find two sisters are very different.

And you and I know that that's very true in families. Although sometimes you can have brothers and sisters, sisters, sisters, brothers, brothers, that look very alike.

You would know just by looking at them and you'd say, oh, well, it's very obvious that you are brother and sister, or you're sister, sister, brother, brother, because they're so alike. And sometimes it runs further out.

You sometimes see nephews and nieces that look like uncles and aunts and so on. And it's very obvious sometimes the facial appearance of many people.

You can see that. But sometimes they look totally different. You can look at a family and sometimes you'll say, well, nobody, none of you brothers and sisters look alike each other in any way.

[8 : 14] But while it is true like that, it's often true with regard to personality, with regard to character. And you'll often see within a family that you'll have different sort of abilities, different gifts, different ways.

And so it is when you come to this home, you find a difference between Mary and Martha. Martha was a busy, busy, busy one. She was always busy. She was always working.

And she was somebody who was just flat out all the time. And we find, of course, that Jesus gently, very gently rebukes Martha.

And he isn't rebuking her because she's a busy woman. Because I know, and I'm sure we all know, that the Lord would love. That more and more people were as zealous and as hardworking as Martha was.

Jesus isn't rebuking her in any shape or form for her hard work. And Jesus isn't rebuking her because he doesn't love her. Because we're told in John's gospel that Jesus loved Mary and Jesus loved Martha.

[9 : 28] What Jesus is highlighting here is that Martha has become over troubled, over anxious. She's the kind of person who, you know, you know that there are people like that.

If a visitor is coming, the fatted calf has to be killed. It doesn't matter who it is. They have to give it the full works. Just completely give everything.

It's as if royalty were coming to the home. And there are some people that's the way they are. And you're kind of saying, slow down. And Jesus is really saying to Martha, slow down.

And why is he saying to slow down? Because she's missing what's absolutely essential, vital, and important. She's missing the moment.

You know, life is full of moments. And this was a very special moment where Jesus was teaching. Jesus was sitting down and he was talking.

[10:38] And what an opportunity. What a wonderful privilege to be there listening to Jesus as he's speaking and teaching. But Martha is so busy that she's not hearing.

She's running here, running there, doing this, doing that. But it's not that Jesus doesn't appreciate what Martha is doing. But she's got the priorities. A wee bitty out of order here.

And so we see, as we say, the big differences between the sisters. In a sense, if you were to look at disciple patterns, you would say that Mary was probably more like John.

John, as he went on in life, although he was once a son of thunder, became a much more reflective person. Peter, as we know, was the impetuous one.

Peter was the one who spoke before he thought, acted before he gave it any proper consideration. Well, Martha was probably a wee bit like Peter, and Mary was a bit like John.

[11:43] But what set Mary apart was what we find in our verse here. It tells us very simply, she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

You see, Mary had chosen, as Jesus said, the good portion. That good portion which shall not be taken from her. And you'll also notice what Jesus says about the good portion.

He says, one thing is necessary. One thing is necessary. Who's saying that? This is Jesus. Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And he's saying to us all, there is one thing necessary. He's our maker, the one who holds our life in the palm of his hand.

The one who was involved at the very beginning, Father, Son, Spirit, were involved in the creation of all things. And here he is in our nature, and he's saying, one thing is necessary.

[12:51] I think we should all lay hold upon that. Because I know that in life, we all have our to-do lists. We all have things that right now, if you were to say, are there any necessary things in your life?

You'd say, oh yes, I've got quite a few really important things. Well, they might be, and I'm sure they are. But there's nothing as important as this of finding and receiving and accepting Jesus Christ as Savior.

one thing necessary. So you make sure, above all, that's why Jesus came into this world.

Remember what it says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.

Should not perish. You know, sometimes we overlook that word, and we just look at the giving of what, the wonderful gift that Jesus is and he is.

But do we stop to think of the consequence of not believing? Perish. It's an awful word. You know, when something perishes. And that's, that's the outcome of not believing.

[14:04] So that's why Jesus is saying, one thing necessary. So in order to have our lives fulfilled, in order to have purpose, direction, in order to have peace, in order to have heaven, we need to have this one thing necessary.

And the beauty is that today, Jesus is a seeking Savior. You know, I love that. It tells us in the Bible that he has come to seek and to save those who are lost.

That Jesus is a seeking Savior. I hope today you ask him. Well, you know, if we knew something of the gospel, but we didn't know where to go, that would be really difficult.

But we do know we have to ask. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened. Ask and you will receive. Really ask. Not a sort of casual.

You know, we can do that kind of casual asking, Lord, oh Lord, have mercy. And we don't really think too much about it. Would we really mean it? Imagine if the opportunity was only now and again.

[15:18] Imagine if there had been, you know, sometimes you'll see for sale and it says for a limited time only. Imagine if it said that about the offer of the gospel. For a limited time only.

