

Encounters with Jesus

Week 10 — Jesus with Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42)

Context:

Our passage today comes after a significant shift in Luke's gospel when Luke tells us that Jesus knew that his time was drawing near and "he set his face toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). While on his journey, Jesus takes a detour to the house of Martha and her sister Mary. In the most ordinary circumstances of an evening with dinner, Jesus helps Martha and us see the key to discipleship—sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to his words.

1. Martha and Mary Receive Jesus as We All Should

- a. Luke 10 - Jesus sends out the disciples two by two
 - He tells them not to bring any supplies, money, sandals, or anything else they need, but to go into all the towns and preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand
 - They would be taken care of by those who receive the message of the kingdom
- b. Martha and Mary are a model for how to receive Jesus
 - Martha demonstrates diligence in hospitality — seeking to make sure all the practical matters of dinner and lodging were taken care of
 - Mary demonstrates eager attention to Jesus' words without allowing any distraction to draw her away
 - Together, they are a remarkable picture of discipleship: active service and humble listening

2. Listening is the First Priority of a Disciple

- a. Mary "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving" (10:39-40).
 - Martha is not wrong for serving, but rather because she "was distracted with much serving"
 - Martha was consumed with the practical work that she was unable to even hear what Jesus was saying, forgetting that Jesus himself is the point
 - Mary is not actually being lazy or selfish as her sister suggests, but is focused on Jesus like she ought to be
- b. It is simple to become consumed with the busyness of doing good things that we lose sight of the actual purpose
 - Jesus says Martha is being pulled in many directions and he invites her to return to the *one thing* which she needs — Him
- c. Only if we first listen to Jesus and learn from him will we be able to serve well as Martha hopes to

3. We Must Remember the One Thing

- a. Mary remembers the "one thing" and chooses "the good portion"
 - the phrase "good portion" speaks of the best part of a meal or the best cut of meat; Mary recognizes that there is a feast to be had and she commits herself to devouring it
 - but it was not the feast that Martha was concerned with.
- b. Disciples sit at the feet of their rabbis
 - "Let your house be a meetinghouse for the sages and sit amid the dust of their feet and drink in their words with thirst" — Mary sits at Jesus' feet like a disciple, which was scandalous to their culture, but demonstrates that in Jesus' kingdom, everyone is invited know him

In him we live and move and have our being
— if our eyes are planted on all the wrong things, we will never experience God as the source of strength and stability that he intends to be
— if we lose focus on our purpose, we will often get lost even when we believe we are doing all the right things

Jesus invites all of us to come to him when we are burdened because he is humble in heart. Then we will find true rest for our souls.

Discussion Questions

1. What struck you about this passage (either hearing it for the first time, or in hearing again after a while)? Why do you think that resonated with you?

2. How have you experienced or witnessed similar events in your own life?

Who do you most relate to in this story: to Mary or Martha? Why do you think that is?

3. Think of where Martha was coming from. What must have been going through her mind?

In what ways do you find yourself getting so hurried with busyness, to-do lists, etc. that you also lose track of what matters most?

4. Hearing from God's word and listening to it are fundamentally important throughout the scriptures. How does listening relate to faithfulness?

Why must we prioritize hearing from God in order to serve well? How do things change when we have God on our mind and regularly return our thoughts to him throughout the day?

5. In your life right now, what some things that are pulling you in many directions at once? What hope or encouragement do you see in this passage for your situation today?