

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Fresh Start and New Beginnings Series

MARTHA: A NEW ATTITUDE

Luke 10:38-42; John 11:17-30; 38-45; Romans 6:1-4

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INTRODUCTION: Today is the last sermon in the series called Fresh Starts and New Beginnings. Today's sermon is on Martha, the sister of Lazarus. There are 3 points to today's sermon.

- Martha was given a new life.
- Martha was given a new calling.
- God offers us the same.

I brought four previous messages to you about people who had fresh starts and new beginnings: Mary Magdalene, Matthew, Peter, and John. All of them experienced something special and unique in regards to their relationship with Jesus.

The messages have been simple, practical, and also spiritual.

1-MARTHA WAS GIVEN A NEW LIFE

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:38-42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

EXPLANATION: Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were three siblings who lived in a town called Bethany. Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem and is located on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives. Jesus visited Bethany on multiple occasions, and, to some extent, we have to wonder if it was not his home away from home. Martha, obviously, tried to make it so.

Martha gets a bad rap because of these verses. Everybody remembers her complaints and Jesus's reprimand. No one remembers her service. In Matthew 8:20, Jesus himself said, "*Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*" I can imagine that Martha simply wanted to make Jesus feel at home.

The Bible doesn't tell us how Jesus met the siblings from Bethany or how they became such friends. In contrast to the other people we've studied this year, I cannot give you a story that defines Martha's calling. By the time we meet Martha, Jesus is already in her house, and we presume he's also in her heart.

Martha, however, offers us a perfect picture of how the transformation of salvation is not a one-and-done experience.

Martha loved the Lord. Her life had been transformed by the Savior, but the work of sanctification is a lifelong endeavor. **Sanctification is a fancy word that means "to make holy."** When we answer God's call and come to Jesus, he not only saves us from the eternal damnation that we deserve, he also puts us on a trajectory of holiness and continues to work to make us holier throughout our life.

In this ancient world, Martha's worth would have been minimalized, especially as an unmarried woman. Her value would have been based largely on what she had to offer. In this case, Martha offered her services. She cooked; she kept house. She welcomed Jesus and his followers and tried to make them as comfortable as possible. Martha's service was not wrong. Her attitude was. This moment in Martha's life was a teaching moment, a moment in which Jesus taught Martha that she was what was really important.

Martha was upset because Mary was not helping. Martha felt unseen. She felt as if her efforts did not matter. Jesus appreciated Martha's efforts, but, more importantly,

he wanted her to experience the joy and peace of resting in his presence. He wanted Martha to understand that her value was not found in the kind of dinner she prepared. It was found in her nearness to him. It is a lesson he offers us as well.

APPLICATION: God appreciates the things that we do for him, but our salvation is not about a list of dos and do-nots. If you came today looking for a checklist of sins to avoid and a list of good things to do, you've come to the wrong place. In fact, none of my preaching is like that. It's too easy and it is actually deceptive to preach about a bunch of rules that give people a false sense of security.

ILLUSTRATION: I recall when I was a kid, I had some friends who had a list of things they were not allowed to do. On the list was going to the movies and, as I recall, roller skating. I always wondered about roller skating being on the list. I guess the guy who created it could not roller skate, so he made it a sin! Rock concerts were not on the list, so they went to as many as possible.

ILLUSTRATION: Once after I preached several messages about God's grace, a man came to see me. He was really bothered because the messages made him uneasy. His "religiosity" – (I call it that because I am not sure it was deeply spiritual), was one of following a list of pious rules and the preaching was exposing the futility of it.

APPLICATION: Sure, a list of dos and don'ts might feel helpful to all of us, but they do not help us attain salvation. Salvation is only found in Jesus Christ alone! Our salvation is not something we can earn. It is a free gift. Like Martha, we have been given a new life, and Jesus wants us to reap the benefits of sitting at his feet, basking in his love, and learning from him.

