

TELL ME THE STORIES OF JESUS

People

July 10, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord’s Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 10:38-42 NRSV

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ 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.” ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Commentary:

The story of Martha and Mary highlights the overriding importance of love and devotion to Jesus and the need to be willing to give time to listen and receive his word. Mary exemplifies the virtue of intimate relationship with Jesus and giving priority to listening to him and doing God’s will as a faithful disciple.

Martha welcomed Jesus into their home when he came to their village and she got busy preparing a meal for him which no doubt was something to be appreciated. Jesus himself practiced what he instructed the Twelve and the seventy-two (or

seventy) when he commissioned them and sent them out to go to all the people to do the work of the kingdom of God – when welcomed by people in a town, to eat what is set before by them. Mary, on the other hand, sat at Jesus' feet, listening to what he had to say and teach and in that she was completely engrossed to the extent that she was not able to share in Martha's work.

The issue arises when Martha protests and complains to Jesus that her sister, Mary, is not helping her in the preparation of the meal but rather just sitting at his feet and listening to him. Martha was going by the societal norms of her time where women were expected to do the work of taking care of guests who come to their homes, especially if it was a rabbi. In her eyes, Mary was disregarding these norms and acting as a man would in sitting with the guest while neglecting her duty to assist her. She probably felt that by violating a clear cultural boundary, she was bringing shame upon her house. However, Jesus gave priority to people being with him, hearing and learning from him rather than being busy in taking care of his needs. This we can understand by the narrator's mention that Martha was distracted by the many tasks she thought she had to do and Jesus emphasizing that she was worried by it all. Jesus allowed Mary, although a woman, to claim the same role that his male disciples claimed for themselves, to sit with him, listen to him, and learn from him about the kingdom of God so as to do God's will.

This short story ends with Jesus gently rebuking Martha by pointing out that worldly cares prevented her from unhindered devotion to him and from attending to his teachings. Luke's Gospel earlier mentioned about the Parable of the Sower where Jesus taught that there are some people in the world who hear the word of God but as they go their way are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and so do not fully receive it and mature in it like the seed that fell among thorns that did not allow the seed to grow (8:14). Luke's Gospel has also mentioned Jesus' words giving utmost importance to the word of God in a person's life, "...One does not live by bread alone" (4:4). For Jesus the duty of the love of God and obedience to God's word takes precedence over all other concerns as here again Luke's Gospel has mentioned Jesus words, "...My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (8:21). Jesus not only commended Mary for what she chose but also affirmed her radical challenge of the restrictive societal rules regarding gender roles by the words, "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

- Adapted from The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, pp. 231-2

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Do you think that Martha lacked love and devotion to Jesus in comparison to her sister, Mary?
2. What was Jesus pointing out to Martha in her relationship with Jesus?
3. Do you give priority to *being* or to *doing*? Do you give priority to intimate relationship with Jesus or fulfilling Jesus' work in the community/world?
4. What are some of the societal/cultural norms still prevalent in our context today that preserve restrictive/oppressive gender roles? Are there any universal gender roles that can be celebrated because of the blessings they bring?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 10:41-42 NRSV
⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."