

Men and Women of the Bible: Mary

Luke 10:38-42 ~ October 28, 2020

38 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."

Martha's view of life

- Martha's words and actions depict her as practical and efficient. Nothing is wrong with being practical and efficient if it doesn't interfere with the more important things in life. If it does, it can become a problem.
- Martha appears to be the leader and the more hospitable of the two: *"Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house"* (Luke 10:38).

Mary's outlook

- One could assume Mary was lazy. It was Martha who invited Jesus into their home. It was Mary who simply sat at Jesus' feet.
- But we should consider Jesus' evaluation of Mary's actions. *"And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'*" (Luke 10:41-42).
- John's account of that same visit: *"Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus [and the disciples] came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil"* (John 12:1-3).
 - John emphasizes here that Mary was so humble, convicted and dedicated to Jesus and His teachings that no expense or personal act was too great or demanding for her to honor her Savior.
 - This attitude, outlook and perspective is the kind of approach God desires in all His disciples. Jesus highly regarded Mary's approach.
- Martha was so comfortable with Jesus that she openly included Him in her frustration. Her words "Do You not care?" and "My sister has left me to serve alone" show her frustration.
 - For Martha to suggest that Jesus didn't care whether Mary was not helping shows a close relationship and considerable forthrightness.

- Martha didn't suggest to Jesus that He ask Mary to help her; she told Him directly to "tell her to help me."
- Jesus responded forthrightly but tenderly: "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things*" (Luke 10:41). Martha was fretting over something quite important to her: providing a meal for Jesus and His disciples. But how important was this compared with other priorities?

Choices in life

- Jesus said Mary made a conscious decision between two alternatives: She chose listening to Jesus over preparation of a meal.
- This may sound strange to those who, like Martha, think meal preparation is more important than visiting. But couldn't that depend on who the guest is? The most pressing need in Martha's eyes was that of preparing a meal for Jesus and His disciples. Mary saw this situation differently. She chose to listen to the wisdom of Jesus, her Savior, while she had the opportunity.

The good part we need

- We have to make a choice as to whether we seek the good part. Jesus tells us our highest priority in life should be to "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ...*" (Matthew 6:33).
- He also gives us guidance in how to do that: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*" (Luke 4:4; compare Deut 8:3). He adds, "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63).
- Mary knew that Jesus' words were the most important needs of her life. Jesus recognized this when He reminded Martha that her life was taken up with many secondary needs, but her greatest need was that which Mary acknowledged: the words of eternal life (John 6:68).

The good part lasts forever

- Like Mary, we need patient faith, that in a world hell-bent on destruction, filled with frivolous trappings and empty, momentary sensual pleasures we can keep the good part forever: "*Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*" (Revelation 14:12). Mary and Martha were Jesus' good friends.
- Martha stayed busy supplying her guests with things that made their visit more comfortable. She should be commended for seeing to the important needs of others.
- But Jesus commended her sister Mary. Jesus noted, in effect, that Martha stayed busy with *form*, but that Mary concentrated on *substance*. He commended Mary for choosing the good part, the holy words, truth and faith of Jesus Christ, which will never be taken from her. We should follow Mary's example and desire God's truth above everything else.