

INTRODUCTION 引言

Priorities will determine our activities. You do the things you see as important first, although your teachers or your boss often decide that for you. Pastor Chuck Swindoll once told a story about a small coastal town. Every Summer tourists go there to enjoy the sun and the beach. Accidents happened occasionally. Due to the city's tight budget, it could not afford to hire life-guard. Therefore, a group of local residents built a small hut and equipped it with basic facilities. They also recruited some qualified volunteers to serve at the station. Since then, people received help when needed. A few years later, some volunteers were busy with their lives or simply lost interest to help. In order to keep the station running, someone suggested adding entertainment amenities to it. Volunteers did return but they came just to hang out or to play ping pong. Eventually, the station was expanded to a facility for people to relax. Any church will end up in a similar outcome if its members forget their missions are to save souls and disciple believers. We must align our priorities with God's will, or else we will turn God's house into our clubhouse. That begins with our personal relationship with God. Jesus is teaching us a simple but profound lesson in our passage today. On that day, the Lord was traveling with His disciples. They passed by the home of Martha. She and her younger siblings Mary and Lazarus lived in Bethany, which is right outside Jerusalem. They were good friends of Jesus. Naturally, Martha warmly welcomed her guests. The focus of the story is about Jesus' comments on the choices the two sisters made. The lesson is evident: hearing the Word of Jesus is more important than doing work for Him.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Busy Laboring 忙於做事

Martha was busy laboring for Jesus. She was perhaps the owner of the house and so she felt obligated to give Jesus the best treatment. Martha did the right things, but with a wrong mentality and a misplaced priority. Her house was probably an ordinary peasant's home, and she did not have any servant to assist her. Therefore, she assumed Mary would give her a hand with cooking or setting up the table. But the younger sister did neither. Instead, she sat near Jesus, listening to His teaching. Getting annoyed, Martha complained to Jesus in verse 40: **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."** Martha was distracted by her duties. All the preparations took away her opportunity to learn from Jesus. In fact, she was overwhelmed by the work! Can you sense Martha's feeling in her words? She said: "Lord, don't you care?" She implied that Jesus did not care about her urgent need. The disciples felt the same way at one time. They met a storm as they were sailing across the lake of Galilee. They were shocked to see that Jesus was sleeping when they were fighting against the wind and waves. They grumbled to Jesus: "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to drown?" We may draw a similar conclusion when God's plan and timing do not match ours. But God's wisdom is way above our limited mind. In this case, Jesus had an important lesson to teach Martha. She was upset about Mary. But why did Martha tell Jesus but not to Mary privately? Perhaps Martha wanted Jesus to play a judge. She expected Jesus to side with her, and even rebuke Mary for not

helping. Put yourself in Martha's shoes for a moment. Have you been a Martha in the church before? I have. You think that you are the only person doing all the work, while everyone else is sipping coffee, chatting and enjoying your service. Watch out when your heart starts to grumble. You may need to do one of the following three things. First, you may have to **slim down**. I am not talking about your weight, but your workload. You can designate some tasks to others. Perhaps it is also time to train new coworkers. Second, you may need to **slow down**. It takes time for people to grow. Do not get frustrated when others are not moving as fast as you want them to. Sometimes, you need to gently push people out of their comfort zone. But do not forget to pray for them too. Ask God to change their hearts. Third, eventually you may have to **step down**. You may consider taking a break and let others take over, especially when you feel that you have run out of fresh ideas. That can give you some time to learn new skills or try a new ministry. It is unhealthy when we concentrate only on our duties and forget that we are serving the Lord. Perhaps it is when you get anxious about teaching the next Bible lesson. It affects your sleep and even gives you nightmares. Going to church feels heavier than going to work, and you are exhausted on your way back home. Then all the stress and anxiety cycle back because you are worried about next weekend already! You just want to check things off your list and move on to the next item. Three words can help us examine our motive. First is **joy**. Is there any joy in your preparation and when you are serving? Some people love their job so much that going to work is like going on a vacation. That should be your mentality when you serve God. Joy does not come only when everything is smooth. But joy will take away your worries and fatigue. Second is **love**. Do you love the Lord and people more in your ministries? Love will increase your patience even when people do not cooperate with your plan. It will motivate you to sacrifice more of your time and effort for others. Third is **growth**. Are you growing spiritually? Do you become more like Jesus as you serve Him? For example, are you growing in grace and kindness toward others? Are you growing in your knowledge about God? Are you growing in your personal relationship with Him? Are the people you serve growing too? Do they become more mature spiritually through your contribution? Those three factors should keep our mindset right.

