

Faith-Filled Martha:
Journey Through Lent, week 3
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First Baptist Church of Birmingham
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John 11:17-28

CHILDREN'S TIME

This morning, I want you to imagine what we might do if Jesus actually came and sat right down in this chair. Wouldn't that be wonderful! Think of all the things we could do for him. Let's see what we can do over at this table. Look at these cooking tools. We could make Jesus wonderful chocolate chip cupcakes! Here is the bowl, spoon, flour, sugar, chocolate chips, eggs, and salt. We have the cupcake tray and the paper cupcake liners here too.

This is a lot of fun, but I think something is wrong. We have left Jesus all alone in that chair over there. Let's go back and sit down around Jesus. There, I think that's better. It's wonderful to do things for Jesus, but maybe even more important to just spend time with him.

There is a story in the bible about two sisters named Mary and Martha. Jesus came to visit and Mary sat at Jesus' feet and gave all of her attention to him. Her sister

Martha spent time running around cleaning the house and preparing things for dinner. Martha was so busy she didn't have any time to talk with Jesus. Jesus said Mary was doing the most important thing at that moment because she just wanted to spend time with Jesus, and Jesus wanted to spend time with her.

It was really nice that Martha was doing all that work, but Jesus just wanted to spend time with her. It's good for us to do things for Jesus but sometimes it's more important to just spend time with him — and remember that he is with us and loves us. When we read the bible or listen to bible lessons it's like spending time with Jesus. Praying is also spending time with Jesus. When we pray, we remember that Jesus loves us and cares for us and hears everything we pray. So let's spend a bit of time with Jesus in prayer right now.

Dear Jesus, we want to do lots of things for you. But help us not to get so busy we forget to spend time with you, or forget to enjoy the wonderful love you have for us. In Jesus' name, amen!

SERMON

Hello again! Lazarus here. I'm back. Your pastor thought that the

baptismal here would be a good place to hide from the chief priests because they wouldn't think to look here. Is the coast clear? Let me come out there to see you.

I learned a few more good jokes since I was here a few weeks ago. Do you want to hear them?

Who was the greatest female business person in scripture? The Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet!

Here's another good one. How did Moses make tea? He-brewed it!

Well, when I visited you last, I shared with you my story. Today I want to share my sister Martha's story. She was busy preparing for Passover and couldn't come herself. She also doesn't like talking in front of groups. But the difference that Jesus made in her life is a great story.

I shared with you last time about how our parents got sick and died several years ago. That was when Martha, Mary and I all met Jesus. It was also during that time that I first really appreciated Martha's gift.

But first, let me tell you about how we grew up. Martha is the oldest

and I am the youngest with Mary in the middle. When I was little, I always knew Martha as the one in control. She would tell Mary and me what to do, what we needed to not do, how we were to behave when company came over, even how to eat soup and dip flatbread in hummus — everything. That's just what she did, and for the most part I simply took that for granted.

Of course, Mary would get really upset with Martha at times when she was really bossy, and so would I. We would argue and fight about that all the time. By the end of every fight it seemed Martha always put us in our place. Let me tell you, there was no getting your way around Martha. It was her way or no way!

So, that is how we worked out growing up. But Martha was also the one who took care of everyone else and did what nobody else would or could.

Now, it was during that time of getting to know Jesus about five years ago that Martha's gift came into focus for all of us, even for Martha. It was like she woke up. Martha sometimes was going so fast that she couldn't pay attention, but Jesus would speak right into her heart and slow her down. You

could just see their profound and deep connection.

I recall a time when Martha was doing her thing, rushing around taking care of everything, and Jesus walked right over to her, put his hand on her shoulder and said with the most loving, most peaceful voice, and without any judgement, “Martha, thank you, you’ve taken care of everyone. Please sit, let’s talk.” I saw it happen. At that moment the candle light went on for Martha. She dropped the rag in her hand right in the middle of the floor (which she would never do) and came over to sit with Jesus, Mary and me. Something in her changed right then.

Jesus, helped Martha to understand her role, not as someone who needed to control things, but as a “faithful giver.” That was her gift. She didn’t have to boss people around anymore.

I know that Martha always wanted to be one of Jesus’ small group of disciples and travel with him and learn from him like Peter, James, John, and the others. I remember a day when Jesus came to visit with his disciples and Martha begged Jesus to take her on as his disciple. Jesus so gently told her that God had other plans for her,

and she needed to be home with her family. She was so upset for a bit, but then she accepted that God had other plans.

It all made sense, though, after I got sick. If Martha wasn’t home with me, things would have been altogether different.

Martha and Mary both were really scared. Everyone was sure that I would die just like our parents, and nobody knew what to do. But Martha was there. She took care of both me and Mary without one bit of complaining.

Martha had such faith and was so sure that if Jesus were there with us that I wouldn’t die. Her faith was so strong that everyone around her were inspired to believe as well. She got right into action and coordinated one of our cousins to track down and call for Jesus, so that she could stay home to take care of me and Mary.

It was amazing how she knew just what to say, just what to get for each of us. I can’t tell you how good that cold towel felt on my head when my fever was blistering hot. She must have sat there with me for 100 hours straight. She was so thoughtful.

Jesus didn't make it there before I died, but I can't tell you good it felt to have Martha there with me, holding my hand when I took my final breath. Her face was the last thing I remember seeing.

After Jesus brought me back to life, Mary, Martha and I talked about how Jesus wouldn't let Martha join his inner group of disciples. After the fact, it was plain to see. Martha needed to be at home. If she wasn't, maybe I wouldn't be alive today. And to think of all the people who came to know Jesus because I was alive and able to share my story! Jesus' kingdom is growing because Martha was faithful to give. We figure there must be hundreds, perhaps will be thousands of people who might not believe if Martha hadn't been there at home when I got sick.

Martha was faithful when it mattered most.

We only see a small part of life at any point in time. But God's sees so much more. I have learned from Martha to have faith that God will bring good from whatever happens. It still is hard to do sometimes. But whenever I doubt, I think of Martha and what she might say, or more likely what she might do. She is always doing something.

Well, that's the story of how Martha's life was changed by knowing Jesus. What's your story? How has your life been changed by knowing Jesus? Be sure to share that story with others.

Bye now.