

A Warning to All Faithful Servants (Luke 10:38-42)

1. The Intention of Martha Toward Jesus (v.38)

Context and Questions:

- Luke does not inform us which village Jesus entered nor whether the disciples came with Him. Mary was the most popular name in the first century. Martha was the fourth.

Does this account happen in Bethany? Is this the same Mary and Martha whose brother Lazarus had died (John 11)? If it is the same Mary and Martha, Jesus visited Bethany multiple times. How did Mary, Martha, and Lazarus hear of Jesus? Is this Jesus' first interaction with Mary and Martha? Does this account occur toward the final weeks of Jesus' ministry?

Conclusion: Luke does not organize his gospel chronologically but thematically in the context of discipleship, evangelism, and hospitality. Jesus is *received* in Martha's home.

Martha's desire and sincerity to serve Jesus (v.38):

- Luke informs the reader that Jesus was welcomed into Martha's home. Was this the first time they met? Is this account weeks before His crucifixion? There is no consensus.
- Regardless of the timing, Martha opened her home to Jesus (and His disciples?). She received Him (10:1-16), unlike Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and the lawyer.
- Martha resembled a "type A" personality: industrious, hard-working, and an organizer with a gift of hospitality (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9-10).

2. The Attention of Mary Toward Jesus (v.39)

- Luke informs us that Martha had a sister named Mary, presumably the same Mary and Martha whose brother was raised from the dead (Jn. 11).
- Mary "sat" at the Lord's feet and "listened to His teachings":
 - This classic example of rabbinic discipleship often symbolizes faith (8:41). Women, Gentiles, and Samaritans sit at Jesus' feet (7:38; 8:35; 10:39).
 - The location, position, and Greek tense indicate that she was drawn to "sit" and "chose" to stay. She "sat" and "was listening (intently)."
 - In the first century, women were not permitted to study the Torah. They were allowed to be instructed, but not by a rabbi.
 - Mary was "locked" into Jesus's teaching. This scene of her at Jesus' feet was unprecedented in this culture.
 - Mary reflects the essence of discipleship: submissive and heeding the words of Jesus. She was ready to listen, believe, and obey.

3. The Agitation of Martha Toward Jesus (v.40)

- At some point between the receiving and welcoming of Jesus into her home and the persistence of Mary remaining at Jesus' feet for instruction and discipleship, Martha became "distracted" with "much serving."
 - The Greek verb for "distracted" is used only once in the NT (Lk. 10:40). It means "to draw around" or "to be dragged away."
 - It is in the middle/passive tense, meaning she became "diverted, sidetracked, and preoccupied."
 - She was distracted by her excessive service.

Did she join Mary for a time but became encumbered with the food preparations? Was she too focused on hospitality? Was it while she was "cleaning up"?

- Regardless, she had a problem primarily with Jesus.

Martha rebukes Jesus: Don't you care that my sister has left me alone to serve? Speak to her that she may help me."

- Martha interrupts Jesus' teaching by urging Him to side with her. Martha's problem is that she is serving, and her sister isn't.
- She attempts to pit Jesus against Mary. After all, Mary is a woman and should serve like all other women, not sitting at Jesus' feet.

What happened inside of Martha's heart?

- A. She served too much, becoming burdened by much distraction.
- B. She developed self-pity: she sulks because she sees herself as the only one who "cares."
- C. She became resentful: she blamed Jesus for not caring how hard she was working for Him since He allowed Mary to remain "at his feet."

Martha's desire to serve Jesus escalated when her service became an idol. The problem was not with her desire (initially) but her attitude as the account progressed. She forgets that Jesus prefers company over service.

Martha's sin was that she believed her "type" of worship was the most acceptable. Ultimately, Martha resented Jesus and Mary for not sharing the same priority and fervency of ministry as hers. She resents Jesus for enabling Mary's dereliction of duty.

4. The Exhortation of Jesus Toward Martha (v.41-42)

- Jesus gave Mary His words, but Martha gave Jesus her words!
- Despite Martha's narrow-mindedness, judgmentalism, and fault-finding, Jesus is patient and tender toward her: He calls her "Martha, Martha."
 - This is a Jewish idiom for affection, as there are several examples of this in the OT: "Abraham, Abraham" (Gen. 22:11-12), "Moses, Moses" (Ex. 3:4), and "Saul, Saul" (Acts 9:4).
- In addressing Martha's heart, Jesus does not take sides or rebuke her for her service as an expression of love but exhorts her for her attitude and misplaced priority for service over sanctification.

Jesus reminds her that she is "anxious" and troubled about many things: the "many things" refers to everything that hindered her from true discipleship: sitting and learning from Jesus, not serving Him.

Jesus speaks of the "one thing" necessary and "good portion," which will not be taken away from Mary. What will not be taken away from her?

- A. Jesus will not force her to stop learning and hearing from Him.
- B. She will be blessed as she learns of the kingdom of God. Nothing will be lost.
- C. She will be remembered for this.

Mary is the "wise and understanding" (v.21):

- The one thing that Martha needs to focus on is not all the preparation and "many things" but hearing Jesus' words, which are essential to true discipleship. Martha assumed that by serving Jesus, she would know Him. God does not need us, but we need Him.

Our usefulness is not in what we can do for God but in what He can do for us and through us by His Word and empowerment of His Spirit. All disciples of Jesus will "hear him" (v.16) and "love him" (v.27).