2. Busy Listening 忙於聆聽

Martha was busy laboring for Jesus. In comparison, Mary was busy listening to Jesus. Before Mary responded to her sister's accusation, Jesus came to her defense. Look to verse 42: **"But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."** Martha had concerns about many things: food, drink and seats, etc. In Jesus' mind, listening to His teaching was the one thing Martha needed. Mary made the right choice. It is a desire that would not be taken away from her. In those days, women did not receive formal training from a rabbi. By sitting at the Lord's feet, Mary acted like a student. Jesus welcomed anyone who came to Him – women, kids, the sick and the poor. Martha thought that it was a rare opportunity to serve Jesus. But Mary valued more about the rare opportunity to listen to Jesus. The Lord never said that eating was unimportant. It is our basic need. The difference is between a good choice and the best choice. Martha could have ordered a few pizzas or asked Door Dash for a delivery. That would free her up to join the learning. Martha wanted to serve Jesus the best way she could. But in this instant, the best way to serve Jesus was to give Him undivided attention. Physical food is secondary when compared to spiritual food. God's Word lays the foundation for our lives. Listen to Psalm 143:8 – **Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.** A morning devotion of

Bible reading and prayer will set the tone for the rest of your day. I encourage everyone to spend time with the Lord first before you get busy with your schedule. If you do not have this habit already, I challenge you to get up fifteen minutes earlier beginning from tomorrow. Read a few Bible verses and pray to God. The Lord will show you direction in areas like your study and career, and marriage and parenting. God's Word is the GPS for our personal life. It is also a blueprint for a church. One day, I was listening to a Christian radio station when I was driving to the church. The host asked the audience what is the one thing a church cannot go without. People called in and shared their answers: one said love, another person said people, etc. Those are good answers. What will your answer be? A church can be without a building. A church can continue without you and me. But a church will not be a church without God's Word. Many churches started by a group of believers gathering in a room to study the Bible. They may not have a seminary-trained teacher. But they have a thirst and hunger for the Word of God. They simply open the Bible, read one verse at a time, understand its meanings and apply the truths in daily life. A church has to keep focusing on God's Word as it grows. Otherwise, coworkers may shift their attention to programs. Ministries become work projects. Success is then measured by numbers like attendance, baptism, budget, offering, etc. One retired pastor shared some good insight. He said that he did not count his sheep; he weighed them. He wants to make sure that his church members are eating healthy spiritual food. God surely hopes that more people will come to know Him. But He also care about our spiritual appetite. I once shared with a Baptist executive that our church is more of a serving church than a growing church. We can easily mobilize people to cook, to clean up our building and to serve the community. Those are all good things. But we should not be too busy to learn. Food is a trademark for our church. We had two annual banquets before the pandemic. Many of you worked hard in the kitchen and served at the tables. We wanted to provide the best physical food to our guests. But do we have a bigger desire to give them the only spiritual food they need? Please do not take my comments as a criticism. It is a beautiful thing for the whole church to work toward the same goal. But in God's eyes what we cooked are only the appetizers, His Word should be the main course. We have something much better than what Pacific Fusion and Golden City can offer. Filling people's stomachs can only last a few hours. Saving their souls will be good for eternity.

CONCLUSION 結論

Hearing the Word of Jesus is more important than doing work for Him. Martha and Mary may have different so-called "love languages." Martha showed her love to Jesus by laboring for Him. Whereas, Mary loved Jesus by spending time listening to Him. To Jesus, if there was only one thing both sisters should choose, it is to learn from His words. I hope that we will have more Mary in our church. We call our Sunday gathering a worship service. Do not just come here to perform a service while forgetting to worship God. Rather, we should serve God through our worship. God sees our relationship with Him more important than our work for Him. On that day, Martha was making every effort to serve Jesus. But in fact, Jesus was serving the audience with His Word. The Lord once said that He came to the world not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus did not only give us His Word, He gave us everything.

INTRODUCTION 引言

優先次序會影響我們做事的決定。一般你會先做你認為比較重要的事情，雖然很多時候你的老師或老闆會為你作決定。史溫道牧師 (Chuck Swindoll) 曾經講過一個關於一個沿海小鎮的故事。每年夏天，遊客都會去那裡享受陽光和海灘。意外偶爾會發生。由於城市的經費有限，沒有能力聘請救生員。因此，一群當地居民建了一間小木屋，收集一些基本設施，並徵召了一些合格的義務救生員。從那時起，人們在需要時得到了幫助。幾年後，一些志願者忙於生活，或者已經失去了願意幫忙的熱誠。為了確保有人在救護站服務，一些人建議增添娛樂設施。有些志願者的確回來了，但他們只是來聊天或打乒乓球。最終，救護站擴充，成為一個休閒的場所。如果一間教會的成員忘記了他們的使命是要拯救靈魂和造就信徒，那麼教會可能有類似的結果。我們的優先次序必須與神的心意保持一致，否則神的家便會變成我們的俱樂部。一切是從我們與神的個人關係開始。耶穌在今天的經文中教導我們一個簡單而深遠的功課。那一天，主和祂的門徒要去某個地方。他們經過馬大的家。她和妹妹馬利亞與弟弟拉撒路住在耶路撒冷外圍的伯大尼。他們是耶穌的好朋友。自然，馬大熱情地接待她的客人。故事的重點是耶穌對兩姐妹所做選擇的評語。故事的教訓是顯而易見的：聽耶穌的教導比為祂做事情更為重要。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Busy Laboring 忙於做事