- Martha was given a new life

2-MARTHA WAS GIVEN A NEW CALLING

SCRIPTURE: John 11:17-30; 38-45

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When

Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. ²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” ²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him...For sake of time, skip to verse 38: ³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” ⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

EXPLANATION: Lazarus got sick. The sisters sent word to Jesus, but he did not immediately come, and their beloved brother died. Still, when Martha heard that Jesus was finally near, she ran out to meet him. Her testimony of faith is one of the clearest and boldest in the gospels, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” After her encounter, she went home and retrieved her sister. The people who were mourning with them followed them to Jesus and then to the grave.

Like all of Jesus’s disciples, when Martha decided to follow Jesus, she was given a new life, but she was also given a new calling. Up to this point, Martha’s ministry was fulfilled in physical acts of kindness to Jesus and his disciples, but her ministry

was about to change. Very soon, Jesus would be crucified, resurrected, and then he would ascend into heaven. Martha would no longer need to fix his meals or offer him a place to lay his head, but Martha's work would not be done. Martha was learning how to be a witness to the lost world around her.

All around Martha and Mary were people who did not know Jesus. When Martha ran to Jesus and professed her faith in him, she pointed them to Christ. For the rest of her days, Martha would be associated with the resurrection of her brother, and she would have the privilege of telling people about how he was brought back to life by the Giver of Life himself.

- Martha was given a new life.
- Martha was given a new calling.

3-GOD OFFERS US THE SAME

SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

EXPLANATION: Martha witnessed the resurrection of her brother, but it was just a foretaste of the resurrection she would soon witness—the resurrection of her Savior, Jesus Christ. Lazarus ALSO received a fresh start and a new beginning when Jesus called him out of the grave. In the same way, the Bible tells us that every believer has been resurrected to a new life with Christ.

ILLUSTRATION: Most of us are vaguely familiar with the way a caterpillar transforms. We know that the caterpillar eats a lot in preparation for the event, molts several times, forms a chrysalis, and after a given amount of time, out pops a butterfly. What takes place inside those shiny shells, however, isn't seen.

Interestingly enough, the caterpillar digests itself. Yep, you heard that right. If you cut open a chrysalis at just the right time, all you would find is an oozy mess. But

inside that goop are these things called imaginal discs. Before the caterpillar ever hatched from its egg, it already had an imaginal disc for each of the adult parts it would need as a mature butterfly. When all the other parts of the caterpillar have dissolved, these groups of organized cells remain. They multiply and grow until the fully-formed butterfly is ready to emerge from the chrysalis and take its place in the world.

APPLICATION: Just like the butterfly, just like Martha, each of us has within us what is needed to become the men and women of God that he has called us to be. However, in order to fulfill our purpose, we must first die to ourselves. Then, we must allow God to do the work in us, shaping us into his image so that we can point other people to him. We must be made new.

Over the last few weeks, we have looked at several Biblical examples. We have talked about how they were given new lives and new callings because of their relationship with the Savior. More specifically,

- Mary Magdelene received a new mind.
- Peter received a new name that had deep meaning.
- Matthew received a new profession.
- John received a new family, and
- Martha received a new attitude.

But each of these people did not just receive something new, they also left something behind.

- Mary left behind a life of oppression.
- Matthew gave up more wealth and possessions.
- Peter set his tackle and line on a shelf.
- John learned to think much less of himself.
- Martha surrendered an insecure heart,

and they all found in a Jesus a brand-new start.

What about you?

INVITATION: January has come and gone. We are settled into another year, but every day offers a new beginning. Every sunrise welcomes a fresh start. Have you experienced a new life in Jesus Christ? Do you know the Savior who died to set you free from the curse of sin and death? The Bible says that Jesus is the way, the truth,

and the life and that no man comes to the Father except through him. If you do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, that's the starting point. Admit your sin. Ask for forgiveness and experience the beginning of a new life in Christ.

If you are already saved, if you already know Jesus as your personal Savior, ask yourself this question: Are you living in the calling he has placed on your life? While every one of us has different abilities, unique talents and tasks, we all share a few primary commands.

- We are called to praise and worship Christ.
- We are called to love, serve, and encourage one another.
- We are called to give testimony to the resurrection of our Savior and point others to him.

How are you doing with those assignments? The altar is open. Jesus is offering you a fresh start and a new beginning. You are welcome to come forward and pray.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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