

Bethany (Luke 10)

Part 1

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[00:00:00] The scriptures that we had of the one thing was in Luke chapter 10, where the Lord is at Bethany, and I would like to look at a few of the places where we find the Lord at Bethany, which I believe is a picture of how we can know the Lord in the assembly, as we were closing with the thought of Psalm 27 of the house of the Lord.

So we might bring some of these two things together. Now we've had the passage in Luke 10, where the Lord came to Bethany, it doesn't say Bethany in this chapter, but we have it very distinctly in John 12, which we shall turn to shortly, that this was the town of Mary and Martha, Bethany, and so it's quite clear as he came [00:01:09] to Bethany, he was received into this home, and I believe we have the Lord going there oftentimes, at least two more times we have recorded in the Word that he went to this home. Well, it was very wonderful of Martha to receive him into her house, but as we've already had, it was Mary who sat at his feet and had the good part that would not be taken away from her. Now I'd like to suggest that here at Bethany, in this incident, we have the Lord known as the prophet who should come into the world.

Moses spoke of him, you know, in Deuteronomy, I believe, he said, a prophet like unto me [00:02:01] shall the Lord your God raise up, him you shall hear, and there are numbers of references in the scriptures, in the New Testament, of the Lord Jesus as the prophet.

We read in Hebrews 1, God spoke in times past to the fathers through the prophets, and these last days spoken to us in the Son, and he was the great prophet, and a prophet is one who comes from God, with a message from God, so we want to hear him.

This is what Mary did, she sat at his feet.

We had this afternoon the women's meeting of the woman of Shunem, who made a chamber for the prophet. There was a bed she provided, and a stool, a table, and a candlestick, four things, and [00:03:12] our brother spoke, applying these things spiritually, the bed is a place of rest, the table is a place of fellowship, food, and the stool is where we sit, and giving us this thought here, sitting before him, you see, and then the candlestick gives light.

So Mary takes that place to sit at his feet, to hear what the prophet has to say. She says the most important thing for me is to get my vessel filled, I'm an empty vessel, I must sit at his feet and let him fill me.

Martha thought the most important thing just now is to have something ready for the Lord, she was going to give to the Lord, it's very important too, but it's first of all important [00:04:06] that we let the Lord give to us. We had also in 2 Kings 4 this afternoon, of the woman who was in debt, and she was told to gather empty vessels, empty vessels, to be filled, and they were all filled with the oil, and then set aside. Wonderful spiritual lessons there. So Mary is taking this place here as an empty vessel to be filled by what the great prophet has to bring.

So we see here the Lord Bethany as the prophet, the one from God, with words from God, and among the many needful things, or I should say the many things that cause us to be troubled and careful, and that call for our attention every day, among these many things, you notice [00:05:04] in verse 41 the Lord says many things, but then in verse 42 he says, but one thing is needful.

So among the many things of daily life, there is the one thing that is most needful, that we take time to sit at his feet, the prophet.

Life is very complicated, there are the many, many things that call for our attention daily, but we must see that we do not let the one thing be pushed out, for the Lord is here the prophet. Now, if we go to John 12, which our brother just made a reference to, we see the Lord at Bethany again, and circumstances are different.

We read in, I rather want to take the 11th chapter first, the 11th chapter, sorry, where we have the next time of the Lord at Bethany, a certain man was sick, named Lazarus of Bethany, [00:06:05] in the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

Circumstances change, and this happy home, there's sickness, and sickness that leads to death, and death brings tears, heartaches, sorrow.

They send for the Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick, how wonderful that to have the sense of his love, they knew of his love, he whom thou lovest is sick, but the Lord doesn't come right away, but then he does come when Lazarus died, he allows death to come into this lovely home where he had often come and received such good treatment, care, he [00:07:03] allows death to come, yes, he allows sorrows to come. We may pray, and pray hard, that things might not take such a hard course, but there's the call to surrender to his will, and he allows this sorrow and this death to come into this house at Bethany, so he allows things to come to us as Christians too, and the devil would whisper in our ears, well if the Lord loves you, why does he allow this to happen, why does he allow that to happen? You know, I think it's very wonderful here in verse 5 and 6, it says verse 5, now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, and then you read, and when he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was, now if you [00:08:04] just read that sixth verse like that, you think well, does the Lord really love them? Why didn't he come at once? You sent for the doctor, you want him to come fast and quick, immediately, they appealed to this one they knew who could help, but he stays two days in the same place. We don't understand the Lord's doings at times, but how important that that verse 5 is stated first, of the assurance that he loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

The circumstance, the actings of the Lord didn't look like he loved them, we must never be shaken in his love to us, we must never measure the Lord's love to us by the circumstances, you know there's only one place to really measure the Lord's love for us by, and that's [00:09:03] Calvary, Calvary's cross, Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, and of course his intercessions for us on high

shows his love, his undying love for us too, yes, so that's an important lesson by the way, we do not measure his love for us by circumstances, or question his love for us by the circumstances.