Imagine if that limited time only had passed. But it hasn't. Still, the day of opportunity. So you make sure that you seek the Lord Jesus while he can be found.

And so we find that Jesus has said this good portion that will not be taken from you. So we find Mary and she's at the feet of Jesus. And every time that we meet Mary, she is really at the feet of

Jesus.

Remember when Lazarus had died and they had sent for Jesus to come. And Martha went out to meet Jesus but Mary sat still in the house.

And it's only when Martha called for, sent for Mary and said, the teacher is sending for you that we find that we find Mary coming and it tells us that she fell down at his feet.

[16:30] That's the first thing Mary did when she came to meet with Jesus when her brother had died, immediately she fell down at his feet. She was used to being at his feet.

That's what she was doing sitting, listening. You can picture Jesus, he's there sitting in their house and Mary just sitting on the floor just at his feet listening to everything that he's saying.

Well here she is again and she falls down at his feet. And by doing that she is declaring in it, Lord, you are my only hope. My brother has died, there is nothing else that anybody can do except you. And we have that picture over and over in scripture of people falling at the feet of Christ. Remember Jairus whose daughter was critically ill and he went to Jesus and he fell down at his feet pleading, please come and save my daughter.

It's a place of dependence, it's a place of humility, it's a place of urgency. Do you know that's the place that you and I have to go to fall at the feet of Christ and to plead with him, to ask him.

[17:43] So Mary had discovered that this was so important. Again, when you look at Mary, for instance, in John chapter 12, we remember that great incident where Mary anoints the feet of Jesus.

again at his feet. And remember what Mary did, she took, she had this box of very, very special ointment which cost an absolute fortune.

And what did she do? She broke it and she poured it out upon Jesus. Oh, there were people in the room that were critical of her and they were saying, oh, what on earth is she doing that for?

They saw it as a waste. Mary gave what was most precious to her and she poured it out over Jesus. And they were critical of her and Jesus rebukes them.

And Jesus said something very interesting. It maybe doesn't bring it out quite in the ESV but more so in the AV it brings out that it's, why did she do it? He said, against the day of my burial has she done this.

[18:49] Isn't that interesting? Remember when the women went to anoint? Jesus. To anoint the body of Jesus. They weren't able to because Jesus had risen.

His body wasn't there. Mary is doing it before he dies. Why is she doing it before he dies? How has she grasped this?

Because let us be quite clear, there was nobody else was expecting the death of the Lord Jesus.

And you may say to yourself, surely, no, no, they weren't. Even although Jesus had told the disciples, he had told them repeatedly of what was going to happen, they weren't grasping it, they weren't taking it in.

They had in their mind that the restoration of the, that Jesus was going to restore the kingdom and it was going to be an earthly kingdom, it was going to be what they thought, they had it in their own mind, it was different to the way that he was doing.

Yes, he was the Messiah, yes, they believed in him, yes, they accepted him by faith, but they had a completely distorted view of his mission. And we can say that quite categorically because one time when he started to tell them what was going to happen, Peter said, put these thoughts away from you, don't be speaking like that.

[20:14] That's what Peter says to Jesus when he's telling them of what his mission is. Of course, Jesus recognized the satanic influence that had been speaking the words that Satan was using Peter as a mouthpiece.

Even the disciples, there's a very telling moment when John goes to the, remember when Peter and John go to the empty tomb. It tells us at that moment that John looked in and he believed.

It's that moment, it was a dawning moment where everything came together. A full understanding and realization. Oh, yes, because Jesus had told them that after, that the Spirit would open the things up to them.

And so, it's like all the teaching of Jesus came together. There was a dawning moment, an understanding moment. Well, do you know what? This Mary understood before Jesus died.

And she anointed the feet of Jesus before he died in light of his burial. How did she know? Because she was sitting at his feet listening.

[21 : 29] That's how. She was drinking in the teaching of Jesus. And she was grasping and she was understanding what even Peter and James and John hadn't at that moment laid hold of properly.

And it shows us the absolute importance of laying hold upon the Word of God. Do we have this hunger for the Word of God? Because today, how do we sit at the feet of Jesus? With the Word. This is where it is. This is where we see Jesus in the Word. The Word is made flesh and dwelt among us. But here we have Him in the Word.

And that's why we're told that if a person wants to come to faith, they've got to be in the Word. Why? Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

So if you're serious about finding Jesus as Savior, get into the Bible. Get into the Word of God. And with a prayer, Lord, open my eyes that I might see wonderful things out of your law.

[22 : 36] And you know, when you come to faith, you will. I remember for years, and it was purely legal, out of a legal mind, before I became a Christian.

I was as dead as could be, but I used to read a bit of scripture every day, because I'd been brought up to do that. I used to read it myself. But I was just doing it to satisfy my conscience.

