



***Theme: The Art of Salvation – Jesus in the Gospel of Luke***  
***“Salvation in the Silence”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, March 19-20, 2022, at Summit Church, Durango

**Weekly Memory Verse:**

***<sup>35</sup> Then a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him.” <sup>36</sup> When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone. – Luke 9:34-35a***

**VIDEO      Sermon Starter**

**SLIDE      “Salvation in the Silence”**

Something that most of you probably know about me is that I like to talk. Have you noticed that? One of the things that they do for me here to keep me on track in the sermon is put a timer up on the back wall. I’m supposed to be done by the time the timer reaches zero and it’s really hard for me to do that because I always can think of more to say. There was a young man in worship recently who noticed the timer on the back wall television and turned to his parents and said that he really appreciated having that timer because then he knew how to pace himself to get through the sermon! The irony of having a pastor who likes to talk is that there are many times in the Scripture where Jesus asks us to be quiet and listen. That is always been challenging for me

and if I were smart, I would say that for the next 25 minutes we are simply going to be quiet and listen instead of hearing a sermon. However, since I already have admitted I like to talk, I'll go ahead and say a few things.

The first thing I need to confess is that every sermon I preach is one that I preach first to myself and today this is a sermon that I know I need, as we talk about finding salvation in the silence. Today is the third weekend of the season of Lent, the 40 days and seven Sundays before we get to Easter. We are journeying together through the gospel of Luke, and I encourage you to use our Meditation Moments each day to read through that gospel over the next seven weeks.

**SLIDE                      Salvation = “to be restored and made whole”**

Salvation is one of the key themes in Luke's gospel and we are going to talk about what that means for our lives because through Jesus it is offered for all people, no matter what we are going through in life. It is one of the promises of God that we can hold onto in the midst of the darkest moments. One of the reasons we chose the Art of Salvation for the title of this series is because art strikes us in many different ways. Whether it is art that is a painting or poetry or a movie, it is meant to grab onto our senses, and we are meant to see ourselves in the art. We are meant to be drawn in and ask ourselves some profound questions about why this story or the artwork or the music calls to us. Often, art washes over us and we don't even have words to express how we feel. Salvation is meant to be an experience and not simply a mathematical equation that says my sins plus Jesus' sacrifice equals salvation. It is something that we hope for, and we are meant to experience it in a powerful way in this story.

What's even more powerful is that this idea of salvation becomes very real and concrete when Jesus sits and eats with people who are in desperate need of hope and grace and mercy. Today we turn to a story in Luke 10 where Jesus is having a meal with his followers. We have

been watching the gospel of Luke together to hear the Scripture using the Lumo Project's film adaption. Let's experience this together.

**VIDEO      Lumo Project Luke 10**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asCkkmaoZbA&ab\\_channel=LUMO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asCkkmaoZbA&ab_channel=LUMO) (2:40 to 3:39)

Mary and Martha live in a town called Bethany, on the backside of the Mount of Olives just 2 miles from the Temple in Jerusalem. While we only read about them once in Luke's gospel, we hear about them two more times in John's gospel, chapters 11 and 12 in some important stories that I hope you will take some time to read this week. This is Google Earth image which shows the Temple Mount in Jerusalem along with the Mount of Olives and then Bethany. The second image shows you the route it would take to travel between the two, which is about 2 miles.

**GRAPHIC      Google Earth Temple Mount to Bethany**

**GRAPHIC      Bethany Jerusalem Map**

We also learn in John's Gospel that Mary and Martha have a brother named Lazarus who becomes ill. They send for Jesus, but he arrived too late, after Lazarus has died. In a very dramatic story, Jesus raises him from the dead and he walks out of a tomb. Jesus turns to Martha in that moment and says these powerful words in John 11.

**BIBLE**

**<sup>25</sup> Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. <sup>26</sup> Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"**

We also read these words just before this story of the raising of Lazarus.

**BIBLE**

### **...Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus...**

This is important because it most likely tells us their birth order, and also that Jesus loved them and, in this story, we see him chastising Martha, but also remember that he loved her. We also read in the story about Jesus' weeping when he comes and finds his grieving family, and it's one of only two places where we find that Jesus wept. Clearly, there is a deep sense of love between Jesus and this family.

In the story Luke's gospel, Jesus arrives, and it says he is the guest in their home. At this point, he is a famous Rabbi, and people will be expecting him to teach as he joins them in their home. This was a very common experience, with the guest being invited into share their stories and in the case of Jesus, teachings about the Scriptures and about life and about the Kingdom of God, of which Jesus spoke often. We don't hear what Jesus is teaching in this particular story as we often do, instead the focus is on the activity around the teaching. While Martha is playing the hostess with the most-ess, taking care of preparations, Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his message.