馬大忙於為耶穌做事。她也許是屋主，所以她覺得有義務給耶穌最好的招待。馬大做了正確的事情，但是她的心態和優先次序都不正確。她的房子大概是普通平民的家，沒有僕人幫助她。因此，她以為馬利亞會協助她做飯或擺桌子。但妹妹兩件事情都沒有做。她只是坐在耶穌旁邊，聽祂的教導。結果馬大生氣了，她在第 40 節向耶穌抱怨：馬大伺候的事多，心裡忙亂，就進前來，說：「主啊，我的妹子留下我一個人伺候，你不在意嗎？請吩咐他來幫助我。」馬大專注於她的職責，所有的預備功夫剝奪了她向耶穌學習的機會。事實上，她被工作壓得喘不過氣來！你能從馬大的話中聽到她的感受嗎？她說：「主啊，你不在意嗎？」她暗示耶穌並不關心她的迫切需要。有一次，耶穌的門徒也有同樣的感覺。當時他們坐船渡過加利利湖，正好遇到風暴。當他們與風浪搏鬥時，驚訝地看到耶穌竟然在睡覺。他們對耶穌抱怨說：「老師，我們快要淹死了，祢不關心嗎？」當神的計劃和時間表與我們的不一致時，我們可能會得出類似的結論。但神的智慧遠超過我們有限的頭腦。在這次事件中，耶穌要教導馬大一個重要的功課。她對馬利亞不滿。但為什麼馬大向

耶穌訴苦而不是私下告訴馬利亞呢？也許馬大希望耶穌來評理。她期望耶穌站在她一邊，甚至責備馬利亞沒有幫忙。我們設身處地來思考一下馬大的處境。你以前在教會裡當過馬大嗎？我有。你認為你是唯一把事情包辦的人，而其他人卻在喝咖啡、聊天和享受你的服務。當你開始抱怨時，你要小心。你可能需要做下面三件事之一。首先，你可能需要**減輕**。我說的不是你的體重，而是你的服事。你可以將一些任務分配給其他人。也許現在也是訓練新同工的好時機。第二，你可能需要**放慢速度**。人的成長需要時間。當其他人的節奏沒有達到你的期望時，不要感到沮喪。有時，你需要輕輕地把人們推出他們的舒適區。但不要忘記為他們禱告，求神改變他們的心。第三，最終你可能需要把事奉**放下**。你可以考慮休息一下，讓其他人接手，尤其是當你覺得自己沒有新鮮的點子之時。這樣你便有時間去參加培訓或嘗試新的事奉。當我們只專注於自己的職責而忘記我們是在事奉主時，這便是不健康的。也許你一直憂慮下一堂的聖經課，它影響你的睡眠，甚至讓你做噩夢。來教會感覺比上班還沉重，回家的路上又身心疲憊。沒多久所有的壓力和焦慮都回來了，因為你開始擔心下一個週末了！你只想著把清單上的事情一一完成。有三個用詞可以幫助我們思考我們的動機。首先是**喜樂**。你在準備和服事的時候有喜樂嗎？有些人非常熱愛自己的工作，甚至上班的心情就像去度假一樣。當你在事奉神之時也應該有同樣的心態。不一定只有在事情順利時，你才會感到喜樂。但喜樂會帶走你的煩惱和疲勞。二是**愛**。你在事奉中更愛神和愛人嗎？愛能使你對人更有耐心，縱使別人不完全配合你的計劃。它會激勵你為他人投入更多的時間和努力。三是**成長**。你的靈命在成長嗎？當你事奉耶穌時，你變得更像祂嗎？例如，你是否對別人更有恩慈和良善？你對神的認識有增長嗎？你與神的個人關係是否在成長？你服事的對象也在成長嗎？他們的靈命是否因著你的付出而變得更成熟？這三個因素會保持我們的心態正確。

