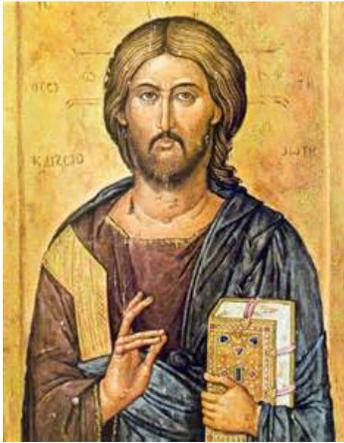


## Dining in the Kingdom:



A look at meals and Communion in Luke's Gospel.

### **Week Four: Luke 10:38-42 (In the kitchen with Mary and Martha.)**

#### **Luke 10:38-42**

#### **Jesus Visits Martha and Mary**

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.'

*New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org>

## **Background:**

This event takes place in Part Two of Luke's Gospel—a long narrative of the journey to Jerusalem and the cross. This is a journey that Luke mirrors later in the Book of Acts, as the missionary Paul journeys to Jerusalem and then to Rome.

This family—Mary, Martha, and their brother, Lazarus, appear in other parts of the wider gospel narrative: John 11 in which Lazarus is raised from the dead, and John 12 in which the risen Lazarus and his family eat with Jesus and Mary anoints the Lord's feet.

Those guests present are Jesus and the disciples.

This story is only told in Luke's Gospel. In a tradition in which "sitting at the master's feet," means that you are a disciple of the master this was quite a new idea—that Mary, a woman, was a disciple of Jesus. (See Luke 8:26-39 in which a man is delivered of a legion of demons and at the end sits at Jesus's feet and listens to him speak. That guy has become a disciple.)

There is a long biblical tradition of the double naming in a call to somebody. ("Martha, Martha...Moses, Moses.... Samuel, Samuel... Saul, Saul.... Simon, Simon...") Eugene Laverdiere writes this about those double namings: "They focus the attention of the one called on the person calling, and they alert the one called to an important announcement. The repetition of Martha's name was to draw her attention to the person of the Lord. Distracted by many things, she had been in no position to hear his word."

## **The gathering:**

The village is not named. In John's Gospel we are told that this home was in Bethany, near Jerusalem on the East slope of the Mount of

Olives. Luke leaves it open to any place where Jesus arrives for a meal, any location of Communion.

It was clearly Martha's house, unusual for a woman at the time. This points forward to Lydia in Philippi welcoming Paul and his fellow evangelists. (Acts 16)

### **The meal:**

There is not a meal in the story! I guess we can assume that they got it all worked out and ate something!

### **Teaching:**

The teaching here is crucial for all those called to ministry in the Christian community: addressing the tension between serving and sitting, ministry and discipleship. Jesus says that taking in his word is the most important, and that serving comes after that.

Being "worried and distracted" was actually the problem—not the tasks that called out to be done. The "many tasks" are the Greek word *diakonian*, from which we get the word Deacon. We need the work of Deacons and we all need to be Deacons...but not distracted, cranky ones.

### **Questions to think about:**

How does this meal point toward a Communion service?

How do we find a balance between worship and serving? Learning and doing? Has the pandemic and its altering of time commitments made this any more clear to you?

What do you think Martha said to Jesus as that conversation rolled to its completion?