

Martha the Evangelist

I felt we were to continue our look at Martha and Mary this morning. Next Sunday we will take a break from this story. The Peacemakers are going to be singing at First Christian Church in Decatur, Illinois. Wayne and Leslie Kent are the pastors. Some of you remember they were pastors at 41st Street Christian Church and for a while they attended our church on Sunday evenings. They invited us to come and minister there in the church. Pastor Brian White will be speaking next Sunday morning and Pastor Dan will be speaking Sunday evening (unless he is at the hospital.)

Turn with me to **John 11** and I want to look again at this story. In case anyone is unfamiliar, Mary, Martha and Lazarus were friends of Jesus. He apparently had visited in their home and at times stayed with them. Lazarus becomes ill and the sisters send word to Jesus, believing that when he hears, he will come and heal Lazarus. Instead, Jesus stays where he was when he received the message and in the meantime Lazarus dies and is buried. By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been dead and buried for four days. Martha meets Jesus before he ever gets to the house and engages him in a conversation. To understand more about that meeting, I would suggest you go to our web site and either listen to last Sunday morning's message or read the transcript of the sermon. Suffice it to say, by the end of the conversation with Jesus, Martha had reached a decision concerning who Jesus really was.

He tells her that he is the resurrection and the life. If you believe in him and place your faith and trust in him as Savior and Lord, Jesus declares you will live and never die. You will have eternal life in Him. Even if your physical body dies here, even then, you will not die an eternal and spiritual death. Christ is the way, the truth, the resurrection and the life. To enter into a relationship with Christ is to leave the kingdom of death and enter the kingdom of life.

Jesus encourages Martha to believe that because he is the resurrection and the life her brother, Lazarus could come back to life. But more importantly, he convinces her that not only could Lazarus be resurrected from physical death, but that she could be resurrected from a spiritual death. She could receive a new life by believing in him. He asked her this direct question: "Do you believe this?" Martha's answer was a response of faith that we discussed last Sunday in the message. She said, "**Yes, Lord.**"

I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” She believed him to be the Son of God and was the one sent to deliver her from sin and death and give her eternal life.

After Martha’s great confession of faith in Christ, something must have happened that is not recorded for us in the passage. The bible says, **“And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. ‘The Teacher is here,’ she said, ‘and is asking for you.’” John 11:28.**

I titled this message **Martha the Evangelist**. An evangelist is one that comes announcing the good news of the gospel of Christ. An evangelist lets you know that Jesus has come and wants to meet you and to change your life. That is exactly what Martha does now. She comes telling Mary that Jesus has come and is calling for her. She apparently doesn’t tell Mary what Jesus has told her, that he is the resurrection and the life, but she brings that important message. “Mary, Jesus is calling for you. Jesus wants to see you. He wants to talk with you.”

Remember the message we preached on Labor Day about Mary and Martha? You’ll find the passage in Luke 10. Isn’t it interesting that on that occasion Martha was trying to keep Mary from Jesus. Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him teach and Martha came insisting that Mary come into the kitchen and help her prepare the meal. But things were different now. How? Why? What made the difference? Martha had met with Jesus and had spoken with him personally. I believe her conversation with Jesus and the confession she made was a life changing moment for Martha. **Martha had a life-changing encounter with Jesus.** She placed her faith in him and believed in him to be the Son of God and her Savior and now she didn’t want to keep anyone from coming to him. She wanted everyone to know Jesus. She wanted everyone to have a relationship with Jesus. She wanted everyone to know him as she knew him.

Martha’s announcement to Mary was based upon a personal encounter she had with Jesus. She wouldn’t have gone to Mary if she hadn’t met Jesus first. Every thing that followed thereafter was because of her personal encounter with Christ. That is as it should be for all of us. Evangelism, sharing our faith, it’s not about preaching the four spiritual laws to people, or at least it doesn’t have to be. It flows out of the

personal encounter we've had with Jesus! **Evangelism flows out of relationship!**

Martha is a role model – an example for every follower of Christ. We have met him in a personal relationship, we've spent time getting to know him through reading God's word, through spending time in worship and prayer and now we have a responsibility and a desire to do as Martha, to call others to Christ. It ought to be the desire of our heart, because of our relationship with Jesus, that we want everyone to know him as we know him. We want to tell everyone, "Jesus is calling for you. He wants to meet you."

