

## Jesus in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Luke 10:38-42, John 11, and John 12:1-7

Luke 10:38-42

### Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, 42 but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Bethany: A village in Judea not far from Jerusalem. The meaning of Bethany has been debated but it most likely means "House of affliction" or "poorhouse". It was thought that was some sort of almshouse or hospital in Bethany.

The family lived in a village (not a city) outside Jerusalem. Martha appears to be the head of the household. The sisters were also not married and there appeared to be no parents around.

- What can we say about Bethany, a village that seems to be connected to suffering and/or poverty.
- Who were Martha and Mary and Lazarus? Were they wealthy or not? Why were Martha and Mary not married?
- What might have been different or not different about their household?

Martha was the first to meet Jesus and she invited Jesus into her home. Jewish tradition is that there is a legal obligation to welcome strangers and outsiders into our homes, feed them and generally take care of them.

- Why would Jesus go to their home? What about this home is better than a different place to stay? Why might it be a safe place or why would he feel comfortable there?
- Was Martha taking a risk inviting Jesus to her home?
- What is Mary doing in verse 39? What was the significance of this? Was this actually uncommon for women at the time (read Tom's article <https://spectrummagazine.org/views/2022/gender-and-jesus> ).
- What is Jesus view of hospitality, given that he appears to think that what Mary is doing is better than what Martha is doing? Why might we see things differently to them (i.e. cultural lenses)?
- What do they give to Jesus and what does Jesus give in return? (Maybe we can come back to this question at the end as well.)

## John 11: 1-45

### The Death of Lazarus (summarized)

When Jesus heard of Lazarus death he stayed two more days before he returned to Bethany. At first he says that Lazarus is asleep but when the disciples don't get it he bluntly says Lazarus is dead. When Jesus arrives at Bethany he doesn't go straight in. Martha goes out to meet him alone at the place where they first met. Jesus speaks with Martha to reassure her and tell her some truths about resurrection. When Martha comes back to get Mary, she runs out to meet Jesus, along with the people. Unlike with Martha, when Jesus sees Mary's grief he is visibly moved and weeps. He goes straight away to the tomb and resurrects Lazarus. Before this though, both women affirm that if Jesus had been there Lazarus would not have died.

- Was there danger for Jesus to go back to Judea/Bethany (see John 11:8)?
- What is the meaning of John 11: 9,10. And what about verse 15?
- Did Mary and Martha have any right to expect that Jesus should have been there?
- Why does Jesus not go into the village but rather waits outside for Mary and Martha to come to him?
- Given that both sisters stated their belief that if Jesus had been there their brother would not have died, what is their level of spiritual development? What else does Martha say that Mary does not?
- Why was Jesus so much more moved by Mary's grief than when Martha came out to him?
- Why did Jesus choose to resurrect Lazarus rather than go earlier and keep him from dying? (see John 11:45)

## John 12:1-7

### Mary Anoints Jesus

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 2 There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him. 3 Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" 6 (He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) 7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. 8 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Jesus often shared a meal with people. Sharing a meal implies many things from simple friendship to partaking in the kingdom of God in a tangible and fulfilling way. In fact Jesus spent a lot of time welcoming people of all segments of society and being hospitable to them.

- What is the significance of giving a dinner for Jesus? Why is Jesus happy to share a meal with people? As a guest, what does Jesus give?
- What is Martha doing? What is her demeanour?

- What is Mary doing?
- What is the significance of the anointing? (perfume on the feet six days before Passover)  
Compare to the story of the other anointing in Mark 14:1-9? (perfume on Jesus head two days before Passover)

- What is the significance of both these anointings?

Read this article that explains about the significance of the anointings

<https://inspired2think.wordpress.com/2015/04/11/understanding-the-significance-of-jesus-being-anointed-by-oil/>

- Why does Jesus defend Mary once again?
- Why was it considered a waste to use the pure nard? What were the disciples not seeing?
- Why would it be women who did both of these anointings?

As it turns out, these anointings were very important. Think also about the women going out with spices after Jesus crucifixion. Women were caring for Jesus throughout the gospels before and after his death.

- What do they give to Jesus and what does Jesus give in return?