



“Woman with Crossed Arms” Picasso

Mary Craig Ministries

What’s with Martha and Mary, Worry and Worship?

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Luke 10:38-42 may be a small section of Scripture, but it has large application for our everyday lives. Digging deeper, as we have been doing at Craighouse® in my “Believe in Jesus, Believe Jesus, Believe what Jesus Believes” series, some wonderful things emerged. The feedback has been so positive that I share the teaching with you.

Jesus and those who came with Him were traveling on the road. While some refused and rejected Jesus, Martha received Jesus into the home. Note it is not just any village, but a certain village; and it is not just any woman, but a certain Martha. Mary, Martha’s sister, had sat down at the feet of Jesus and was listening to the word of Him, i.e. listening to Jesus teach. Perhaps they were both trying to listen to Jesus teach or perhaps Mary worked for a while and then sat down at Jesus’ feet to learn.

Martha welcomed Jesus. The word used for “welcome” means “to accept the presence of a person with friendliness—‘to welcome, to receive, to accept, to have as a guest.’” It is G5264 and refers to a welcoming such that someone is received as under a person’s responsibility and personal care. So to her, Martha’s welcoming would have meant being responsible to care for Jesus’ personal needs.

Jesus is not always welcomed, received, accepted, or invited into people’s homes. So do that and you will be blessed as you **practice His Presence.**

And she had a sister called Mary, who also having sat down at the feet of the Lord, was listening to the word of Him. But Martha was distracted about much service; having come up, moreover she said, Lord, NOT is it concerning to you that my sister alone has left me to serve? Speak therefore to her that me she might help! Answering moreover said to her the Lord, **Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing however is necessary, and one thing Mary indeed the good portion has chosen, which NOT will be taken from her.**

Mary is listening, but remember, to be a woman and sit at a Rabbi's feet was unheard of. Jesus is always breaking the mold man has put in place. Jesus did not stop her, upbraid her, or do what Martha wanted: tell Mary she should be busy meeting His personal needs. Mary's posture demonstrates her heart...humble and teachable. She wants to learn. She is continually listening.

The thing is that Martha was distracted because of all the serving she had to do. The Greek word here means to draw away, to be distracted and greatly troubled.

This was a whole group of people, and Martha is serving them and probably trying to listen to Jesus teach in the process. She comes up to Jesus, calling Him Lord, and is frustrated. Does it NOT concern Jesus that her sister has left her to do all this serving alone? Doesn't Jesus care? Does He have no care? Look at all that had to be done. Martha doesn't use her sister's name. Martha wants Jesus to speak up. She gives Jesus an imperative. Speak! Get her to help me! Say something so she might help!

Jesus says Martha's name twice. Jesus says Martha is anxious. The Greek word here (G3309) means Jesus defines her problem as being over-anxious, distracted, drawn in opposite directions, divided into parts, going to pieces because being pulled apart in different directions. That's the negative sense. The positive sense (1 Corinthians 12:25; Philippians 2:20) is when someone effectively distributes concern in proper relation to the whole picture.

Not only is Martha anxious, but she is troubled about many things. This Greek word, G2350, means to be disturbed greatly, terrified, stricken with panic, agitated of mind.

Martha was getting herself all worked up. She was troubled in her mind. Wanting to serve is not the issue. The issue is to **labor for the Lord in love**.

ONE THING is necessary. Jesus uses two different words translated "one thing" here. The first is the Greek G3641, which means small, slight, little. The second Greek word G1520 means one, one thing, exclusive of the rest; one thing before all others.

One thing, exclusive of the rest, is necessary. One thing before all others, is necessary. Indeed Mary has chosen the good portion and it will absolutely not be taken from her.

Now the deal is that the second use of "one thing" is usually omitted in English translations. Basically, Jesus is saying, NO, I will not speak to Mary and tell her to get up and help you serve.

Choose the good portion. Choose the best over the better. Mary chose the good portion.