This was an upending of the social order because women were not expected to be disciples, but instead to serve those men who were the teachers and the students. In this first century, patriarchal world, women did not join the men to eat but were busy in another room or part of the house preparing the meal. Mary makes it clear that she is going to listen to Jesus because she wants to hear what he has to say. No doubt it was unsettling for some of the men around the table, to have a woman be taking this position. There may have even been other women doing the same thing in that moment, and we read a few weeks ago about a woman interrupting the meal of religious leaders to be with Jesus.

Luke tells us that Mary is quietly sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to what he taught.

### **BIBLE**

<sup>40</sup> **But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing.**

You can imagine why Martha would be distracted and focused on the big dinner, with the most famous Rabbi in the region visiting and having many guests to serve at her house. She wants to make sure it's perfect. We can picture what that looks like when we have over someone for dinner, can't we? Most of us want to have the house clean and looking presentable at the least. We clean the bathroom and make sure we do a good job preparing food. We put away the dogs, so they don't bother people and even clean the front porch because we want to make a good first impression. Some of us might make sure the garage is clean! You never know what those guests are going to check out while they're roaming around your house! Am I right?

Now, imagine your hosting Jesus! How is that for pressure? Imagine you are hosting the Son of God. Wouldn't you want everything to be just right? Might you find yourself rushing around and preparing everything and getting everything in order? I mean, after all, he is perfect! No pressure though, because there is always grace. Oh, let's not even talk about saying grace or the blessing before the meal! Now you're talking pressure and nervousness and working hard to be prepared, maybe even putting it in the notes on your phone and reading it so you don't stutter.

I often wonder if that is why Mary simply sat and listened at the feet of Jesus, because it was the only thing you couldn't mess up! I'll just sit and listen, so I won't have to be responsible for the food, or the house, or making all the other dinner guests satisfied. Mary was actually brilliant!

I drive my wife crazy when we have people over because I am cleaning right up until the last minute and sometimes, I procrastinate too long and I don't get out of the shower until after they have arrived. What's worse, is that I'm the one who has invited them! I make myself

busy preparing food or getting things together, and sometimes I am not ready to even welcome people and entertain them or listen in on the conversation. I will sometimes get going cleaning dishes before we even have a chance to visit after the meal. I can be a lot to live with and to deal with when it comes to entertaining houseguests. I will be the first to admit that I have issues and my wife no doubt would agree!

What's interesting about the story is that Jesus never chastises Martha, even after this question and outburst. He recognizes who she is and what she is doing, and what she is trying to do. Martha is so distracted by the dinner guests in the preparation and the expectations and the pressure, that she finally can't take it anymore. Luke describes it this way.

#### **BIBLE**

**She came to Jesus and said, "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."**

I always like to add a whiny tone when I read this text. It's only after this interaction, where she basically asks Jesus to tell her little sister to get her act together, that Jesus addresses her behavior in wanting everything to be perfect. You can feel Martha's anger and irritation and I think Jesus reacts in a way that she is not expecting.

#### **BIBLE**

**<sup>41</sup> But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! <sup>42</sup> There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."**

Whatever my wife, or my mother, or people who care about me, start with something like, "My dear Jeff..." I know I am probably doing something obviously irritating but I'm oblivious. It's not an angry tone, but a reminder that I probably know better if I would pay attention. The words that Jesus used when he described her as being worried and

upset can also be defined as, “panicked, deeply disturbed, troubled, anxious, fretting, unnerved, and fearful.” When Jesus talks about Martha only needed to attend to one thing, it can be read in the Greek as a simple meal would have been enough. There was no need for six or seven courses, but fish would be fine. There is this idea in this story that I think can be very helpful for us today.

**SLIDE                      Keep it simple.**

Don't make life too complex. When we keep it simple, it allows us to enjoy it at a deeper level. One of the things that is so powerful about contrasting Martha and Mary is how simple Mary makes the situation and how complicated Martha allows life to become. I think we are meant to ask a question about whether we see ourselves as Martha or Mary in the story. Am I consumed about the details, and anxious, and worked up, and troubled, and unnerved, and even fearful? Have I allowed myself to become worked up over many things, often things over which I have don't even have control?

