

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Martha and Mary

Lesson: Luke 10:38-42 NRSV

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

(Slide 1) In today's Gospel we see two sisters: Martha and Mary. In the Gospel of John, Martha and Mary are described in more detail. Martha and Mary lived in Bethany. The area was very close to Jerusalem, about two miles away. Martha and Mary also had an older brother named Lazarus. Lazarus became sick and soon died. However, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead four days after his death. Lazarus' resurrection turned his sisters' sorrows and all their worries into joy. So they invited Jesus and his disciples, Martha served, and Lazarus and Mary listened to Jesus. While listening to Jesus' words, Mary poured her precious perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped it with her hair.

The Gospel of Luke we read today focuses only on Martha and Mary. Luke describes Martha serving and Mary listening to Jesus. An easy mistake we can make in reading this passage is to compare Martha and Mary and see who is more right. But both serving and listening to the word of God are important.

According to the Gospels, Jesus loved this family, and Lazarus, Martha, and Mary also enjoyed having Jesus. The Gospel of Luke introduces the background of how Jesus first entered the house: "as they went on their

way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him.” (38)

(Slide 2) The relationship between Jesus and this family was begun by the dedication and hospitality of Martha. It was Martha who invited the passing guests, so she took the lead and took on the responsibility of serving guests. The Bible says many times that hospitality is precious. For instance, the book of Hebrew says “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Also, Jesus stressed the importance of hospitality saying “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matthew 25:35) Hospice care for terminally ill patients nearing death stems from the Christian tradition of hospitality.

(Slide 3) Martha's hospitality is a good example of serving. Like Martha, our church ladies serve and treat their church members with love at every church event, and that heart is very precious. So, Martha's labor of hospitality is really just and precious. Without Martha's decision to welcome Jesus and his disciples as guests, it would not have been possible to have a relationship with Jesus.

In the text, the sisters ‘Martha and Mary’ show two representative styles of faith. Although they were sisters, their behavior in following Jesus was different. While Martha was busy serving her guests, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to him.

When we read the text from our point of view, we don't feel very strange, but in the time of Jesus, it was a very patriarchal period. Those who were educated were mainly men, and women were not allowed to learn. However, the appearance of Mary was contrary to the custom at the time, and the actions of Jesus were also unfamiliar.

(Slide 4) This situation must have seemed uncomfortable for Martha. Besides, she was too busy and needed many hands. Thus, Martha rebuked Mary indirectly saying to Jesus: “Lord, do you not care that my

sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.” (40)

Martha's complaint seems fair. After hearing Martha's reasonable complaint, Jesus speaks out of common sense. It would be common sense to say, ‘Mary, your sister looks very busy and needs help, so go to her and help.’ But Jesus is not speaking like that way, but said to Martha: ““Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”” (41-42)

Why did Jesus reply like that to Martha?

(Slide 5) In the Gospels, Jesus going to Jerusalem means going to die on the cross. In other words, it means that Jesus is going to fulfill the promise of salvation. Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem, and it was not long before the day when Jesus would ascend to heaven.

Jesus mentioned his death several times to his disciples. However, his disciples did not believe what Jesus said. However, Mary believed in Jesus. Mary was able to help her sister, but when she was told that Jesus would die soon, she realized that the most important thing in her life was to listen to Jesus. Thus, Mary focused on Jesus’s words.

Rather than focusing on who is right among Martha or Mary, Martha served Jesus as a precious guest with dedication, Mary listened to Jesus, and embraced him as her Lord. Although not described in Luke, Martha's faith is well described in John's Gospel.

(Slide 6) Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was sick. And he died because of the disease. Everyone there, including Jesus, knew that Lazarus was already dead. However, Jesus went there to raise him up and said to Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me will live even if he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26) Then Martha said:

“Yes, Lord! I believe that you are the Christ to come into the world, the Son of God.” (John 11:27)

Martha's confession is the first woman's confession of faith comparable to that of Peter, a disciple of Jesus. The Gospels show how Martha and Mary best serve Jesus in their circumstances, and the process of growing as disciples of Jesus as women, and the devotion to participate in Jesus' funeral.

(Slide 7) Martha welcomed Jesus and his disciples, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His words, and with faith and hope Martha confessed her faith, and by pouring the expensive perfume on Jesus' feet, Mary prepared for Jesus' death. Their devotion and faith are what all churches today should imitate.

The Bible highlights the activities of women. The women welcomed Jesus as their guest and Lord. They also became the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. They are peace-oriented and have been dedicated to their families and communities. Jesus accepted not only men but also women as disciples, and women took the lead in creating a new world.

Friends, like Martha and Mary, let's greet the Holy Spirit into our hearts every day and every moment and enjoy reading and listening to God's words and change and heal our lives and history as his disciples and children of God. May the peace of God be with us always. Amen.