This Greek word (G18) for "good" refers to something inherently and intrinsically good, something good in nature, something good whether seen to be so or not. It describes what originates from God and what is empowered by God in someone's life through faith. Mary chose the good portion, her assigned part/share.

We all make choices every day, and these choices reveal our priorities. Is it wrong to labor for the Lord? No, but worship takes priority over work. God must have first place in our lives. Don't just "spend" time with God; "invest" time with God.

Christians are ambassadors. In the beginning of Luke 10, Jesus sent out the 70/72 into the villages ahead of Him. Rejection and refusal to receive Jesus by a village meant rejecting the peace His ambassadors brought in His Name. Jesus passed them by. Here, Martha received Jesus, so Jesus comes into the house, bringing His peace, and teaches.

Christians are also to be neighborly. They are to imitate Christ, especially in the area of *hesed*, or mercy/compassion/unfailing love.

But prior to running around and getting all busy, we are to worship. We are to listen to the Lord. We are to sit at His feet and be learners. We are to prioritize our time. One thing is necessary. Sitting at Jesus' feet is not optional for the believer; it is necessary.

Martha was worried about many things. It wasn't so much that Martha was serving. Jesus came to serve and desires for us to have servant hearts. The thing was that Martha was worried. She was all riled up inside, so riled up that it was a distraction. She was over-anxious, near panic. She was troubled. She was going to pieces because of being pulled in different directions.

We can be worried about specific things and make a list. Anxiety moves beyond worry. Anxiety hits us when we are unable to effectively distribute concern. We are torn up inside. We cannot prioritize. We can't see the trees, only the size of the forest. We need balance in our lives. **With Martha and Mary it is not an either/or. It is both in the right priority.**

We don't know the details here. Maybe Martha was trying to listen to Jesus and felt she was neglecting Him and failing to show proper hospitality, which would have meant preparing meals. Martha is upset because she's doing all the work and her sister is off sitting at Jesus' feet. What was Martha supposed to do? It seemed like Jesus didn't care and had no concern about the hospitality codes. But that might change when everyone expected some fabulous dinner and fixings for all the people that may have crowded into her home. Martha was distracted by all the work; that was the point.

Jesus came into her house. Jesus was teaching. Make way for the Lord of Hosts.

Mary here is Mary of Bethany. We see her three times in the Gospels. On each occasion she is at the feet of Jesus. (Luke 10:39; John 11:32; John 12:3) She is a worshipper.

What we do with Christ is more important than what we do for Christ. We cannot work for Christ without doing the one thing necessary: time with Jesus. We can be like Martha, serving and serving and alone. And that is fine; but we must be like Mary of Bethany. We must take time with Jesus alone. The better part would not, absolutely not, be taken from Mary of Bethany.

In John 11, Martha dropped everything and came right away to Jesus as soon as she knew Jesus was coming; Mary was still in the house. She knew that if Jesus had been there when Lazarus had died, it wouldn't have happened. She knew about the Resurrection. She believed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. She was satisfied and went her way and called her sister secretly when Jesus called for Mary. **It's a big deal, John 11. Martha seems content with her portion, with her position, and with the peace Christ gives.** Jesus healed her emotionally. He brought her mind into balance. He brought her life into proper perspective and order. He did it with a rebuke; but the Bible clearly says that Jesus loved Martha.

Later on, Martha was still preparing and serving feasts. In John 12:1, 2, Martha prepared a feast for Jesus, the Twelve, and her brother and sister, at least. We have no record of complaint.

There is a part of our Christian lives that only God sees. That is the most important part, the time when it's just God and us. Jesus left us the example: Come alone. Come apart. Come away. But Jesus didn't withdraw from life. He came that we might have life abundant.

Now let's talk a bit about what is called "the contemplative life." It was Aristotle who places the highest good, and ultimate end, of human life as living in contemplation, which, according to him, is the enjoyment of virtue. Withdrawing and living in solitude is not the goal. Mary chose the one thing necessary, but not the one and only thing of the true Christian life. People were created and given a purpose. Jesus and His Father are working right up to this very moment. Whatever we do, we are to do it to the glory of God. We are to fulfill the purpose for which God created US.



