

Matthew 6:24-34 Part 4
Satan's Only Weapon Against a Believer in Christ Part 4
also Luke 10:38-42

We are in Matthew 6:24-34. Our text for this morning, that is the basis for our study in Matthew 6, is Luke 10:38-42.

In Matthew 6:24-34 we are studying about *anxiety*, or *worry* as it is translated in English. But in Matthew chapter 6 Jesus is ministering to religious Jews that the external practice of religion means nothing. It is the internal ministry of God's Spirit. It is the internal interaction with the spirit of the living God that counts in a person's life. And in Matthew 6 Jesus introduced three important points:

(1) In Matthew 6:24 Jesus says, "**You cannot serve two masters.**" The term *cannot* has to do with capacity. What Jesus is saying is every human being has been created with the capacity to only serve one master - not *believe* but *serve*. Either you will serve God or you will serve **μαμμωνᾶς** (mammōnas), the earthly realm, the physical realm in which we live.

(2) So with that in mind - that the human being has only been created with the capacity to serve one master - He says in Matthew 6: 25, "**Therefore take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or drink or what you shall put on.**" The word *thought* is the word that we are studying in the series, **μέριμνα** (merimna), and it means *to occupy the attention of the mind*. Not occupy the mind but occupy the attention of the mind. What Jesus is saying is since the human being only has the capacity to serve one master, we are serving whatever our mind is occupied with.

(3) So therefore He says in Matthew 6:33, "**In light of this** - since you only have the capacity to seek and to serve one thing - **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else that you worry about (or care about) will be added to you.**" In other words, the Lord is saying, "Give Me your total focus and attention and I will take care of whatever you need. You don't have to worry about it."

So we went off into I Peter 5:5-9 to show that **μέριμνα** (merimna) is Satan's only weapon against a believer in Christ. His only weapon. We saw in I Peter 5:8 that Satan walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He scouts people to see what their weaknesses are, what he can get them occupied with. And that is why Peter said, in I Peter 5:7, to cast all of your anxieties, cast all of your cares upon the Lord, because Satan is going to use that to direct your attention and draw your attention away from Christ. You only have the capacity to focus on and serve one thing.

So last week we took The Parable of the Sower to study how Satan uses **μέριμνα** (merimna) to influence and occupy the believer. In Luke 8:4-18 in The Parable of the Sower, the sower goes out and sows (or plants) seed in four different kinds of soil. And one of the kinds of soil was that the seed fell in amongst the thorn bushes. And as the seed - which He said

represents the Word of God - as the seed began to grow and its influence began to grow in that plot of land, the thorn bushes choked it out. That is, choked out the influence of the word. And Jesus said, "Here is what this means. The seed being the word of God. The thorn bushes represent the cares or anxieties, and the wealth, and the pleasures of life. And these things come along and choke out the influence of the word in a person's life."

And the word *cares* or *anxiety* is this word **μέριμνα** (merimna). Satan takes the cares and the events of life, as Jesus mentioned even some of the basics (food and clothing and housing) we get concerned about. We get worried about it. We get occupied with it. And we get taken away, our attention gets taken away from Christ.

And we think - and it is because of our lack of understanding - we think that if we hold the proper beliefs about what the Bible says and who Jesus is we are fine. But Jesus is not dealing with beliefs. Peter is not dealing with beliefs. They are dealing with service. Who and what are you serving? You can believe the truth but be enslaved to the things that you are occupied with, and therefore your mind is taken away from Christ. Now why is that important? Because after you are saved Satan cannot take Christ out of your heart. He cannot take salvation away from you. He cannot remove your salvation.

After you are saved what is the Christian to do? It is a complete lifestyle of having our minds transformed by the ministry of God's Spirit through His Word. The transformation of the mind. So if Satan can occupy the attention of our minds and take our minds away from the ministry of God's Spirit through His Word, he has not taken away our salvation, he has taken away our therapy. He has taken away our healing. He has taken away our spiritual growth. And basically Satan is saying, "I have lost you to Christ as far as the salvation of your soul goes, but I can spend the rest of your life making an effort to keep you from growing, and keep you from being healed from the damage of sin, by getting you so occupied with the physical life in which you live."