There is a second thing to notice about Martha the Evangelist. When Martha came back to the house it was still full of people, mourners who had come to grieve, friends who had come to bring food and to share the sorrow of this family. There is a big crowd and the NIV says Martha called her sister Mary aside to speak with her. The King James Version here is a better translation. John 11:28 in the King James Version reads, **"And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee."** John 11:28 She spoke to her secretly, privately and personally.

I'm grateful that God uses all kinds of methods and means to communicate his message. I'm grateful that the gospel is being shared over the internet and through satellite transmission to places around the world to people that have no access to a gospel church or preacher. But I also am grateful and I realize that when it gets right down to it, the best way, the most effective way for the gospel to be communicated is one on one. Martha does what all of us need to do – she shares her faith. She comes to another and tells them Jesus is here and is calling for her.

And notice **Martha tells Mary about Jesus personally, privately, and appropriately.** She didn't embarrass Mary. She wasn't shouting it. She wasn't obnoxious about it. She didn't create a scene. She wasn't trying to draw unnecessary attention to herself. She drew her aside and told her "Mary, Jesus is here and he is asking for you."

There may be a place for street preaching with a bullhorn, but think about most of the people you know, your friends or associates who are unsaved. How do you think they would be more likely to respond positively to the message of Christ? Through a

stranger shouting at them over a bullhorn, or through a personal testimony of the life-changing power of Christ at work in the life of someone they know well, namely you? Which is most likely to bring them to faith in Christ, watching the blue-wigged guy holding up the John 3:16 sign in the end zone at NFL games, or their watching the faithful, consistent lifestyle of you, their friend? Which is most likely to bring your family members to a relationship with Christ? You pointing out their shortcomings before other family members, constantly berating them for not following Christ or going to church, judging them at every turn, or finding appropriate ways, privately to let them know that Jesus loves them and he is calling for them. He wants them to come to him and know him as well. “Well, I hope you don’t turn out like your father there - refusing to go to church - cause I sure don’t want you to go to hell like him.” Use wisdom!

Martha came to Mary personally, privately and appropriately to announce that Jesus was there and was calling for her. Let’s find a way to personally, privately and appropriately let our friends and family and co-workers and others in our circle of influence know that Jesus is calling for them as well.

One more thing about Martha the evangelist. Notice that the reason for her going to Mary is because Jesus must have told Martha to tell Mary he wanted to speak to her as well. **Martha goes to Mary because Jesus told Martha to go.** Martha has been given orders, instructions, and so have we. We’ve been given clear instructions. Jesus told us to find ways to go into all the world – into our world and to proclaim the gospel, the good news. We are under orders to let everyone know that God sent his son into the world to die on the cross in their place so they could be free from the penalty of sin and could have everlasting life through their faith in Christ as their Savior and Lord.

This is what we call the great commission. It applies to all of us, not just preachers or bible teachers or missionaries. It is a command for everyone that knows Christ as Savior to be like Martha, to be one that lets others know that Jesus has come and is calling for them.

Martha is an example to us all. She called Mary to come to Jesus. She called Mary privately, personally, appropriately. Martha called Mary because she was obeying Jesus. We’ve been called to do the same. How are we doing?

Well, let me wrap this up by taking a brief look at Mary's response to this. This is how we should respond to Jesus.

First of all, **Mary ran to Jesus.** Look at verse 29. **“When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.”** Mary didn't hesitate to respond. She didn't allow the crowds to prevent her. She didn't permit her friends to stop her. She got up and quickly went to Jesus.

She could have easily thought to herself, “What will everyone think if I just get up and rush out? These are our guests. They've come to comfort us and it would be rude to just leave them all here. I know Jesus is calling me, but I can't go right now. I've got to entertain the guests. I have responsibilities. They wouldn't understand such a decision right now. But I know Jesus is patient and he will wait for me. I'll go to him after while.”