This story is about reminding us to keep things simple and not make life so complex. This story is a reminder to me to not allow myself to get so worked up over all the details and everything that is happening in the world and focus instead on what is most important. This can be really hard, especially if we have a personality type which lends itself to being anxious and busy and not being very comfortable settling down.

You may remember a study done years ago that was conducted because of something they noticed in the office of cardiologists. When people would come and be in the waiting room, the arms of the chairs began to be worn down quickly from people grabbing them and holding on tightly and twisting back and forth. They couldn't figure out why this was happening and so they did some research and found several different personality types, which you may have heard referred to before. There are two main ones which were first talked about as type

A and type B. This cartoon describes it well, with each person finding a mountain and one climbs it because it's there and the other uses it for a nap because it's there.

**GRAPHIC            Type A and B**

**GRAPHIC            Type A and B and C**

Later they added a Type C and now they even have Type D, but I think you get the idea. Type A were self-driven, competitive, achievers, and risktakers. They often are stressed and experience high blood pressure because they are always on the go. They tend to get irritated when things don't go their way even though they may not express it to others. They could feel it inside. They tend to over schedule and cram too much and which causes stress. They can be perfectionists and want things to be just right. My guess is that some of you, like me, are Type A, or you are married to one, or you have a child like this, or parent. What was type A in this story?

Type B tends to be more easy-going and relaxed, not easily stressed, and often lacking a sense of urgency. They like to enjoy the moment and not over schedule or try and do too much. Mary seems to be more of a type B.

You can see the Type C listed on this cartoon as being those who are introverts, preferring to work alone and also are sticklers for details. They too can be perfectionists and be prone to stress. In some ways, we all have parts of each of these in us, but we do tend to lean one way. It seems like Martha seems to be in the Type A or C category and Mary is Type B. We all need parts of these in our lives for balance and it's not helpful all the time to overgeneralize, but I think you get the idea.

What they did find in the cardiologist research is something that many of us might know, that about half the population was Type A and they were twice as likely to have cardiac issues because of stress and high blood pressure. There is something about this desire to achieve and compete and over schedule which leads to an unhealthy heart,



which is all the more reason to pay attention to Mary in the story. Jesus seems to be encouraging us, when we are overwhelmed by the complexities of life, to simplify and take a deep breath.

Another way that we can end up like Martha is by easily being distracted, once again something of which I am very familiar. I have often told you that my prayer life feels like this, “Dear God... O look... A bird!” We can even trick ourselves into thinking that we can do many things at once, something that has been debunked in multiple research projects over the last few years. We often think that we can do multiple things at once, but neurologists have found this is just not true. They found that the human brain can really only do one thing at a time, and while we think we are multitasking, we really are not doing anything well. There always seems to be one thing in the driver seat. My grandfather used to tell me that he was a “jack of all trades, but master of none.” The same can be true of our brain! It might be trying to multitask, but that just means we are doing nothing at a high level.

I myself have found myself drawn to a number of books over the last few years because of my need to do this. I found it interesting that these are some of the bestsellers, but you can find hundreds if you simply do a search on how to simplify life.

- The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World
- Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives
- Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less
- Get Your Life Back: Everyday Practices for a World Gone Mad

I remember when our kids were younger, and we had lots going on in the church, and kids were involved in lots of activities. I can remember moments where one of my kids or my wife or a staff member were talking to me, and I would nod my head as if I was paying attention, but my mind would be on something else. Does that ever

happen to any of you? Sometimes my kids would look at me and grabbed my hand and say, “Dad, pay attention to me. Are you even listening?” They could tell that even though I was looking at them, I was not really engaged in the conversation.

Martha had the same issue, where she was so intent on the tasks before her that she missed the opportunity to truly experience God in the flesh, in her dining room. She was so consumed about what she was feeding the dinner guests that she almost missed the Bread of Life sitting in front of her. Every human generation has struggled with this reality. Whether it was the newspaper, or the nightly news on television, or now our cell phones, we are easily distracted and caught up in what is happening that often is not even in our direct sphere of influence.

We open our phones, and depending on our settings, we have anywhere from 2 to 20 notifications that tell us there is something critical going on in our lives or in the world to which we must pay attention! Everybody wants to know that they are important and there is this urgency in our lives which can be a bit overwhelming. I purposely don't have my cell phone in my room when I sleep, and I leave it in my office while I'm preaching so I'm not distracted. Sometimes I don't carry it with me when I go for a walk, imagine that! I had someone tell me that they had to sleep with their telephone because it had their alarm. I reminded them of this amazing invention that is hundred years old and still functional: the alarm clock. Did you know that you could have the device which tells time but does not give you notifications or buzz or ring while you are trying to sleep?