So today in Luke 10:38-42, what a surprise! You say, "Well, what is the surprise?" I am glad you asked me. The surprise is that in Luke 10:38-42 Luke presents the teaching of Jesus - how service to Christ can be a distraction. That does not sound right, does it? How service to Christ can be a distraction. Do you know that Satan can use Christian service to occupy our time and attention and take us away from the top priority in life, and that is, hearing the word of God? Over all the years that I have been in churches and in ministry, I have seen this over and over again. Do you know other than just totally avoiding anything to do with the Bible or Christianity that there is one place that you can go to get away from the Word of God, and that is church. Because all you need to do is go there and then volunteer for all the work that needs to be done.

I even knew of a woman, and I have heard other testimonies over the years, but I know of one woman's testimony where she said she went to church, and she volunteered to be a Sunday School teacher for little children. She did not want to participate in the church service. She did not want to hear the sermon, but she did volunteer to minister Bible stories to little children in Sunday School and she did it for years. And one Sunday some people, as a gift to her without her knowing it, said, "We have found someone that will relieve you in Sunday School so you can sit in church and take this Sunday off." So she sat in church for the first time in years because

she was back there with the kids. She said when she heard the sermon she was so convicted and knew at that moment that she was not saved, she had not received Christ. And at that service she got saved. She received Christ and was saved. Christ saved her. And her testimony was how she, and she knows of others, that will go and that is their justification. That is how they get out of facing the fact that they have never received Christ, they have never been born again, is go to church and find work to do, ways to serve. And of course, church today is always into putting people to work. "Service to Christ," they say, "is the most important thing."

But our text tells us that is not true. Look at what this text says. In Luke 10:38-39 and the title of this section is The Priority of Life. And there are three things under The Circumstances in verses 38 and 39. Three things:

(1) First of all, **Now it happened that while they were going along, that He Himself, that is Jesus, entered into a certain village.** First of all, location. Where is this village? John 12:1-2 tells us that the name of the village is Bethany. It is the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus their brother. So Lazarus who was raised from the dead in the Gospel of John, Lazarus was their brother. And before Jesus entered into Jerusalem, in John 12 as it is recorded there, before He entered into Jerusalem to die on the cross He had dinner at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus's home there in Bethany. So, first of all location of our teaching, that Jesus entered into a certain village. That would be Bethany.

(2) Secondly, The Position of Martha, we are introduced to her. **And a certain woman, Martha by name, received Him into her house.** The position of Martha in the family structure. The owners of the home, and especially the older women - whoever the oldest woman is in the household - she is the one who greeted visitors. So Martha was the older sister, and quite possibly the owner of the home. So she is responsible for receiving guests. So Martha received Jesus into her home.

Why is that important to understand her position? Is because she is in charge not only of greeting the visitors, but she is in charge of making sure that when the visitors come in the home that they are fed, and taken care of, and they are greeted properly. She is now in charge of taking care of everybody in that home and making sure. Here you have Jesus come in your home. Martha is in the position of being responsible to make sure her guests are taken care of.

So we had the location is Bethany, the village. And we saw the position of Martha, that she is in charge of the running of the household and the responsibilities there.

(3) Thirdly, The Reputation of Mary. Look at verse 39, **And to this one, that is Martha, was a sister being called Mary.** Some Greek texts use the Greek word **Μαριάμ** (Mariam), that is her Jewish name. She is not *Mary* to the Jews, it is *Mariam*. Even Mary and Joseph, Mary the mother of Jesus, she is called *Mariam* to the Jews. **So Mary** (or Mariam), that is her name, **who when she sat alongside of the feet of Jesus, she was hearing His Word.** So whenever she sat, she sat at the feet of Jesus. She was not way in the back, or over in the corner; she made sure that she was right up front, right alongside of the feet of Jesus whenever He sat and taught. But I want you to notice what her reputation is. Notice the phrase is, *she was hearing the Word*. The

term *was hearing* is what is called the imperfect tense, which means continuous action in the past. It means that her continuous habit of life was continually hearing His Word.

