

JESUS WITH MARTHA, MARY, AND LAZARUS

Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1 - 12:7; Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Key-location: Bethany

Key-repetitions:

- The names of Martha, Mary and Lazarus are repeated.
- Martha was concerned with practical things: she was busy with housework when Jesus visited her home (Lk 10:40); When Jesus gave orders to remove the stone covering Lazarus' grave, Martha argued that the body would smell bad (Jn 11:38-39); Martha served the dinner at Lazarus' house (Jn 12:1-2).
- Mary was not concerned with being practical: when Jesus visited Martha's house, Mary sat at his feet to hear him teach (Lk 10:39); at the dinner in Lazarus' house, Mary emptied a jar of perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair (Mt 26:6-7; Mk 14:3; Jn 12:3).
- Mary was criticized: by Martha (Lk 10:40); by the disciples (Mt 26:8-9; Jn 12:4-6).
- The Jews wanted to kill Jesus (Jn 10:39; 11:49-57; 12:9-10).
- Resurrection: the resurrection (Jn 11:24, 25); Lazarus' resurrection (Jn 11:43-44, 46; 12:1, 9-10, 17-18).

Key-attitudes:

- Martha's anxiety over giving attention to practical service and issues, in contrast with Mary's interest in hearing Jesus and Mary's impulsive behavior.
- The grief of Martha and Mary when Lazarus died, and their feeling of deception because Jesus had not prevented his death.
- Jesus' sadness because of the death of Lazarus.
- The fear and despair of the Jewish leaders when they

heard about Lazarus' resurrection.

- The joy of Martha and Mary when they offered a dinner for Jesus.
- Judas and the other disciples' outrage, over what they considered to be a waste by Mary when she anointed Jesus with perfume.
- The sternness of Jesus when he rebuked the disciples who criticized Mary.

Initial-situation:

During the second semester of the third year of his public ministry, Jesus made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three different religious feasts. The first trip was for the Feast of Tabernacles. After the Feast, while still in Jerusalem, on a Sabbath, he cured the man who had been blind since birth. That provoked a conflict with the Pharisees.

After the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus probably went to the region of Perea. He sent out 72 men to heal and teach about the Kingdom of God. The men returned and reported to Jesus.

Initial-problem:

Jesus entered the village of Bethany where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

Final-situation:

A large crowd of Jews went to Bethany, both to see Jesus and to see Lazarus. The chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. Many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him due to the miracle done for Lazarus.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus Visited Martha and Mary Lk 10:38-41

After the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus appointed seventy-two men, put them in pairs and sent them ahead to every town and place where he intended to go. Jesus started traveling to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Dedication.

Jesus and his disciples came to the village of Bethany, where a woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. Her sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. Martha was upset over all the work she had to do. Martha interrupted, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is essential; Mary has chosen what is best, and that one thing will not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:38-42).

Then Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. Jesus was in the Temple area and claimed that God was his father. The Jews picked up stones to kill him.

Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had baptized in the early days (Jn 10:22-42).

Resurrection of Lazarus Jn 11:1-54

Lazarus, Mary and Martha's brother, also lived in Bethany. Lazarus became sick. The sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

Jesus received the message and said, "Lazarus' sickness won't end in death. No, it will bring glory to God and to his Son." Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus; however, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

The disciples answered, "But Teacher, the Jews there wanted to stone you!"

Jesus told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep; but I will go to wake him up."

His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus meant that Lazarus was dead, but his disciples thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was sleeping.

Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake, I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. Let's go to him."

Thomas said to the other disciples, "Let's go, so we can die with him" (Jn 11:1-16).

Jesus arrived in Bethany and found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews were visiting Martha and Mary to comfort them. Martha heard that Jesus was coming; she went out to meet him, but Mary remained at home (Jn 11:17-20).

Martha told Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died. But even now, I know that God will do whatever you ask."

Jesus answered, "Martha, your brother will come back to life."

Martha responded, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection; I am life. People who believe in me will live, even if they die; everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" (Jn 11:21-27).

Jesus remained where he and Martha had talked. Martha returned to the house, and privately told her sister Mary, "The Teacher is here, and is asking for you." Mary jumped up and went to Jesus. Her friends noticed how quickly she got up and went out. They followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to weep.

Mary went to where Jesus was waiting. As soon as she saw him, she fell at his feet saying, "Lord, if you had only been here, my brother would not have died."

Jesus saw Mary weeping. Friends who had followed her were also weeping. Jesus was deeply upset. He asked, "Where have you put him?"

They replied, "Lord, come and see" (Jn 11:28-34).

Jesus wept.

The Jews said, "See how deeply he loved him!"

But others said, "If he loved him so much, why didn't he keep him from dying? He gives sight to the blind; he could have prevented Lazarus from dying."

Jesus, once more deeply moved, went to the tomb which was a cave with a stone rolled across the entrance. Jesus ordered, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the dead man's sister, replied, "But, Lord, by this time he stinks. He's been buried four days."

Jesus said, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you would see God's glory?"