Another thing we get here is that the Lord's delays are not denials, the Lord's delays are not indifference to our cause, these are lessons we learn at Bethany, in the assembly too, but the Lord does come, and how does he come?

He comes in a different character than he did before in Luke 10, and we must learn the [00:10:04] Lord in different ways, and in different circumstances we come to learn the Lord in different characters, in a time of sorrow and need which he allows to come, even death itself, and the tears, the heartaches, now he comes into that scene, he comes, and what does he do?

Well we find in verse 33, when Jesus therefore saw her weeping, that is Mary, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said where have you laid him, they said unto him Lord come and see, Jesus wept, then said the Jews behold how he loved him, how does he come now to Bethany, he comes as the sympathizing [00:11:08] high priest who weeps with those who weep, they saw his tears, his heart of sympathy is made known, isn't that what we get in Hebrews 4, that we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, we can say it in a positive way, we have a high priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and we are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy in a time of need. So thus it is through circumstances which the Lord allows to come upon us, which he allows us to come into, that we come to know him in a way [00:12:08] which we could not know otherwise. He groaned in the spirit, he wept, so the scripture exhorts us weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice, there are times when words fail and when words are empty as it were, but tears, weeping is the language that is called for, that really express sympathies of heart, and we need the sympathizing high priest. So at Bethany the Lord comes and is known in this character as the sympathizing high priest. So as we have been put in poetry and in a hymn, we know him as we could not know through heaven's golden years. The first [00:13:13] verse of this hymn is we thank thee Lord for weary days, when desert springs were dry, when first we learned what depths of need thy love could satisfy. So we, you know, we have privileges down here that we're not going to have in heaven. There are things we can learn down here that we cannot learn in heaven, I believe because the circumstances are such. We're not going to have any needs in heaven, not going to be any tears there, heartaches, but here they are, and we can learn what our Lord is, and they won't be forgotten up there. So this is the wonderful occasion of Bethany, much could be said, but time [00:14:03] fails us, and so in the assembly too, in our sorrows, exercises we will share together, we can come to learn the Lord as his sympathizing high priest. And how strengthening it is for one another to see the Lord here, as has been said, before he performed the miracle, he felt in his spirit what he took away with his power. Wonderful lines of J. N. Darby in the Sufferings of Christ. This is what we get here, before he raised Lazarus from the dead, before he restored the loved one to them, he groaned and he wept. He entered into [00:15:01] the sorrow that sin had brought him, death, the wages of sin, and he first felt in his spirit what he took away in his power. I think it's a wonderful expression, the truth that it is there, the sympathies of our Lord Jesus. We learn him thus at Bethany. Now then the twelfth chapter, the twelfth chapter of John, we find now verse one, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead, there they made him a supper. Martha served, Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him, then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Here the Lord comes to Bethany six days before the Passover, and you'll see that the end of the [00:16:02] eleventh chapter was that they

were seeking for Jesus, that they might destroy him, they might take him. The religious hatred against him was round about. What does the Lord do? Hated all round about, seeking for him by the religious Pharisees. He goes to Bethany, he goes to Bethany, the place of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He knew he was welcome there, and it says they made him a supper, there they made him a supper. And what a supper it was, not just a material supper, but what a feast for his heart. There again, our dear brethren has written, I just referred to, that the Father had prepared a wonderful balm of comfort for his son in this [00:17:11] house, just before the cross. Yes, we read in Psalm 69 that the Lord looked for comforters, for some to take pity. If he is a sympathizing high priest, he is sensitive to everything. He looked for comforters, and he found a house here that had fellowship with him, Bethany. A picture of an assembly, where the Lord has given his place, and a supper is made for him, something for his heart, in the day of his rejection, now too, we can make him a supper. Yes, a balm of comfort for his heart, just before the cross. And Martha is serving, has already been referred to, Lazarus sat at the table, there's fellowship, sitting there, keeping company with the Lord, and Mary is worshiping. [00:18:21] Three great things, and I believe they all contributed to this supper. It doesn't say Martha made him a supper, it doesn't say Mary made him a supper, or Lazarus, it says they, they made him a supper. And we see these three activities of the Christian life that should be seen in the assembly. Service, fellowship, sitting at his feet, and worship. Worship, giving him his due.