Martha was taking on more than she needed to. Jesus wasn't interested so much in the food and fancy dinner as He was in teaching and placing His Presence in Martha's home. **He brought the Peace. Jesus is the Peace. Martha neglected the main business of life: to worship and serve the Creator. What would serve Jesus best? How best could she have shown worship? Listen to Him. Learn from Him. Live pleasing to the Lord.**

It's not this or that. Martha commanded Jesus to speak certain words to her sister. We can't call Jesus Lord and then tell Jesus what He should do just for our own selfish benefit. We have to see the whole picture and think of others beyond ourselves. (Phil. 2) If Mary were just trying to get out of working and being lazy and idle, that might have been a different story. Jesus sees it as Mary choosing the good portion. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4) The food of Jesus' teaching will last because the Word of God stands forever. Jesus was there in Person giving words of eternal life, words of power that would stand forever, words of truth.

Accept the presence of Jesus. Accept Him into your life and into your home. Welcome Jesus. Labor in Love, yes, but make it a priority to Worship Him, sitting at His feet as a learner privileged to be there. and receive teaching from Jesus Himself. This one thing is necessary. Choose the good portion.

On Wednesday nights we ask ourselves, "So what does Jesus believe?"

1. Jesus believes in entering the home where He is welcomed, accepted, received. He blesses that home with His Presence. He brings to that home His Peace. Martha welcomed Jesus into their home. Under the custom of hospitality, she was willing and sought to meet His needs.

2. Jesus believes the work can be a distraction from the one thing necessary. Martha was distracted. She was greatly troubled, anxious, drawn in opposite directions, being pulled apart,

and worried about many things, her mind disturbed. She puts to Jesus an imperative to speak to her sister and tell her sister to help her.

3. Jesus believes in His ability to discern and judge righteously. Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet and listen and learn. Jesus did not upbraid Mary, even though it was not customary for women to sit at a Rabbi's feet like that.

4. Jesus believes in correction. He firmly calls Martha by name, twice, and tells her the emotional state she's in. Martha is worried about many things, but one small/little thing is necessary. Martha had her priorities upside down.

5. Jesus believes: **one thing Mary indeed the good portion has chosen, which NOT will be taken from her.** Mary has chosen the one thing before all others and exclusive of the rest. Mary has chosen the good portion, the good being what *originates from God* and is *empowered* by Him in one's life, through faith, and her assigned portion/share/part. And that portion will absolutely not be taken from her.

From this we conclude that Jesus must have first place and priority in the life of a believer. We are to worship Him in spirit and in truth. We are to listen and to learn of Him who is meek and humble of heart. We are to practice His Presence in our lives and choose every day the good portion. Worship precedes good works, which are to be the outflow of our salvation, labors of love. Martha neglected the main business of life: to worship and serve the Creator. What best serves Jesus' needs? As God, Jesus has no needs. (Acts 17:25, e.g.) Jesus as God Incarnate, said: John 4:32. He has food unknown to many. But this: Luke 19:31. So how do we serve the LORD? Matthew 25. What is it to "minister to the Lord"? Ezekiel 44:7, 15; Revelation 1:4-6. The priests in the Old Testament were to minister to the Lord. Jesus helps us administer our sacrifices to God. Although we no longer have to present animal sacrifices, we do present ourselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). We are to have the kind of worship and service God finds acceptable. We have to find out what pleases the Lord. Here's a start:

1 John 3:22 - And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Hebrews 13:16 - But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Romans 12:2 - And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Hebrews 11:6 - But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Romans 8:8 - So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 12:1 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.

(Bibliography: www.biblehub.com)

I hope this teaching blesses you as it has reportedly blessed many others. You can listen to the full teaching time at www.mcmtffr.org.

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May you find the Peace Christ brings,

Mary Craig

Mary Craig, D. Min.

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor His delight in the legs of the warrior;
the Lord delights in those who fear Him,
who put their hope in His unfailing love.
Psalm 147:10, 11

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