

Choose the Good Portion

Even though it is only recorded in the Gospel of Luke, there are few events in Jesus' life more familiar than His visit to Bethany and the home of Mary and Martha, or should I say Martha and Mary. They are two of the more recognizable women in the Bible and the events associated with Jesus' visit may be even more so. It is obvious that the sisters are not only followers of Jesus, but very much devoted to Him. Their devotion is expressed in two very wonderful ways: service and worship.

According to the account found in Luke 10:38-42, Martha invited Jesus to her home. She was a remarkable hostess, preparing a meal for both her Lord and His disciples. Her generosity and love are clearly evident. She likely swept and picked up every room, toiled in the kitchen, and hurried back and forth from there to where her guests gathered around Jesus to hear Him teach. All the while, her sister, Mary, sat among the other guests and at Jesus' feet listening intently to His every word. At some point, Martha, overwhelmed and stressed by all of the preparations and toil, became angry and demanded that Jesus tell Mary to help her. Certainly, in that moment, Jesus' response must have been hard for Martha to hear:

“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.” (vv. 41-42)

Can you imagine hearing Jesus say that the things you are overwhelmed by, anxious about, stressing over, and laboring in are actually trivial? The truth is, life is made up of very few real necessities. One of them is the communion that Jesus invites us to enjoy with Him. Martha's desire to **do** something for Jesus had superseded her desire to **be** with Jesus. **The process occupied her rather than the Person who was visiting her home.** In Revelation 2:2-5, Jesus warned the church at Ephesus of this dangerous preoccupation that ultimately leads to Spiritless activity and Gospel impotence.

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. **Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.** Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

There is a reason this is important to constantly keep before us. Mary had chosen the good portion and it was not going to be taken away from her (v. 42). Most things in life are transient. They come and go. They have little lasting impact or value beyond a week, let alone a year. However, a relationship with Jesus is not simply of great value in this life, but is an inheritance for the life to come as well.

Jesus was Mary's portion and in His gentle instruction to Martha He is inviting her to put aside her toil and make Him her portion also. Coincidentally, Jesus is our portion too. He is mine, and I am His (Song of Solomon 2:16). We inherit Him, and Jesus inherits us (Ps 2:7-12). He is our portion, and we are His portion (Deut 32:9). And that portion will not be taken away from us. He is the portion that cannot be earned, but is given freely to all who believe (Jn 1:12). And once He gives Himself to us, He promises to remain with us forever (Deut 31:6-8; Matt 28:20; Rom 8:31-39; Heb 13:5).

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV) - *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to **an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**"*