So he is known here as the King, in Matthew, and here in John, as the Son of God. And there's something beautiful, you know, the accuracy of scripture, in Matthew you read that Mary anointed his head, but here in John it says she anointed the feet of Jesus. [00:19:23] Now the Cavalier, the critic, would say, you see, the Gospels, they contradict each other. One says the head, the other one says the feet. But the student of scripture sees wonderful beauty in these two things. In Matthew he's presented as the King. It is right that Matthew would record only that she anointed his head. That's in keeping with the theme of his Gospel, the King. In John, he is presented as the Son of God, and all his deity. It is in keeping with this Gospel that it is recorded only that she anointed his feet. Undoubtedly she anointed both.

[00:20:20] But each writer records that which is in keeping with his Gospel, and so we see beauty, the perfections of the Word of God, the theme, that the unbeliever doesn't see at all and cannot enter into. They made him a supper. So he is known here at Bethany as the King and the Son of God. Now in Mark 11, just touch on it, we see the Lord coming again to Bethany in Mark 11, and this is following John 12 because the story goes on in John 12.

[00:21:01] The next day that they cast their palms before him, their garments, as he came riding on the ass's coat. So now we see that in verse 9, they say, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. And then verse 11, Jesus entered into Jerusalem and into the temple. When he looked round about upon all things, and now the even tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry. We see the Lord again at Bethany, but he's at Jerusalem, and he looks around in the temple, sees how everything they were doing, but he goes out to Bethany. You know, the Lord spent the night at Bethany. And in this same chapter, we read in verse 19, after he had been in the temple again and cast out those who were making his father's house a den of thieves. In verse 19, when even was come, he went out of the city. And Matthew 21 definitely gives it as Bethany. [00:22:20] So twice here we see the Lord is spending the night at Bethany. You know, this raises a question in my mind. I keep on asking it. I never get an answer contrary. Does the scripture ever record that the Lord spent a night in Jerusalem? I haven't found one. But here we have definitely that the Lord goes outside of Jerusalem, and at Bethany he spends the night. Bethany was on the slope of the Mount of Olives. We have that in the very first

verse. Bethany at the Mount of Olives. [00:23:01] Without his head was wet with the dew of heaven, and he tied him to the Mount of Olives. I don't think he was at the house of Mary and Martha this time because he was hungry in the morning. They'd never let him go away hungry. But he's the rejected one. That's what we get here, you see, in the 18th verse, the scribes and the chief priests heard it, and they saw how they might destroy him. So he goes out of the city. He's rejected at Jerusalem, the scribes and the Pharisees. And as the rejected one, he goes to Bethany. And we know him in the assembly as the rejected one. Rejected in the religious world, but there to receive him. Just in closing as our time is up, in Luke 24, when the Lord has risen from the dead, we read that he led them out as far as to Bethany. And there he lifts up his hands and blesses them and goes up into heaven. [00:24:05] It's at Bethany that he goes up to heaven, not Jerusalem. He led them out to Bethany, and there he blesses them. We see him there as not only the risen one, but as the ascended one. The great high priest blessing the people. Blessing coming from the nail-pierced hands. No blessing of the priest in Luke 1. Zechariah was stricken dumb. He comes out, he has no blessing for the people. But the great high priest is seen at the end of Luke blessing the people at Bethany. We know him as the risen and the ascended Lord. And then if you would think of Acts 1, it goes on. Right there at Bethany, when he went up into heaven, received them out of their sight, they stand there gazing. And two angels are there. And Acts 1 tells us they said, [00:25:03] He, men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall come again, in like manners ye have seen him go. This is spoken at Bethany. There we have the announcement of his coming. At Bethany, we learn him as the one who's coming again. And his feet are going to touch Mount Avalon, are they not, when he comes to earth. He's coming back to Bethany, that very place, with power and great glory. Before that, he shall come for us. So a few scriptures, where we see the Lord at Bethany, as the prophet, as the sympathizing high priest, as the king, the son of God, was anointed, as the rejected one, as the risen, ascended Lord, and as the one who's coming again. How wonderful, this wonderful Savior.