

# Martha

By Joyce Catherwood

(Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-7)

Mary was really beginning to get on my nerves. There was so much to do. I had invited Jesus to our home and was in the middle of preparing an elaborate meal. But my sister was not the least bit interested in helping me. Instead, as usual, Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, with all the men, listening intently to everything he said. I thought, what if I did that too? Who would prepare the meal? Who would see that everyone was served? Who would see to the needs of the guests?

I was tired, and I could barely keep up with everything that needed to be done. I'd been at the market at dawn, purchasing the freshest meat and produce and searching for special spices. Nothing was too good for our beloved friend. Now, as I hurried around making sure everything would be ready at the appropriate time, I grew more and more irritated with Mary. Finally, I couldn't hold it in any longer.

I marched into the courtyard where Jesus and the others sat in the shade of our olive tree and blurted out, "Lord, don't you care that this sister of mine has been leaving me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!" I gave Mary a hard look and then turned back to Jesus, hoping he'd set her straight.

As I look back on it now, I realize Jesus had every reason to react negatively to my curt interruption and snippy attitude. But he didn't. Instead he said in his soothing voice, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about so many things, but only one thing is worth being concerned about; Mary has chosen it and it shouldn't be taken away from her."

I was so embarrassed, but not by Jesus' discreet response. No, I had managed to humiliate myself by my own impetuous and inconsiderate outburst. As I held back the tears stinging my eyes, I knew that Jesus cared deeply about me, and that he more than appreciated my hard work.

I suppose I was jealous of Mary. She always seemed to reach out with her heart, and people sensed her love and knew she cared. For me it was different. People appreciated my hospitality and fine meals, but it was always hard for me to stop and give people my undivided attention, my personal time.

Only a few days before Jesus' arrest, I prepared another special meal for him. I didn't know he would soon die, so I was surprised when Mary unabashedly honored Jesus by anointing his feet with expensive perfume. And yes, she did interrupt my carefully planned meal. But at least this time I did something right by holding my tongue. Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, said something about it, but Jesus told him to leave Mary alone and praised her for doing such a beautiful thing.

I think Mary intuitively sensed Jesus' death was near, and that he needed honor and reassurance from his friends. If, like Mary, I had been quietly listening to Jesus during his visits to our home instead of always thinking the meal was the highest priority, I might also have understood what Mary understood.

Later, as details emerged of his cruel and brutal crucifixion, and then of his glorious resurrection and ascension, I was sorry that I had not understood sooner what Mary had understood all along—that knowing Jesus was the one thing worth being concerned about. Now, like Mary, I have chosen it too. ●