So here we have the circumstances: the location is in Bethany; the position of Martha, she is the head of the household, she is responsible to make sure that everybody is taken care of; and thirdly, we know the reputation of Mary, that she was continually sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His Word.

And now we have The Conflict in verses 40 and 41. Three things about the conflict.

(1) **But Martha was distracted.** King James says, *But Martha was cumbered*. I like that word. And it literally means *to be distracted*. So, first of all, of the three things on the conflict we want to understand The Distraction of Martha. Remember, she is the head of the household, she is running around making sure everybody is taken care of, she does not have time to sit down and visit and socialize. And if Jesus is teaching, she does not have time, she has things to do to take care of the guests. All normal. Nothing wrong with it. But the distraction of Martha. **But Martha was cumbered**, that is *distracted*, **concerning much serving**.

Of these two words, the word *cumbered* means *distraction*. Literally, in the Greek it means *to pull or drag somebody away*. It is a fishing term that means once the fish are caught up in the net and they are trapped, you drag the net and pull them out of the water. Something has captured her and has dragged her away from the importance of the situation. And the word *serve, serving* - **she was distracted with much serving** - it is the word **διάκονος** (*diakonos*), where we get our word *deacon* from. It does not mean she was a deaconess, or that she was a deacon, but she was serving in an official capacity in service to Christ. The Lord is here. Like you would act or I would act if the Lord came into our home. "What can I get you to drink?" You greet them at the door. You wash their feet. You make sure they are all taken care of. "Do you need something to eat? Here, sit here. Are you comfortable?" Hospitable. So it tells us in the conflict of the situation that Martha was distracted with much serving.

(2) And then, The Interaction of Martha with Jesus. Remember Jesus is in the living room with a crowd of people of the community, and they are all sitting there, and they are listening to her; and Mary her sister is at His feet listening to His Word like she always does, which just drove Martha right up the wall. She is always listening to Jesus when there are things to be done around here, especially if the Lord is here! Good grief! Cannot you stop just once and help me out? Look what she says, the second thing, the interaction with Jesus. **And having stood over Him**. Interesting. That is how the line starts in verse 40. After she was distracted concerning much serving **and having stood over Him**. Meaning she came out of the kitchen and Jesus is teaching, and she comes in and stands right over Jesus. And she says to Him **"Lord, is it not a concern to you that my sister left me alone to serve?"**

And as I have said over the years you can get the picture with the pun: Martha was in the kitchen stewing. And this thing is building up. "Yeah, I would like to be in there too, but you know, we have to take care of things. And my sister is in there sitting at the feet of Jesus!" So she has finally had it and so she is going to appeal to Christ. I guess she wants Jesus to look down at Mary and say, "Mary, you know, your sister needs some help out in the kitchen. You

can get a tape. You can get it online. You do not need to be here in person. Why do not you go help serve?" That is what she wants. **Is it not a concern to you that my sister has left me alone to serve?** Now the word *care*: do you not *care*? Is it not a *concern* to you? in the Greek, is the word μέλει (melei), which is *genuine concern*. Do You not have - she is questioning Him - do You not have a genuine concern for me out there in the kitchen serving alone?

Now the reason why she is stuck in this position is somebody has to do it. Who is going to feed all these people? Who is going to take care of all these people? Apparently He nodded His head yes, when she says, **Is it not a concern to you that my sister has left me alone to serve?** Apparently He nodded His head yes, He is concerned, because she says, **Therefore speak to her in order that she might help me.** So Jesus affirmed His concern that she is out there serving alone and His concern to help her, but He was not interested in helping give her help for her service. He was more concerned about Martha coming out to be with Mary, than He was for Mary to go in and be with Martha.

(3) The Evaluation of Jesus is the third thing. We have had The Distraction of Martha; we have had her Interaction with Jesus; and then The Evaluation of Jesus in the Situation in verse 41.

And when He answered Jesus said to her, "Martha, Martha," repeating it twice to get her attention, because she is all caught up in being left in the kitchen to serve alone. **"Martha, Martha."** He is directing her attention to Him, **"you are careful,"** literally, *you are anxious*. There is our word. **"And you are troubled concerning many things."** Now before we get to The Cure - the answer to all this - let me break this down for you because this is tremendous material here. Even psychology uses the principles that are found here to explain the stages of anxiety. **You are careful,** your mind is occupied μέριμνα (merimna), **and you are troubled, τυρβάζω** (turbazō).

