**Servants like Martha**

“*Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.**She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying.**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.”**But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.*”

[**Luke 10:38-42**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010%3A38-42&version=NRSV)

***“****Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.  There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him.”*

**John 12:1-2**

The story of Martha and Mary is often a well known one. Two sisters who are very different – Martha cooks, cleans and serves whilst Mary sits and listens to Jesus. I’ve heard many a sermon asking whether I am a Martha or a Mary. The passage in Luke seems to say that Martha’s work of cooking, cleaning and serving are not the right path – but how would anything ever get done if we all sat and listened?

**Q – who do you identify most with, Martha or Mary?**

Service is important – Jesus himself describes himself as a servant and encourages the disciples to be like him. So, it isn’t the serving that Jesus is gently rebuking Martha for. I think that Jesus really appreciated the meal and the refreshments that Martha brought for him and the disciples. Perhaps it is her distraction with other tasks, such as cleaning, rather than listening to Jesus that is the issue.

**Q – Have you ever been to a party or to visit someone and they spent the entire time in the kitchen?**

**Q – Did that make you feel welcome or frustrated?**

Perhaps Martha, after serving Jesus, should have left the cleaning until after her guests had left? Perhaps then, Mary would have helped her?

The passage from John’s gospel comes just after the raising of Lazarus. The event is followed by a meal, where Martha serves, and Mary anoints Jesus with costly perfume and wipes his feet with her hair. Once again, Mary is seen as the more devoted of the two sisters – yet Martha’s quiet, almost invisible act of service is the one Jesus asks us to emulate.

Martha is a servant, just as Jesus is a servant. Her quiet, humble act of service is an act of true devotion. It is one we are called to do for others. Serving does not make Martha any less of a follower of Christ, in fact, if we look at John 11, we see that Martha has an incredibly deep understanding of who Jesus is:

*“When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.**Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.**When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.**Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.”**Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”**Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”**Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.  Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”*

**John 11:17-27**

Martha demonstrates her deep faith in Jesus:

1. She declares that Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had been there – she had complete faith in Jesus’ ability to heal
2. She demonstrates an understanding of the final resurrection
3. She declares Jesus as the Messiah – one of only two people who do so – the other is Peter

**Q – What do you believe about Jesus?**

**Q – Is your faith as sure as that of Martha?**

Not only does Martha explain her faith in words, she demonstrates it in her actions. Serving others is what all flowers of Christ are called to do. Yes, we should serve others and be hospitable – but unlike Martha we should not get so distracted by teas, buffets, serving and cleaning, that we forget to focus on Christ.

**Q – How do you serve others?**

**Q – How do we ensure that we don’t become distracted by hospitality, still serve others and have time for Christ?**