2. Busy Listening 忙於聆聽

馬大正忙於為耶穌做事。相比之下，馬利亞忙於聆聽耶穌的教導。在馬利亞回應她姐姐的指責之前，耶穌站出來為她辯護。請看第 42 節：**「但是不可少的只有一件；馬利亞已經選擇那上好的福分，是不能奪去的。」**馬大關心許多事情：食物、飲料和座位等。在耶穌的心目中，聽祂的教導是馬大唯一需要做的事。馬利亞做出了正確的選擇，沒有人能奪走她的願望。當時，婦女沒有權利接受拉比的教導。馬利亞坐在主的腳前，表現得像個學生。耶穌歡迎任何人來到祂面前：婦女、小孩、病人和窮人。馬大認為這是一個難得的服事耶穌的機會。但馬利亞更看重聽耶穌的難得機會。主從來沒有說過吃飯不重要。那是我們的基本需要。分別是好的選擇和上好的選擇。馬大本可以買一些比薩餅或叫外賣，這樣她便有時間參加學習。馬大想盡她所能給耶穌最好的服務。但在此時，服事耶穌的最好方式就是全神貫注地聆聽祂。物質的食物沒有屬靈的食物那麼重要。神的話語為我們的生活奠定了基礎。請聽詩篇 143:8：**求你使我清晨得聽你慈愛之言，因我倚靠你；求你使我知道當行的**

路，因我的心仰望你。早上的讀經和禱告時間能幫助你設定一整天的步伐。我鼓勵大家在忙自己的事情之前先花時間與主交流。如果你還沒有養成這個習慣，我挑戰你從明天開始就提前十五分鐘起床。讀幾節經文，然後向神禱告。主會指引你生活的方向，例如學業和事業、婚姻和教養子女。神的話語是我們個人生活的導航儀和一個教會的藍圖。有一天，我開車去教會時在收聽一個基督徒的電台節目。主持人問聽眾一個教會不能沒有的一件事是什麼。人們打電話並分享他們的答案：有人說是愛，另一個人說是會眾等等。這些都是很好的答案。你的答案會是什麼？教會可以沒有建築物。沒有你和我，教會依然繼續存在。但是沒有神的話，一個教會就不再是教會了。許多教會是由一群信徒聚集在一個房間裡學習聖經開始的。他們可能沒有受過神學院訓練的老師，但是他們渴慕神的話語。他們只需打開聖經，閱讀一段經文，了解其含義並將真理應用到日常生活中。隨著教會的增長，信徒必須繼續把重點放神的話語上。否則，同工可能會將注意力轉移到節目的安排。事工成為工作項目。然後人們以出席人數、浸禮、財政預算、奉獻等數字來衡量成功。一位退休的牧師分享他的見解。他說他沒有數他有多少的羊，他乃是稱他們的重量。他確保他的成員吃健康的屬靈糧食。神當然希望更多的人認識祂。但祂更關心我們的屬靈胃口。我曾經與一位浸信會的行政人員分享說，我們的教會樂於服務，但沒有在穩定成長。我們可以很容易地動員人們做飯、打掃教會並為社區服務。這些都是好事。但我們不應該忙到一個地步沒有空學習。食物是我們教會的號召。在疫情之前，我們每一年舉辦兩次宴會。很多人在廚房裡辛勤燒菜，在餐桌旁服務。我們希望為客人提供最好的物質糧食。但是我們是否有更大的願望給他們唯一需要的靈糧？我不是要批評大家。整個教會朝著同一個目標努力是一件美事。但在神眼裡，我們煮的只是開胃菜，神的話才是主菜。我們有比 Pacific Fusion 和 Golden City 更好的食物。填飽人們的肚子只能維持幾個小時，拯救他們的靈魂卻使人永遠受益。

CONCLUSION 結論

聽耶穌的教導比為祂做事情更為重要。馬大和馬利亞可能有不同的所謂「愛的語言」。馬大通過為耶穌做事來表達對耶穌的愛。然而，馬利亞通過花時間聆聽耶穌來愛祂。對耶穌來說，如果姐妹兩人只能選擇一件事，那就是學習祂的話。我希望我們的教會裡有更多的馬利亞。我們稱我們的周日聚會為主日崇拜。(英文的直接翻譯是敬拜服事) 我們不要只是來這裡提供服事而忘記敬拜神。我們應該是透過敬拜來事奉神。神看我們與祂的關係比為祂做事更重要。那天，馬大竭盡所能服事耶穌。但事實上，是耶穌用祂的話來服事每一個聽眾。主曾經說過，祂來到這個世界不是要接受別人的服事，乃是為了服事人，並且捨棄自己的生命作為眾人的贖價。耶穌不僅給了我們祂的話語，還給了我們一切。