A lot of folks have used those same excuses. They hear the word of God, they hear the invitation from a preacher, from a friend. Jesus is here and he is calling for you. And we look around at all of our friends. What would they think if I became a follower of Christ? What would my family do, what would my boyfriend or girlfriend do if I committed my life to Christ and began to serve the Lord? What would the guys at work say? What would the ladies at the club think? What would the kids at school think? What would my teammates say or do? What would my wife think if I did this? What would my husband think? We let others stop us from answering the call of Christ to come to him and commit our lives to him, to make him Savior and Lord.

You know what? If Jesus has been calling you and you've been putting it off because of all these other people, or all these other reasons, you need to do what Mary did. You need to stop thinking about it, stop worrying about what anyone else thinks and focus on what Jesus thinks. He has come and is calling for you. Get up like Mary and run to Jesus. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks or says or believes. All that matters is that you come to Christ and find life in him. Don't let anyone or anything stop you or keep you from coming to Christ and finding the forgiveness of your sins and the deliverance you need from sin and self. Notice that all the Jews in the house assumed that Mary was going to the tomb, overcome with grief so they followed after her. But by the time she got to where Jesus was, she didn't care who was there. She didn't care

what they thought. She wasn't going to let anyone or anything keep her from getting to Jesus.

Notice the second thing Mary did. Verse 32 says, **“When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’” John 11:32**

Mary ran to Jesus and fell at his feet. This is a sign of worship. Mary humbled herself and fell at his feet, showing her devotion to him and expressing her submission to him and to his will, even in the death of her brother. It is as though she is saying like Job did, “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all that had happened, in all she and her family had experienced, she was still going to worship the Lord and submit her life to his authority.

It's interesting that every time we see Mary she is at the feet of Jesus in humble surrender and adoration to Christ. In Luke 10 she is sitting at his feet. In John 11 she is falling at his feet in worship and in John 12 she is pouring perfume upon his feet and drying his feet with her hair.

Our response to the call of Christ to come to him should be as Mary's. We come to him, not letting anyone or anything prevent us. We come in surrender and in worship. And finally we come with a confession of our trust and faith in Christ.

Notice what she said. “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” It is the exact same thing that Martha said to Jesus, but it feels different, doesn't it? The posture makes it different. Martha seemed to confront Jesus, although lovingly and reverently. She meets him face to face, eye to eye, wanting answers. Mary meets him and falls at his feet in surrender and trust. It is as though she is saying “Lord, I surrender to you. I've not come to argue. Instead I affirm what I know to be true, that you are the Lord and the one who is able to do all things. You could heal my brother I know and though I don't understand it all, I know it is in you that I can and will place my trust.”

Mary comes to Jesus in brokenness, weeping the bible says. Grieving over the loss of her brother and yet resting her faith in Jesus as the one who can save, deliver and heal. When life is falling apart, you do what Mary did, you run to Jesus. When sin and addiction and guilt have finally gotten the best of you, you do what Mary did, you

run to Jesus and fall at his feet and ask for his help. The only hope, the only answer is to come to Jesus.

We are going to look further at this story in a couple of weeks. But as we close this morning, consider this glorious thought that Martha expressed for all of us. King James Version expresses it so beautifully: **“The Master is come and calleth for thee.”** “The Teacher is here and is asking for you.”

It is not just the words of a New Testament character in this story, the words of an historical person, it is the spiritual truth and reality for someone this very moment. The Master is come and calleth for you. He is here, calling you to come to him in faith and be born again. He is calling you to discover new life in him, eternal life in him. He is calling you to come as Mary did in worship and in submission to his purpose and his will. Come as Mary did, weeping, broken, confused perhaps, yet desperate to get to Jesus. He is here and he is calling for you. Will you come to him in repentance and faith today? Don't let anyone or anything stop you. Like Mary, don't worry about the others, just make your way to Christ today.

And for those of you who are followers of Christ and have surrendered your life to him, let me ask you – are you, like Martha, calling others to Christ? Have you found that way to personally and appropriately let them know that Jesus has come and is calling for them? He wants them to come and find eternal life and he wants you to extend that invitation to everyone in your world. What not become an evangelist like Martha? Why not commit yourself to calling others to Christ?

The Master is come and calleth for thee. What will your response be?