

CHOOSING OUR SEATS

My daughter Coral and I attended a concert at the Sanderson Centre on Thursday night. As we were entering, I was surprised to see that our neighbours who live right across from us were there too. He had booked his seats a year prior for this show. He told me how he purposely chose seats two rows up in the upper section, center with the stage. The reason why he selected these seats was not only for the good sight line it provided but also because it allowed them quick access to the bathrooms and to the bar. It was my wife Nadine who selected the tickets for Coral and me. She got us great seats just eight rows from stage right in the middle.

My neighbour's comment got me thinking about some of the criteria I use at times when it comes to selecting seats. Whenever Coral and I attend basketball games at McMaster University we always try to get in the section where there are plastic seats with backs on them. If you have ever sat through a basketball game on stands with no back rest, you will understand why we prefer this kind of seating. Whenever we have purchased tickets for Toronto Blue Jays games, I have gotten seats in areas where we might catch a foul ball. When it comes to selecting seats at the movie theater, we tend to look for them in the back row, or second to back and preferably right in the middle. During COVID we would also look for seats far away from where others were seated. When it comes to concerts, usually price is the biggest factor in determining which seats we select. Because of the high prices being charged at some concerts, we tend to find ourselves very high up in seats quite a distance from the stage. My brother has his own strategy when it comes to selecting seats at a theater. Because of his height, he prefers to get a seat on the aisle so that he has more leg room. If my mother is going to a live theatre performance, we try to get her seats close to the front so that she can hear and see the show better.

We all have our own criteria when it comes to selecting seats at events like these. Whether we have considered it before or not, we also have criteria when it comes to being seated with Jesus. The story where Jesus and His disciples spent the night at the home of Lazarus and his two sisters Martha

and Mary reveals the criteria they used in being seated with Jesus. We find this story in **Luke 10**.

Hospitality was very important in that culture so when Jesus and His disciples were passing through Bethany Martha welcomed them into their home. Martha set out to make a big meal for her guests. Her sister Mary chose instead to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to everything He had to say and teach. Martha was very upset at her sister's decision and came into the room to voice her displeasure. She said to Jesus:

"Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." (Luke 10 :40)

Martha hoped Jesus would take her side and tell Mary to leave her seated position at His feet and go help her sister. But Jesus said to Martha:

"My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42)

Mary and Martha each had their own criteria when it came time to choosing when to sit with Jesus. Martha's criteria for choosing when to be seated with Jesus was to wait until the meal had been prepared, served, and cleaned up. If there was still time after all of this, then she would take a seat with Jesus. Mary on the other hand did not want to miss out on this special opportunity of having Jesus as their guest. When He began to teach, she saw it as an opportunity to sit and listen at that moment. These two sisters had different criteria as to when it was best to sit with Jesus. In His response to Martha, Jesus was not criticizing her but merely pointing out the need to make it a priority to spend time sitting at His feet to be renewed and uplifted.

Which sister's approach would describe best your criteria at present when it comes to spending time seated with Jesus? Do you tend to be like Martha and only make it a priority after all your tasks are done? Do you follow more in Mary's choices here and carve out time when presented to spend it seated with Jesus in worship or prayer?

Every one of us have tasks and priorities competing for our time and attention each and every day. As we consider our priorities each day do we carve out that special time to spend with Jesus in conversation and prayer? Jesus is giving us the opportunity to have a front row seat with Him. He is willing to teach us and share His wisdom in order to help us. We do not have to pay in order to sit in a front row seat with Jesus. All it costs us is a little bit of our time. We may worry and fret that it is time wasted, or that our priority needs to be on other things, but sitting with Jesus will help us emotionally and spiritually.

Martha chose not to make it a priority to sit at Jesus' feet and as a result she was the one experiencing all of the frustration, worry, and anxiety. By following in Mary's example and making it a priority to be seated at Jesus' feet, He will give us spiritual lessons and reminders to help us be more at peace and less anxious. This story shows us the need as well as the blessings that come when we make it a priority to be seated at Jesus' feet each day. Let us make this seating arrangement part of the criteria we use to plan out each day.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean