

The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:41-42)

Loving Lord, we give you thanks that you invite us to sit at Jesus’ feet and learn from him. You are the source of all wisdom and insight, and we trust that your holy Word will teach us to follow Christ. Help us to put Christ first and so prioritize what is most important in our lives. In Jesus’ holy name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

Jesus came to Bethany to visit his friends Martha and Mary. While Martha was busy running around taking care of the house and preparing meals, Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to his teachings. Jesus commended her for choosing the “better portion.”

Read: Luke 10:38-42

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

Much of Jesus’ early ministry took place in the region of Galilee, on the northern end of the Holy Land. He traveled the through cities around the Sea of Galilee, often crossing over from one side to another with his disciples. (The word “disciple” means student or apprentice — one who learns.)

Jesus called many people to follow him as disciples. What would have been remarkable in that day and age was the fact that Jesus’ followers included both men and women. Jesus’ disciples included not just the Twelve, but all who learned from him.

Here in this lesson, Jesus approves of Mary as a true disciple. In the same way, Jesus calls each one of us to a life of discipleship, always learning and growing in faith.

Discussion Questions

1. When Jesus and his disciples came to Martha’s house, how did she react? What did she do? Why do you think she did this?
2. What did Mary do when Jesus came? Why do you think she did this, instead of doing what Martha did?
3. Why did Martha get upset with her sister? Do you think you would have felt angry if you were Martha? Why or why not?
4. How did Jesus respond to Martha? Does this mean the things Martha was doing were wrong or bad? What point was he making to her?
5. Have you ever felt overwhelmed, like Martha? Why is it important for us to still spend time with Jesus even when we have a lot of things to do?
6. When in your daily life do you set aside special time to be with God? Why is this essential to our faith?
7. In describing the Sabbath Commandment, Martin Luther wrote, “We should fear and love God so that we do not despise his Word and the preaching of it, but acknowledge it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.” How might you do a better job of putting a priority on God’s Word?
8. Read Galatians 2:15-21. How does the story of Martha and Mary illustrate what Paul is saying here? If we are not justified by all the good works we do, how are we made right with God?