They rolled away the stone. Jesus looked up and prayed, "Father, I thank you that you listen to me. I know that you always listen to me, but I said this for the benefit of the crowd standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth covered his face.

Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go" (Jn 11:35-44).

Many of the Jewish friends who visited Mary saw what Jesus did and put their faith in him. Others went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. The chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Jewish ruling council.

They argued, "This man is working many miracles. If we don't stop him, everyone will believe in him. Then the Romans will come, take away our power and our privilege, and they will destroy our Temple and our nation."

Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You don't know anything! It's better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation be destroyed."

From that day on, the Jewish authorities plotted to kill Jesus (Jn 11:45-53).

Therefore, Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead, he secluded himself with his disciples.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem. They kept looking for Jesus. The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so they could arrest him (Jn 11:54-57).

The Triumphal Entry

Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-44; Jn 12:12-19

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went back to Bethany where he had recently raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn 12:1).

On Sunday, the first day of the week, Jesus told two disciples to go to a certain village, find a donkey colt which had never been ridden and bring it to him. They brought the colt, threw their cloaks over it, and Jesus mounted it (Mk 11:1-8; Mt 21:1-11).

The large crowd, that had come for the Feast, broke off palm branches and went out to meet Jesus, cheering, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!" (Jn 12:12-13).

The people who had been with Jesus when he called Lazarus from the tomb and brought him back to life, kept telling what they had seen. The crowd heard that he had performed this miracle and went out to meet him (Jn 12:17-18).

The Pharisees said to one another, "This is getting us nowhere. It's out of control. Look! The whole world has gone after him!" (Jn 12:19).

Jesus Anointed by Mary

Mt 26:6-16; Mk 14:3-11; Lk 22:3-6; Jn 12:1-7

Tuesday evening of the week when the Feast of Passover was celebrated would have been considered Wednesday by the Jews; the Jewish custom considered that the new day began at sun-down. On that evening, a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served. Lazarus was reclining at the table with Jesus. Mary took a pint bottle of expensive perfume made of pure nard; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. The perfume fragrance filled the house.

Judas Iscariot, the disciple who was going to betray Jesus, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was keeper of the money bag, he also embezzled money for himself (Jn 12:1-6).

Other disciples criticized Mary harshly (Mt 26:8; Mk 14:4-5).

Jesus defended Mary, "Leave her alone. She poured perfume on my body to prepare it for burial. It was a fine and beautiful thing that she has done for me. You will always have the poor among you. But you will not always have me. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Mk 14:9; Mt 26:10-13; Jn 12:7-8).

Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and asked, "How much will you pay me if I hand Jesus over to you?" They paid Judas thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them (Mt 26:14-16).

A large crowd found out that Jesus was in Bethany and went there, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. So the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus as well. Many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him due to the miracle done for Lazarus (Jn 12:9-11).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Mary and Martha express their service for Jesus in different manners?
2. How did Jesus participate in the life of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus?

3. What does the resurrection of Lazarus teach us about sickness and death?
4. How did different people react differently to Jesus?
5. How can this story help you deal with sickness and/or death when you must face it for yourself or for your loved ones?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. Different temperaments exist among Jesus' followers. Martha was an active person, concerned with practical activities; Mary liked to sit and contemplate (Lk 10:38-42). After the resurrection of Lazarus, Martha manifested her love by serving a banquet for Jesus, and Mary impulsively poured perfume onto Jesus (Jn 12:2-3). It is tough for an activity-minded person to understand the contemplation-minded person and vice-versa. However, both are important to the Kingdom of God.
2. Questioning Jesus when facing a crisis, is not proof of lack of faith. Both Martha (Jn 11:21) and Mary (Jn 11:32) questioned why Jesus didn't prevent the death of Lazarus. However, Jesus understood and was gentle with his answers.
3. Jesus transforms the desperation that accompanies the reality of death into hope:
 - All believers in Jesus will be resurrected (Jn 11:25);
 - Believers in Jesus are transformed by his death and resurrection; they have already begun to experience eternal life (Jn 11:26; 3:36; 5:24; 17:3);
 - Physical death is only a temporary interval to sleep, until the resurrection (Jn 11:11-13; 1 Th 4:13-17; 1 Cor 15:55).
4. Expressions of love are valuable and have everlasting results. Mary expressed her love by pouring perfume on Jesus; the whole house was filled with the fragrance and the story of Mary's deed is told wherever the Gospel is preached (Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-8).
5. Leaders who desire to protect personal privileges that accompany leadership positions see a manifestation of God as a threat to their power. After the resurrection of Lazarus, the Jewish leaders felt that Jesus was a threat to their power (Jn 11:46-57). Earlier, they felt that Jesus was a threat when he healed the man who was born blind (Jn 9:41).
6. When leaders' plans cause others to suffer, they mask their actions as being for the good of the people. When planning for Jesus' death, the Jewish leaders masked their reasons as:
 - To protect the people from following a deceiver (Jn 11:48);
 - To protect the Temple and the city of Jerusalem from destruction by the Romans (Jn 11:47-57);
 - To do what was best for the majority (Jn 11:50-51).