

Luke 10:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

Analysis

Jesus responds to Martha: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.' The repeated 'Martha, Martha' shows affectionate concern. Jesus doesn't condemn her service but her anxiety—'careful and troubled' (Greek 'merimnās kai thorybazē,' μεριμνᾶς καὶ θορυβάζῃ, anxious and troubled) about 'many things.' He contrasts this with 'one thing needful'—hearing His word, relationship with Him. Mary 'hath chosen that good part' (literally 'the good portion')—she prioritized what matters most. Jesus defends contemplation over busyness, relationship over activity.

Historical Context

This occurred at Martha and Mary's home in Bethany. Martha's hospitality for Jesus and disciples involved extensive meal preparation. Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to His teaching (v. 39)—unusual for women in first-century Palestine, where women typically served while men taught and learned. Martha's complaint that Mary wasn't helping and her request for Jesus to tell Mary to help (v. 40) revealed her priorities—practical service over spiritual learning. Jesus' response validated Mary's choice and corrected Martha's skewed priorities. The church throughout history has struggled with this tension—activism versus contemplation, doing versus being. Jesus prioritizes relationship with Him over service for Him.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' response correct the tendency to prioritize busyness and service over relationship and learning from Him?
2. What does Mary's choice of 'the good part' teach about the relative importance of contemplation versus activity in discipleship?

Interlinear Text

ἀποκριθεὶς	δὲ	εἶπεν	αὐτῇ	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς,	Μάρθα	Μάρθα
answered	And	and said	unto her	G3588	Jesus	Martha	Martha
G611	G1161	G2036	G846		G2424	G3136	G3136
μεριμνᾷς	καὶ	τυρβάζῃ	περὶ	πολλά			
thou art careful	and	troubled	about	many things			
G3309	G2532	G5182	G4012	G4183			

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 4:6 (Parallel theme): Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Luke 21:34 (Parallel theme): And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Mark 4:19 (Parallel theme): And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Luke 12:22 (Parallel theme): And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

Luke 8:14 (Parallel theme): And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

Ecclesiastes 6:11 (Parallel theme): Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org