

Luke 10:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

Analysis

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. The phrase *en tō poreuesthai autous* (ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτούς, "as they went") places this event during Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem and crucifixion (9:51). The village is Bethany (John 11:1), about two miles from Jerusalem, home of siblings Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

The name **Martha** (Μάρθα, from Aramaic ܡܪܬܐ, "lady" or "mistress") indicates her position as household head—possibly the eldest or a widow managing the family property. The verb *hypedexato* (ὕπεδέξατο, "received") means to welcome as a guest, showing deliberate hospitality. Martha takes initiative, opening her home to Jesus and His disciples—a costly, risky act of devotion requiring substantial food preparation and accommodation for potentially thirteen men.

Martha's hospitality is commendable; Jesus doesn't condemn service but corrects misplaced priorities (vv. 41-42). The contrast between Martha and Mary illustrates the tension between doing and being, between active service and contemplative worship. Both are necessary, but worship must take precedence. This account balances the Good Samaritan parable (vv. 25-37), which emphasized active love. Together they teach: love God supremely (Mary's choice), then serve neighbor actively (the Samaritan's example). Reversed priorities—service without intimate relationship with Christ—lead to burnout, resentment, and joyless religion.

Historical Context

First-century Middle Eastern hospitality was sacred duty and cultural expectation. Receiving traveling teachers (rabbis) was considered meritorious, providing opportunity to hear teaching while fulfilling covenant obligations to care for God's servants. Women typically managed household affairs including food preparation, though public teaching of women by rabbis was unusual. Martha's receiving Jesus into her home demonstrated both faith (recognizing Him as worthy teacher) and courage (risking Pharisaic criticism for associating with this controversial rabbi).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Martha's initiative in welcoming Jesus demonstrate genuine faith and devotion despite her later distraction?
2. What does this passage teach about the relationship between active service and contemplative worship in the Christian life?
3. In what ways might our service for Jesus become a distraction from intimacy with Jesus?

Interlinear Text

Ἐγένετο δέ Ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτῆς καὶ αὐτῆς
it came to pass **Now** **as** ^{G3588} **went** **he** **that** **he**
G1096 G1161 G1722 G4198 G846 G2532 G846

εἰσῆλθεν εἰς κώμην τις γυνὴ δέ τις ὀνόματι
entered **into** **village** **a certain** **woman** **Now** **a certain** **named**
G1525 G1519 G2968 G5100 G1135 G1161 G5100 G3686

Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτῆς εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς
Martha **received** **he** **into** ^{G3588} **house** **he**
G3136 G5264 G846 G1519 G3624 G846

Additional Cross-References

Acts 16:15 (Parallel theme): And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.