### **GRAPHIC            Wake Up Alarm Clock GIF**

I particularly like this option for those of us who are heavy sleepers! My point is simply this. You do not need to sleep with your phone. There is research upon research which tells us that this is not good for us, and we don't get good REM sleep if we have our phone

plugged into our bedside table. At the very least, you can turn off all notifications while you are sleeping because no one needs to be woken up because they are having a sale at The Gap! My watch now even buzzes at me unless I turn it off.

What's interesting is the research that's been done looking at how many times the average American looks at their cell phone each day. And 2019, research found that we Americans check our cell phones 96 times a day, meaning once every 10 minutes. In that moment when we look at our phone, we leave the conversation with our spouse, or kids, or work meeting, and enter into a different world. This was a 20% increase from 2017. The most recent research found that this has increased another 20% since 2019, and that 66% of Americans check their phones 160 times a day!

### **GRAPHIC          A Single Pickup Sets off a Chain Reaction**

What's really fascinating is how a single check of your phone sets off a chain reaction. 50% of screen time sessions start within three minutes of the previous one. The American Medical Association found that even a brief check of your phone can cause you to lose as much as 40% of your productive time. This was true of every generation by the way, and it became especially acute during COVID where people's time on screens more than doubled and that has not receded as the pandemic has over the past six months. If this is something you struggle with, let me give you several quick tips recommended by tech companies no less.

### **SLIDE (Have the fly in)**

- **Track your screen time**
- **Do a smart phone cleanse**
- **Set your screen to appear monochrome during work hours**
- **Turn off your phone's notifications**
- **Allot time for no devices**
- **Fix a time for checking your media platforms and your email**

- **Resist the temptation to check your phone during the first hour of morning and the last hour before you go to sleep**

Let's be clear that screens are completely awful, and neither is attending to tasks like Martha. If used correctly, our phones can contribute to our efficiency. The key is to not let them get the best of us, just like the key for Martha was to not let all those things she needed to do become the thing that she worships. I love this idea which I have seen at a couple of restaurants, and it would be good to try in your home. I know that we use something like this with our youth group in what is called the "cell phone hotel." It's a simple box or basket to remind yourself to be present for each other when you are eating or in some sort of meeting where you need to focus on the other person. It also reminds us to recharge by connecting with others. You can think of it as a "**Mary basket.**" You can even have some fun and make your own.

**GRAPHIC            Unplug - Be Present Reset Recharge**

**GRAPHIC            Unplug - Be Present to those around you**

I can guarantee you that doing this in today's world will be an antidote to fear, which is what much of the notifications on our phone are trying to instill in us, because those lead to sales. I want to remind you that the purpose of the media in today's world, no matter which strand you are listening to, is to make money. I'm all for capitalism, but let's remember that what most notifications are trying to do our pull you in and make you afraid and then get us to buy something or react in a particular way. The story of Mary and Martha is inviting us to do it differently and to set aside our fear and our busyness and our to do list so that we consider the feet of the one who brings life and salvation. One of the ways that happens is by recognizing that the world is trying to pull us in one direction and God is inviting us in another.

I think one of the most important questions this particular story is asking us is simply:

**SLIDE                      Who will be first?**

**SLIDE                      Am I pleasing God or myself or others?**

Another way of asking that is if I'm trying to please God, or myself, or others. These are two powerful questions with which we are meant to wrestle during this season of Lent. Jesus had another way of talking about this in Luke's Gospel, which came AFTER the feeding of the 5,000 story as Jesus went to be alone to pray in chapter, and BEFORE this story of Mary and Martha. Here is what we read.

**BIBLE**

**<sup>18</sup> One day Jesus left the crowds to pray alone. Only his disciples were with him, and he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"**

**BIBLE**

**<sup>23</sup> Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. <sup>24</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. <sup>25</sup> And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?"**

Notice that Jesus even was pulled out of prayer at times and then found himself teaching about what salvation really is about. We are saved when we are willing to listen for God's voice, follow God's lead, and set aside the voices of the world which tell us we need to be busy, we need more, we can have it all, and we have no limits. We are lost and even destroyed when we believe we can be God and do everything. Jesus is reminding us that we have limits. Mary chose the better part by looking up at Jesus and not being obsessed with looking down. She was willing to give her life to Christ and his teachings and in the process experience salvation, wholeness, life with God forever. And she got to experience it in that moment!

