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Mary's Faith John 11:28-32

Intro: In our last study we spent some time looking at the faith of Martha. Jesus had just returned to the vicinity of Bethany because of Lazarus' death. By the time He arrived, a great crowd of mourners had already appeared so Jesus didn't go into the city. He stayed on the outskirts. Word came to Martha that Jesus was there, so she went out to meet Him. Jesus then has a conversation with Martha in which she expresses a faith in Jesus that is real but is also limited. Jesus then begins to strengthen her faith by revealing that He is in fact the resurrection and the life.

Having dealt with Martha's faith, it's only right we now turn our attention to Mary and her own audience with Jesus. Even though there's no outstanding declaration of instructed faith on Mary's part to correspond to that of Martha's in vs27; nor is there any resounding statement of Jesus; this passage is still of immense value for believers as it serves as a microcosm of both the Christian life and Christian responsibility.

Oddly enough, the gist of our text turns on something that was spoken by Jesus but not recorded by John. It is an invitation – an invitation from Jesus to Mary. It's not recorded so we must read between the lines. We are confident that the invitation was issued (28) but what we want to look at today is what can be learned from the one who bore the invitation, Mary's response to the invitation and how this same invitation comes to each person still today.

28-32- We aren't told exactly why Martha did this secretly. We can surmise that she did this to allow Mary to have a few uninterrupted moments with Jesus before the crowd of mourners surrounded them. We should also notice the way Martha refers to Jesus; she calls Him "the Teacher." The article in this phrase is important. Among His followers, Jesus was primarily known for His teaching activities but in her statement, Martha recognizes Jesus as being beyond compare. He's not just **a** teacher – as in 1 among many – but He is the Teacher – 1 with no equal.

It's also significant that it is a woman who refers to Him as such. Rabbis of

the day refused to instruct women, they would have nothing to do with them. Jesus held a very different view. His messages were not for a select few or just for one gender of societal class. Now, His teachings were exclusive to a certain degree – they were spoken for the express benefit of only those who had ears to hear. The only real requirement of His teaching was the way they were received by the listener. If you had ears to hear – if you received them by faith and walked in His truth, then the message was for you no matter what your gender, social class or even nationality was. The same holds true today.

But, what does this verse tell us about the Christian life and responsibility? It becomes clearer when we look at Martha for what she truly was – the bearer of the invitation. Martha had met with Jesus and had been given this task: to go and call Mary. This is what she does. If you'll recall, the first time we meet Martha and Mary in [Luke 10](#), Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet and Martha is busy serving. Martha became so frustrated in all her activity that she asked Jesus to rebuke Mary. She tried to get Jesus to make Mary get up from His feet and go help her in the kitchen. Now here, she goes to call Mary to be with Jesus. What happened? What's made the difference in Martha? It can only be that Martha has met with Jesus herself and has been stirred by His teaching.

So many Christians today fail to share their faith on a regular basis. Some try to play it off by saying that it's not really their gift. I'll grant you that there are some believers who have been noticeably blessed with the gift of evangelism but sharing your faith is not necessarily a gift, it's the responsibility of every believer. Each of us are responsible to bear the very same invitation that came to us – “the Teacher...is calling for you.” There may be several reasons for this failure but the most common one is that many Christians have not spent sufficient time with Jesus and have not been stirred by His teaching. A lot of things contribute to being a great soul winner but the most important thing is just spending time with Jesus. Without that, all you have to talk about is theory or doctrine. But, if you spend time with Jesus regularly, you can speak from personal experience about the Person whose invitation you carry.

It's also significant that Martha called Mary personally (secretly). The story tells us this; Mary's actions suggest it. When Mary got up and quickly left the house, the Jews who were with her didn't know where she was going ([31](#)).

Obviously, Martha had whispered the invitation to Mary. If she had said it out loud, everyone present would have heard it and understood. This points us to the important principle of one-on-one evangelism. The best and most effective evangelism is when the individual Christian takes the invitation of Jesus Christ (the Gospel) to an individual who does not yet believe on Him. This is not to say that there is no place for mass evangelism (Billy Graham; Greg Laurie) but even in this, the strength of mass evangelism lies in the fact that God the Holy Spirit carries the Word of Jesus to the heart of the individual. Yet, despite the massive response from revival meetings, evangelistic crusades and outreaches; more people have been brought to Christ from personal evangelism than by any other means.