Let me explain these two words. We already know what μέριμνα (merimna) means, it means *to occupy the attention of the mind*. In psychological terms we have the first and third of the three important words to understand the stages of anxiety for the mind.

(1) The first word is *occupied*. She got occupied with serving alone in the kitchen, she noticed it.

(2) The second important word is our word back in verse 40 for the word *distracted* or *cumbered*. That is the second word. So your mind gets occupied with something, and whatever it is you are occupied with puts the net around your mind and drags you away. In other words, what you are occupied with snowballs on you. It is not just a thought anymore. It is taking you over in your thought processes.

(3) And then the third word is this word τυρβάζω (turbazō). τυρβάζω (turbazō) means *to outwardly express your inward thoughts*. To outwardly express. In other words, it has gotten to a point it is not just a thought. I can see you walking down the street someday, and I have this concern and care on my mind, but it has not really taken me captive yet. I am not really enslaved to it so that when I see you, I can greet you on the street and you would never know that I have

this in the back of my mind. I have been thinking about this thing all night and I have been thinking about it all morning. When I see you, I kind of put it away and I greet you, but you do not know that something is working its way up in my mind. Maybe if you saw me the next day and you came up and said, "Hey Bill, how is it going?"

"Nah, not too good!"

Outwardly. All of a sudden it has gotten to me so bad that I show it and express it in my human expressions and reaction.

You can see it with Martha. She was in the kitchen; she began to notice she is doing this alone. She is thinking about it, and thinking about it, and thinking about it. Pretty soon it has her captive like a fishing net around the fish, and it is dragging her away, and it is snowballing on her. It has taken over her whole life to the point that she has to put the pans down on the stove and walk in and stand over Jesus. "Do You not care that my sister has left me alone to serve?!" See, that is the outward expression, the frustration, it finally got to her, to where she had outwardly express the very thing that had taken over her mind, her thinking.

So, the three stages of the psychological steps of anxiety are right here. This is where they got it from. **μέριμνα** (merimna), the occupation of the attention of the mind, and this snowballs. We meditate on it, and we think about it, and we worry about it, and it just gets so big that it takes us captive. We become enslaved to it and it becomes the expression of our life. People see us walking down the street, "Whoa, what is wrong with Bill? Look at him. He is all worked up about something."

Now, in Jesus addressing Martha, He did not say to her that she was unfaithful in her service to the Lord. He did not say, "Martha, you are just unfaithful. You need to learn how to serve alone, get over it, and do it faithfully." He did not say that. What He told her was, "You are distracted in your service to the Lord." That would be almost blasphemous if you were to say it in some churches, or Christian circles today.

"Do you know that you are being distracted by serving the Lord?"

"What?!"

Churches are trying to put people to work. All Martha was doing would be normal responsibilities that you can imagine and sympathize with her. But Jesus is pointing out something to her, as He will show in The Cure.

Look at verse 42, The Cure. Two things about The Cure. Remember He said to her, **You are anxious and troubled concerning many things.** "A lot of things on your mind, and it is captivating you, and you are enslaved to it, and now it has gotten to you so bad that now you are coming in and you are expressing your frustration all over me, in front of everybody." Jesus said, verse 42, this is the literal translation, **"But of one thing there is need."** Did you catch that? Only one thing that is necessary. One. **"One thing that is of need, and Mary chose the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."**

Two things, first of all, The Correction by Jesus. There is only one thing that is needful. One. In your whole Christian life, if you remember anything from our time together remember that Jesus said, "You only have one need in life." And if you are like me, and if you are like Martha, and we are all the same, you say, "Well, I have a major need, but I also have other needs." Jesus said, "No, you only have one."

"Well, I need to eat to stay alive."

"No, you do not, because if you die you go to be with Christ."

You do not need to eat. You do not need to stay alive. You do not need anything except one thing. That is it. Just one. **But of one thing there is a need.** The correction by Jesus. Now listen to this. Listen carefully. Receiving from the Lord's Spirit ministering through God's Word is not top priority. How do you like that one? Listening to God's Spirit minister through His Word is not the top priority in the believer's life, it is the only priority. It is not top priority; it is the only one.

