

Class Notes  
March 18, 2009  
Mary & Martha/How Jesus Taught Us To Pray

Martha and Mary were two young, unmarried women who were sisters and lived with their brother, Lazarus. Their story unfolds in three different episodes in the Bible.

**Luke 10:38-42** Mary and Martha are visited by Jesus. The two women have complementary personalities. Several points emerge:

- Mary “sat and listened”. This was the usual posture of a disciple, who was usually male. Mary was quietly breaking the rules that study was for men
- Martha not only asked for help, but demanded that Mary behave in the traditional way
- Jesus ignored the traditional role of women and encouraged Mary to think and learn
- Jesus did not say that Martha’s role of service was unimportant, but that learning his teachings was more important

**John 11:1-44** Mary and Martha ask for Jesus’ Help.

- Martha names Jesus as the son of God using the same words as Peter. Peter went on to become the leader of the Christian community. The writer of the Gospel suggests that Martha has equal right to authority because she has an equal understanding of Jesus.

**John 12:1-8** Mary anoints Jesus. The week before his death Jesus visits Bethany, very close to Jerusalem. All know that he is in grave danger. It is the custom to give your guests a footbath when they arrive.

- Instead of water, Mary uses expensive perfume which has deeply religious significance, anointing him as king.
- Mary knew how much danger Jesus was in and offered this as a gift of comfort and reassurance.
- Jesus defends her extravagance and he recognizes that his time here is short lived.

## **Jesus taught us how to pray, The Lord's Prayer**

**Matthew 6: 5-15** Jesus emphasizes that prayer is a conversation with God, not a list of what we want or need. God already knows what we want. He says to pray quietly in private. First we pray for the sanctity of God's name and the coming of the kingdom. Then, we pray for our needs, for the needs of others and for forgiveness for what we have done to offend God. We ask that God restore our relationship with him and others. Notice that we use the term "our". We use the communal form to recognize our solidarity as a community.