

PLEASING PRESENTS
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Luke 10:38-42

1. Shortly after Jesus was born the Wise Men arrived from the East bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
2. They came to the house in Bethlehem where Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were residing.
3. There they presented gifts that were both prophetic and practical.
 - a. Prophetic in that they pointed to Jesus' eventual reign, His priestly ministry, and His sacrificial, atoning death.
 - b. Practical in that the family was about to flee into Egypt to escape Herod's attempt to kill Jesus, and these valuable gifts would sustain them for an extended period of time.
4. What we call Christmas constitutes the only birthday celebration I know of where honoring the honoree is often not the priority while pleasing ourselves and others often is.
5. If we were to ask Jesus what He would like to receive from us on an ongoing basis I think examining the life of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, would help us to determine at least part of the answer.
6. Lazarus, Martha, and Mary lived in Bethany, a small village not far from Jerusalem, and their home was a place where Jesus was always welcomed and cared for.
7. His presence was not viewed as an intrusion, rather His visits constituted an infusion of love and light into their home.
8. How blessed is the life or the home where Jesus is recognized, welcomed, honored, worshipped, and obeyed.
9. Let's look at three things Mary gave to Jesus that we should also give to Him.

I. Undistracted devotion. Luke 10:38-42

- A. No relationship can prosper unless both parties involved see it as a priority.
- B. This incident provided Jesus with an opportunity to teach a foundational truth related to our ongoing relationship with Him.
- C. Jesus' visit elicited two different reactions from Martha and Mary.
 1. Martha got busy preparing to meet Jesus' physical needs.
 2. Mary took the opportunity to sit at Jesus' feet, listening to His word.

NOTE: This was something Martha could have done as well if she had not been distracted by her own priorities.
- D. The text tells us that Martha was distracted with all her preparations (much service).
- E. The word distracted means that Martha was cumbered, overly occupied, and too busy.
- F. In other words she was trying to do more than the situation required.
- G. Not only was she not finding any joy in what she was doing, she was also growing increasingly irritated with her sister who was enjoying what she was doing.
- H. In her frustration she questioned Jesus' apparent lack of concern, and demanded that He tell her sister to stop doing what she was doing, and start doing what Martha was doing.
- I. In response Jesus gently chided Martha for being worried and bothered about so many (unnecessary) things, and commended Mary for focusing on the ultimate priority in life: Him.
- J. Jesus Christ wants us to recognize that He is to be life's Grand Obsession, and when He is everything else will find its proper place.

II. Undisturbed trust. John 11:1-44

A. Most of us are familiar with this incident.

1. Lazarus became ill and the sisters sent word to Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 3

NOTE: Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 5

2. Rather than running to Lazarus' bedside Jesus delayed His departure for two days.

3. At the end of two days the Lord told His disciples that they were going to Judea even though it was dangerous.

4. Jesus also informed them that Lazarus had died and that He was going to raise him from the dead.

5. Lastly, by the time Jesus arrived Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days.

B. For the purpose of this message I want focus on the response of Martha and Mary.

1. When Martha heard that Jesus was arriving she went out to meet Him, confronted Him with, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 21

NOTE: In other words, "You could have prevented this, but did not."

NOTE: The text confirms that Martha was a woman of faith, but her faith was not as fully formed as that of her sister.

2. When Mary came to Jesus she fell at His feet and spoke the same words Martha had spoken, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 32

NOTE: Mary used the same words, but both her tone of voice and attitude were different; there was no irritation in her voice or accusation in her words.

C. This incident was orchestrated by God, so that Christ's power over death and the grave could be demonstrated.

D. Jesus wants us to trust Him totally no matter what life throws at us, and that trust, and accompanying peace of mind and heart, is pleasing in His sight.

III. Undiluted love. Mark 14:1-9 (See also John 12:1-8)

A. Jesus was a guest in the home of Simon the leper (who had been a leper).

B. Also present were Lazarus, Martha who was acting as hostess, Mary, the disciples, and possibly others.

C. Putting both accounts together we learn that at some point Mary emptied an alabaster vial of pure nard on Jesus head, and with some of it she wiped His feet using her hair as a towel.

NOTE: Her actions were totally inappropriate by the norms of her society, but she did not care, nor did she care that she had wasted, in the eyes of some, something that was valued at almost a year's wages.

1. Some present scolded her for wasting such a valuable commodity.

2. Judas pointed out that the ointment could have been sold and the money used to help the poor.

NOTE: His words were high sounding, but his motives were selfish.

D. Note Jesus' words related to His attitude about the whole matter.

1. "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial."

NOTE: Mary's act of devotion was not only motivated by a pure and lavish love for the Lord Jesus, but it was also prophetic in nature.

2. Jesus went on to say that what Mary did would serve as an ongoing example wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world.

E. We should all love Jesus the way Mary did with a pure and fragrant love.

F. When we do no sacrifice will be too great, and our living for Him becomes a joy.

APPLICATION

1. As we approach Christmas we might ask ourselves:
 - a. Does Jesus have my undistracted devotion?
 - b. Do I trust Him totally whether I understand things or not?
 - c. Do I love Him, and does my life and my life choices demonstrate that I do?
2. If not what should we do about it?
3. We should acknowledge where we are, and ask God to bring us to where we ought to be.
4. There are not many Marys in today's world, but we should all want to be one of them.