

## An Invitation to Rest Luke 10:38-42

### Jesus visits Martha and Mary

<sup>38</sup> While Jesus and his disciples were traveling, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his message. <sup>40</sup> By contrast, Martha was preoccupied with getting everything ready for their meal. So Martha came to him and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the table all by myself? Tell her to help me."

<sup>41</sup> The Lord answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. <sup>42</sup> One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won't be taken away from her."

This is the Word of the Lord.

**THANKS BE TO GOD.**

If you read just these five verses, and nothing else of the Gospel of Luke, you might think that Martha is not doing very valuable work – that it's just busy stuff.

But you'd be mistaken.

The word in Greek for Martha's work is *diakonia*. It means ministry. It's where we get the word Deacon from. It is service to others, in many different forms. We don't actually get told that the specific ministry Martha is doing here is preparing a meal. The CEB translation takes some liberty with that. It could mean giving

clothes or money to someone in need. Bandaging up someone who is wounded. Praying for someone who needs prayer.

But one specific form diakonia can mean is table service – preparing a meal for others. Now again that can sound a little bit like busy work to us, but in Jesus' day, and throughout the Bible, hospitality, especially hospitality with meals means everything. Probably because you can't just run out to the fast food place down the road to eat. As you travel and visit, you rely so much on the hospitality, generosity, and welcome of strangers.

At the start of this chapter in Luke 10, Jesus even tells his disciples that people like Martha are who they are hoping to find – people who open their homes, invite them in, give them a meal. Jesus knows this is rare, so rare he has to tell his disciples what to do every time they don't get welcomed this way. Martha's diakonia is exactly what Jesus is hoping he and the disciples find on their journeys.

And Jesus is not anti-work or anti-service. He calls people to walk the extra mile. He says following him will ask much of us, including picking up and carrying our cross. And again, at the very start of this passage Jesus says:

*"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."*

Jesus is looking for people to serve and minister just like Martha. And in our world today, I know that we need plenty more Marthas, people who welcome, serve, and do the work that often goes unseen.

So why is Jesus upset with her in this passage?

Two reasons:

1. Martha is complaining about her Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet. And Jesus doesn't like it very much when people try to triangulate him in – that is get them involved with their own arguments or disagreements. He also very much values Mary's actions here. While Martha's ministry is great, Mary is doing something here profoundly counter-cultural. As a woman, she is sitting at Jesus' feet. This sitting at the feet is usually reserved for disciples. And disciples of rabbis in Jesus' day are all men. It is men who are told they are to pause from work to listen, learn, and then speak and teach themselves. It is men who are told to be preachers and teachers. But here is Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing his words, ready to speak her own when the time comes. Jesus says "she has chosen the better part." Mary is being called to be a preacher of the gospel. Meeting Jesus, something is stirring inside her to do what is usually left only for men to do – preach God's love and grace. Use her own voice and power to spread the message of the Kingdom of God. And so Jesus is speaking up for Mary's calling here. This is one of the first passages that support the gifts for women in all ministries of the church.
2. The second reason Jesus is upset is that Jesus wants to spend time with Martha. He sees her hospitality, her service, her welcome, her incredible work. And yet, as he is in her home, he isn't getting to spend anytime with her. She's doing good work. She's doing meaningful and necessary work. But even with

good work, God wants us to take time to pause. To sit. To simply be present and still, and enjoy those who are around us.

So many of you all here today do incredible work and service – in your professional life, for your family and your home, here in our church community, and for our neighbors all over. A huge reason I felt called to come to Bon Air Presbyterian Church is that this is a church that does true ministry – of welcome, of service, of generosity, of justice and care. I know so many of you are filled with that work. And it's great work, and I hope we continue on.

But today, in the midst of all our ministry and important work, I hope we hear a message from Jesus. I hope you hear Jesus saying to you that Jesus wants to spend time with you. That Jesus wants to invite you to take a moment and pause and be still, and hear a word from him. Hear how much you are truly loved and cared for. It is amazing, but what Jesus longs for more than anything is not your accomplishments or tasks or projects or programs. It is you. It being with you.

I know at the start of Covid, I, like so many, thought that now I was going to finally get a chance to catch up on everything and find some rest. I thought the tasks and demands and acts of ministry would get less. But as we all know now two years later, that has not been the case. We have been much busier, and usually busier without breaks. Without pause. Without time to simply be still and know that Christ wants to visit with us.

So today, I invite us to take a moment. A couple of minutes, and simply be with Jesus. If it helps, find a comfortable spot for your

hands to rest. You can close your eyes, or keep them open and find something of beauty to look at. And as you do, ask Jesus this question. Jesus, I'm here with you this day. What do you want to say to me? What do you want me to know this day? And then just be still and listen.

Let's take a couple minutes now to pause and rest, and know that Christ is here.