I wasn't gaining any benefit from it. I wasn't seeing anything. There was nothing wonderful in it. But I'd been taught, brought up to do that. But I was as dead as a dodo. But I was still reading it.

One day it changed. And it has continued to change. Because all the time, the Lord is opening up to our mind. We see things.

We see things from a new, and every day it's fresh. church. So it's vital that we're in the Word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

[23 : 38] Again, we're sanctified by the Word. Remember when Jesus, the high priestly prayer, sanctify them through the truth. Thy Word is truth. So the more that the Word of God runs through our spiritual veins, the more that we are being transformed to the image of Christ.

You see a fast-flowing river, and it's been roaring down for year after year, maybe hundreds of years. And the stones are so smooth, because the water has, over the years, it's began to smooth the stones.

So it is spiritually, that the water of life running through our veins, in the Word, that it will begin to smooth out all the rough parts of our life, so that we're being, as it were, changed and molded more and more.

It's through the Word that we bring fruit to the glory of God. Remember in the parable of the sower, how it tells us that the good seed fell and it brought forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred.

So the Word, the seed being the Word of God, when the Word of God is in our heart, implanted in our heart, it breaks out in our life by how we live, and that's where we bring fruit to the glory of God.

[25 : 06] It's through the Word that we're cleansed. You are now clean, the Lord says, through the Word that I've spoken to you. And again, the Word is essential in prayer, because this is what it says, if you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.

See, the great help it is to our prayer life. The more we know what the Word of God is, the more we know how to pray according to God's will.

And when we're praying according to God's will, God tells us we shall receive the things that we ask. There are many other things that we could say, but one last place we could say about being at the feet.

It's also the place of thanksgiving. Because there's a great picture given to us in Scripture.

Remember there were ten lepers that came to Jesus asking to be cleansed.

And Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests. And away they went, and on their way they were healed. And it tells us that one came back, he was actually a Samaritan. And what did he do?

[26 : 18] Well, first of all, the ten of them fell down at the feet of Jesus, asking Lord, please have mercy on us, cleanse us, clean us.

They went off, and they were healed on the way. This one came back. And what did he do? He fell down again at Jesus' feet, thanking Jesus and praising him for the healing that he had received.

And Jesus asked the question, where are the nine? Only one came back to thank, and it was a Samaritan. Do we receive from the Lord, and are we like the nine, forgetting to come back to thank?

Thanksgiving should be a constant part of our life, displaying our gratitude to God for the wonderful things that he has done. You know, as Christians, we can sometimes sadly begin to take it for granted.

And we forget sometimes just how awesome, how extraordinary our salvation is, the cost of it, the marvel of it, and the future that is held out before us.

[27 : 35] So let us make sure that we are at the feet of Christ, thanking him for what he has done. So let Mary be an example to us, to be in the word, just with a thirst, with a hunger for the word.

And if there's anybody here today who's still outside the kingdom, remember this world has nothing for you. Yes, the world holds out many promises, and we all have our dreams.

We all have our dreams. We all, and we still have our dreams. But you know, the world can never ultimately give. Whatever the world gives you, it's only our loan. It takes it straight back.

It'll come back. We have to leave everything else. But what Jesus gives, it's forever. That's what he said, this one good portion, the good portion that can never be taken.

Never be taken. Well, you make sure that you have this good portion today. Let's pray. Lord our God, we give thanks for your word. We give thanks for what you teach us from it.

[28 : 46] We pray that we might have teachable spirits, because sometimes we can be so hard in our heart. We are poor pupils before our teacher.

And we pray that we might be more willing to learn, more willing to bend before you, because there is so much within us that is almost defiant.

O forgive us, Lord, and help us to walk worthy of the high calling to which we have been called. We pray to part us with your blessing, take us all home safely, we pray.

Grant us your grace and come before us for the evening service, forgiving us our every sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We are going to conclude singing in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73. And we are going to sing verses 23 to 26. This is from the Psalter, Scottish Psalter.

[29 : 49] Psalm 73, 23 to 26. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

Thou with thy counsel, while I live, wilt me conduct and guide. To thy glory afterward, receive me to abide. Whom have I in the heavens high but thee, O Lord, alone?

And in the earth whom I desire, besides thee, there is none. Verses 23 to 26 of Psalm 73.

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

Amen. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

[31 : 05] Thou with thy counsel, while I live, will be with me conduct and guide.

And to thy glory afterward, receive me to abide.

whom I have I in the heavens high of thee, O Lord, alone?

Lord, how did the earth whom I desire, whom I desire, besides thee there is none.

my flesh and heart doth fit and fail, but God doth fail me never.

[32 : 40] For of my heart God is the strength and portion forever.

For of my heart forever. For of my heart forever. For of my heart, I am with you. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.