I have heard people say, "Well receiving from God's Spirit through His Word is the top priority, and then secondly there is worship and singing, and thirdly there is prayer, and fourthly there is service." No. There is no two, three, and four; there is only one.

Just like in Exodus chapter 20 when God says, **You shall have no other gods beside me.** That is not Him in priority. And I saw this week on the Internet, somebody quoted that verse and says, "Remember, this is the reason for the season. We remember to keep God first, your spouse second, your children third, and fourth your friends..." the list. That is not, no. You have no other gods besides me. In other words, there is number one God, that is it; there is nobody else. He is all. He is it. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. How do you give Him all? Do you have something left over for somebody else? No. So what does everybody else get? God. They get God from you because you have given yourself to God.

You do not know how interesting it is that if you attempt to make the Lord Jesus Christ your whole life and people come into association with you, and they say, "I cannot have a friendship with you because you belong to Jesus Christ. You are all His."

"And what is wrong with that?"

"Well, cannot you take time out from that and come over here and do my thing too?"

"Nope. Do you want me and Jesus, or no? What is it?"

That is what you get. I cannot take time out from Him for you. I mean you have to take us both together. It is the only priority.

Serving Christ can be a distraction. Why? Because it can take you away from the hearing of the Word of God and justify your busyness by saying, "I am serving Christ."

"But what about the Word of God?"

"Yeah, I hear it every once in a while."

It is interesting that Luke is presenting here - he is not presenting the dangers of being caught up with and occupied with the things of the world, like in The Parable of the Sower. He is talking about being caught up in an occupied in serving Christ, and you do not hear His Word, and it is taking you away. You see, service to Christ is an outflow, it is a result of hearing the Word. It comes automatically. It is an outpouring of one's relationship with Christ from hearing the Word of God. It does not take its place. You do not have to work at it.

And then he says, secondly, notice, The Portion of Mary. We saw The Correction by Jesus, and now The Portion of Mary. It says, **Mary chose the good portion.** The word good is the word **ἀγαθός** (agathos), which in the Greek text denotes *spiritual good*. And the word *portion* has to do with food terms. We are dealing with food here, so Jesus puts it in context. He says, "Martha, you are in the kitchen caught up with making physical food, when Mary is in here eating spiritual food. She has chosen the good portion of the meal and everything that she is getting will never be taken away from her. It will always be a part of her life, not only now but throughout eternity."

In Matthew 4:4 you remember when Satan came to Jesus and tempted Jesus because Jesus went forty days in the wilderness without eating, and so He was hungry, and so Satan came and said, "Since You are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread, satisfy your hunger." And in Matthew 4:4 Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 and says, **Man shall not live by bread alone but every word that proceeds about out of the mouth of God.** He says, "Feeding My hungry body is not priority. I will not misuse My authority and change stones into bread just to satisfy My physical hunger. But the truth of the Word of God is My food."

In Job 23:12, one of my favorite verses, Job 23:12, where Job says, **I esteem the words that flow out of the mouth of God more than my necessary food.** Whoa. You do not know how many times people have told me, "Yeah, I couldn't make it to the study because I had to eat."

"Why did not you just wait an hour?"

"I cannot do that because, you know, I get hungry."

Hungry for what? There is only one need. Everything else has a natural flow out from that. One need. One focus that a believer is to be occupied with, and that is the receiving from the ministry of God's Spirit through His Word. That is it. Period. There is no other need. God takes care of all the other needs. God's Spirit takes care of the worship, and the prayer, and the service to Christ. As a natural flow from, not the top priority, but the only priority in the believer's life. Hearing, not just hearing the Word, but receiving the ministry of God's Spirit through His Word. Not all Bible studies, not all scriptural sermon presentations is the word of God. It does not mean sit and listen to sermons and Bible study. It is receiving the ministry of God's Spirit

through His Word. That is the food for the believer. And Satan can get us occupied, with even serving Christ being a distraction to take us away from our food in Christ.

Let's close in prayer.