

TRINITY NEWS

Jesus visits Martha and Mary Luke 10:38-42

Jesus' relationship with Mary and Martha here and parallels has scriptural cross references in John 11:1 and 12:1-8. Lazarus is said to be their brother in the Johannine accounts. This is the most personal family relationship in the gospels among those associated with Jesus as an adult apart from the Mary-Beloved Disciple relationship. The resuscitation of Lazarus prefigures the resurrection of Jesus, and the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary of Bethany is said by him to prefigure his death (John 12:7). Prophecies about Jesus' death and the symbols that go with those prophecies are associated with this family.

The Lukan account says that Mary "listened" to Jesus, whereas Martha is "distracted by many tasks" which are also a proper way of serving the Lord. They both served God in different ways. This text should never be used to describe two different kinds of women. Jesus avoided putting people in categories, and we should follow his example.

Dialogue with the Text

We need to avoid categories in any dialogue with the text of this story. The relationship of Jesus, Mary, Martha and Lazarus is a personal one. He associates with no other family other than his own in this way. We spend our lives trying to get close to him. We know that we cannot do this just by striving to know him. Like all loving relationships, something has to happen, an "I-Thou" relationship as Martin Buber called it. This relationship is personal, and requires communication at a personal level. "Everything begins with relationships". We 'connect' with Jesus through the enabling work of the Holy Spirit. We are fortunate to have words in John's Gospel about the way in which the Spirit brings Jesus to our "remembrance". The Spirit also leads us close to his heart.

The Holy Spirit reaches across nearly two thousand years to bring the historical Jesus into our midst. Not only that, the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of Jesus" who proceeds from the Father with the imprint of Christ's earthly life and his ascended life written on the heart of Spirit, at the heart of the "Father of all lights". The Holy Spirit and Jesus are inseparable companions in the Gospels. Where Jesus is, there is the Spirit. But after the death and resurrection of Jesus the function of the Holy Spirit as the bearer of the Christ memory becomes more distinctive as a Person.

The welcome given to Jesus by Martha and Mary differ only in function. One tends to the table to provide for the Lord's needs, and the other sits at his feet and converses with him. They are not two categories of women, or two grades of activity, but the Lord does note Martha's fussing about the importance of her own task!

We are servants of our Heavenly father, and Jesus often reminds us of that humbling fact. Nothing matters apart from serving and loving and caring with heartfelt intention.

When we come to make Eucharist, Holy Communion with Jesus, we welcome him, but in another sense he welcomes us. Martha and Mary welcomed him in different ways, but he also welcomed them.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Monday.

- Vestry meeting, 6:30pm, Rectory

Wednesday.

- Bible Study, 10:00am
- Group discussion, 7:30pm, Parish office

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel
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NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Genesis 18:20-33

Psalm 138

Colossians 2:6-15

Luke 11:1-13