One last thing about Martha here: yes, she called Mary and she called her personally but we must also recognize that she did this on orders from Jesus. Does this apply to us in any way? Absolutely! If you're a believer in Jesus Christ then you are under orders from the same to take the Gospel into all the world to every creature. This is the Great Commission and its jurisdiction extends to every believer. It's not a commission just for Pastors, missionaries or Sunday School teachers. It's a command for all who know Jesus Christ a Savior. Besides this, it's repeated many times. It appears clearly at the end of the first 3 Gospels and at the beginning of the book of Acts. It is the marching orders of the church and the truth of this should seize us to our core and direct our thinking in every aspect of life.

29-32a- Let's look at Mary's response to Martha's invitation; this is a pattern for us as well. What did Mary do?

She ran to Jesus! She went to Him quickly and without hesitation. Now, to do this, she had to leave the others who were with her. These were some close friends, while others may've just been acquaintances but they had all come to sympathize with her and surround her with comfort. It would've been easy for Mary to feel compelled to stay and ignore the Lord's invitation. Sadly, that's what many people do today. They hear the Gospel, find out they are sinners in need of a Savior. They discover that Jesus is that Savior and may even believe it but they hesitate to make a commitment for fear of what friends or family might think. So they postpone the day of decision and the opportunity passes them by. Don't do that! Don't let the opinions of others hinder you from coming to Jesus! Don't even allow them to delay you in any way. Now is the accepted time; today is the day of

salvation.

This principle is not just for the unsaved. Even after salvation, Jesus continues to call believers into a closer, more intimate walk with Him. He continues to call us out into deeper waters to strengthen our faith by revealing Himself to us in greater ways. In each case, we must respond as Mary did, with immediate and complete obedience if we want to see His work and will accomplish in and through our lives. Failure to respond will not cause Him to cut us off but He will not fight with us to submit to His will. That would actually defeat the purpose of extending the invitation.

Someone once asked a little girl whether she obeyed her mother. She turned to her mother and asked, "Mother, do I always obey you?" "You know the answer to that better than I do," the mother replied. "Well, I never disobey you," the child said. "I always do what you tell me, but sometimes I go slow." Many Christians are like that with Jesus but not Mary! Mary ran to Jesus immediately!

Next, we notice that Mary fell down at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him. This should always be our response too.

As I've mentioned before, every time we see Mary in the Gospels, she is at the feet of Jesus. In Luke 10, she's at His feet *learning* from Him. Here, she's at His feet *worshipping*. On the 3rd occurrence (ch12), she's at His feet serving Him, having broken an alabaster box of costly ointment over Him. The same should be true of us. We sit at Christ's feet first to learn from Him. Next, we fall at His feet to worship Him. Then we are fully prepared to serve Him. This is not to be taken merely as a formula or recipe for successful Christian living. Truth is, it's nearly impossible to do the last 2 *properly* until we have submitted ourselves to doing the first one faithfully. Let's turn to [Luke 10:38-42](#) to glean some important principles.

One thing- We can almost sense the love in Jesus' voice as He says this. Martha's mind was in the right place – she wanted to serve Jesus; but she had failed to add the one thing that was needed. The Bible speaks of this one thing in other places: [Ps 27:4](#); [Lk 18:22](#); [Phil 3:13-14](#). This is that one thing that Mary had chosen – that good part which would not be taken away from her. It was to simply sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word. To sit at the feet of Jesus implies a readiness to accept and obey what He teaches. It implies submission to Him - rebellion is done with. It implies faith in who

Jesus is; it implies discipleship; it implies love.

Again, spending time learning at Jesus' feet is not just more important than worship or service, it is critical for both! As we learned in [ch4](#), the Father's seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. This means it is impossible to accurately worship the Father unless you know who He is. The only way to know that is to learn it from Jesus.

So many people today are under the false impression that they can believe in only the aspects or characteristics of God that they like or agree with. That is not the case. To worship a god other than the One revealed in Scripture is to worship a god of your own making. The biblical term for that is idolatry.