One of the things we are invited to do is to confess and be honest

about what gets our attention and how easily it is for us to not love God, not love others, and not even do the loving thing for ourselves because of the way we get consumed by exterior voices telling us we have to perform and get things just right. One of the biggest voices we hear is that we are not enough, and that God is not enough.

When I was doing youth ministry, there was a song we sang often in our youth group gatherings that was written by Keith Green and based on Psalm 51, which has powerful words for us to remember about salvation and what it means to be made new, to be restored, to be forgiven, and to be made whole.

## **SLIDES**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God  
And renew a right spirit within me  
Create in me a clean heart, O God  
And renew a right spirit within me  
Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord  
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me  
Restore unto me, the joy of Thy salvation  
And renew a right spirit within me**

I think that is exactly what Mary was doing as she knelt at the feet of Jesus, being willing to listen and longing to be restored and have a new spirit placed within her. I know that each one of us can easily be pulled in different directions in today's world, and this is something I struggle with on a daily basis. One of the reasons we are inviting you to read Luke's gospel is to help ourselves to be centered on the Bread of Life who offers salvation.

You see here is the final word I will leave you with today. We all are imperfect, and we make mistakes, and one of the mistakes we make every day is to listen to the voices which tell us we are not lovable, and there is no way we can be redeemed. Equally damaging his thinking, we are perfect, and we don't need God, but can do it all on

our own. You and I both know that we have done things we can't fix or said things we can't unsay. I was meeting recently with someone whose parent died and they talked about how much unfinished business there was between them. I tried to encourage them and remind them that God doesn't want us to carry those things, and the joy of salvation is being able to say, "I'm sorry," even though we can't fix it and know that the words from Jesus are simply, "I forgive you. And I will pass on your repentance and regret to your loved one."

One of the main reasons we need to learn to be quiet and sit at the feet of Jesus is because he modeled that for us. On more than one occasion, Jesus went away to be quiet and to pray after healing and preaching and teaching. Jesus did this even after his baptism. Our scripture memory verse for this week comes from this story in Luke 9, where we read these powerful words in verses 34 and 35a.

#### **BIBLE**

***<sup>35</sup> Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him." <sup>36</sup> When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone.*** – Luke 9:

Jesus himself needed that silence to let it sink in that he was made by God to be loved by God. You and I need that time as well, so I encourage us to make that time in the days ahead. Just start now and don't worry about what you may have missed. Martha would later choose to not only follow Jesus but learn to be quiet with him, of this I have no doubt.

When I graduated from college, I didn't know what I wanted to do and I ended up being an intern at the Methodist College Ministry at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. One of my roles there was to interview and then supervise 12 students that lives in a large house called Koinonia Community next to the church. They lived in intentional Christian community, doing Bible Study and chores together. I lived in the basement of the church next door, and one day as I was leaving

early in the morning to walk my dog, one of the students, Chris was sitting outside by himself on the picnic table on the back lawn of the house.

I sat with him for just a moment with my dog, and we didn't say a word. He had his Bible and journal with him, and I remember being so impressed by his ability to be quiet. I was even more ADD than I am now and had a list of things running through my head and as I got up to leave, having not said a word, Chris said, "Can you hear it, Jeff?"

"Hear what?" I replied, as nothing had been said and you couldn't hear anything in that moment. He replied, "Can you hear the silence? I think that is where God really speaks because there is finally no other noise. I can hear God reminding me who I am and who I belong to. Can you hear it, Jeff?"

Can you hear it? I pray you will find some quiet in this crazy world to hear God's gift of saving grace, allowing it to wash over you. Let's take a few minutes and just be quiet in prayer together.

**SLIDE      Prayer**

*...Thank you, God for Mary. Help us to be quiet and listen for your voice. Give us courage to tune off our phones and the world's distractions. Forgive us when we don't. Encourage us to start now and set our tendency to be Martha aside so we can love you, love others, love ourselves, experience the Good News of your salvation, and share that with the world from our very being. We pray these things in your holy name. Amen.*



## **March 19-20 Order**

1. Ely welcomes people and says, **“Today we continue our journey through the gospel of Luke, focusing on how we find God and salvation in silence.”**
2. Two Songs
3. Jeff welcomes and invites people to wave and be seated.
4. Announcements by Jeff (Check News Section on Website)
  - a. New Worship Schedule
  - b. Ukraine Fundraiser
  - c.
5. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
6. Sermon
7. Prayer
8. Closing song
9. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
10. Offering SLIDE and Focus (New Offering Boxes)
11. Care Ministers (If any are present)
12. Prayer Quilt (If any)
13. Closing Prayer