Likewise, effective service for the Lord is only possible after you have sat at Jesus' feet and learned from Him. Our text in Luke teaches this. Martha was diligently serving Jesus with the best intentions but, because she failed to add that one needful thing, a continued focus on Jesus; her service resulted in great frustration. I believe this, above every other factor, is the primary reason for ministerial burnout. Many people have an honest desire to serve but they lack a close, consistent, intimate walk with Jesus and they cannot maintain the work under their own power.

G. Campbell Morgan said, "If we would be strong for service in the strength that prevents distraction and unrest, we must know what it is to find time amid all the duties of life to sit at His feet as disciples." C.H. Spurgeon, "The way to get revival is to begin at the Master's feet; you must go there with Mary and afterwards you may work with Martha." In [ch12](#) we'll see that Mary's service, though scandalous to the disciples, was well received by Jesus. The disciples completely misunderstood her actions but Jesus did not. She poured out that very costly oil of spikenard in honor of His upcoming burial. How did Mary know this when all the other disciples did not? She spent time at Jesus' feet actually listening to His teaching, not just hearing them. Because of her attentiveness to His words, her service for Him was proper, it was effective and it was spot on. Isn't that what you desire your service for the Lord to be? If so, let Spurgeon instruct you once more – "You must sit at His feet or you will never anoint them; He must pour his divine teaching into you or you will never pour out a precious ointment upon Him."

Some people say we need revival in the church but Jesus says we need to sit at His feet and hear His word. Some people say we need unity in the Body of Christ but Jesus says we need to sit at His feet and hear His word. Some people say we need to win arguments but Jesus says we need to sit at His feet and hear His word. Some people say we need to reach the whole world with the Gospel but Jesus says we need to sit at His feet and hear His word. The truth of the matter is, if we would just determine in our hearts to do what Jesus says we need to do, all these other things will naturally follow.

32b- finally, there is one more thing that Mary does. After she ran to Jesus and had worshipped Him, she expressed her faith verbally. If you look closely, you will notice that this is the exact same thing that Martha said to Jesus (21). But, you should also recognize a difference in Mary's cry. This is one of the places in the Bible where we wish we could hear the tone of voice of the speaker or see the expression on their face. But even without these 2 things, we can tell that Mary's approach to Jesus is different from Martha's by looking at her posture. Martha's approach was almost like a debate: she stood toe-to-toe with "the Teacher" and was looking for answers to hard questions. Mary, on the other hand, fell at Jesus' feet. Her comment was made in the context of total trust and confidence in Jesus.

Although Mary did not know what Jesus was about to do, she believed He could do anything and she trusted Him totally. Can you say that? Is that also your confession? It's critical that you consider this because now, the Teacher is calling for you – each and every one of us.

If you've never heard the Gospel message; if you've never considered the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, if you've never seen yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior – now's the time to do so. You may ask, "Why is Jesus calling me? I don't know Him or even want Him in my life. I've come this far in my life without Jesus; I figure I can go on a little further." Well, that's really neither here nor there. What you and I know or want doesn't even factor in this at all. The Apostle Paul explained it this way to his stubbornly pagan audience on Mars Hill in **Acts 17:30**. This command is Jesus' call to every man. It's His call of salvation to you. Will you respond to His gracious invitation? There is none too high or too low to be touched by the Gospel. There's none who doesn't need to hear Jesus' call.

If you're already a believer, Jesus is still calling you too. He's calling you to a closer walk with Him. He's calling you to spend time at His feet learning of Him. He's not calling you to this because it's fun and exciting – He's calling you to this because it is necessary – for proper worship and effective service. The songs we sing on Sunday morning do not constitute the whole of worship. In fact, they make up very little of what worship should be in our lives. They can assist in promoting worship but only to the degree that they accurately present and/or describe the Godhead to us. Worship is merely the act of recognizing who God is and responding to Him accordingly.

Similarly, quite a bit of “ministry” is engaged in by force of will alone. Some people have the personality and drive to pull this off but it will never last. Gumption can only take you so far and when you get there, how do you know you are in the right place? Anything that is accomplished in the flesh must be maintained in the flesh and that will wear you down and burn you up. It will eventually lead to frustration and hard feelings towards everyone, including God.

Jesus is calling. He wants the best for you. How will you respond? Your answer will determine your future. 😊