



Women of the Bible in Stained Glass: Mary and Martha

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses: women and men who have walked in faith, endured in hope, and loved with courage. As we gather to reflect on the life of your daughters, Mary and Martha, open our hearts to hear their story. May their strength and struggles illuminate our own paths. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lectio (Scripture Reading) – Read **Luke 10:38-42** aloud three times. Notice what words, phrases, images, or ideas speak to you through the text.

Visio (Seeing) and Oratorio (Praying) - Gaze at the stained-glass window and consider the scripture reading contemplatively for 2-3 minutes.

Notice:

- What details stand out to you?
- Where is your eye drawn first?
- What emotions or questions arise?

Ask:

- Where do you see yourself in this story?
- What do you want to say to God after hearing this story?
- What might God be saying to you through the story of Mary and Martha?

Activity: Making Space for Presence Meditation

Intro - In the story of Mary and Martha, Jesus gently invites Martha to release her distractions and choose the better portion—presence with him. Today, we'll reflect on what it means to make space for God in a distracted world. Take a few deep breaths, and if you are comfortable, close your eyes.

Identify Your Distractions *What pulls you apart right now? What fills your mind, your calendar, your heart with noise? Write down or silently name 2–3 distractions.*

Imagine Spaciousness *Now imagine you are Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet. What does that space feel like? What do you hear, see, or sense when you are fully present?*

Choose Your Portion *What would it look like to choose the better portion this week? What small act of presence—prayer, listening, rest could you make space for? Or is it service—hospitality, advocacy, care—that would bring your life of discipleship into greater balance?*

Closing - *As we close, whether you are hearing a call today to sit in stillness or rise in action, know that Jesus meets you there with loving encouragement. The better portion is not a task to complete, but a relationship to receive. May we carry this spaciousness into our week, making room for God and others. Amen.*

Discussion Questions

- Which sister do you relate to more right now—Mary or Martha? Why?
- What does “being pulled apart” look like in your daily life? Do distractions impair your ability to be present with God and others?
- Luke places this story between the sending of the 70 and the Good Samaritan. What does that suggest about the relationship between contemplation and action in discipleship?
- Jesus says Mary's portion “will not be taken from her.” What might that mean for our own spiritual inheritance today? Consider how choosing presence with Christ secures something lasting, even amid cultural distraction or personal busyness.

Comments / Study Notes

Mary's Posture as Discipleship - Mary sat at Jesus' feet—the language here suggests formal learning (cf. Acts 22:3). Her stillness is not passivity, it's intentional devotion and spiritual formation.

Martha's Service and Strain – The urgent necessity of compassionate service resounds throughout the book of Luke, notably in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which immediately precedes today's text. Here, though, Martha's service has been strained by distraction and anxiety that is pulling her apart. Jesus invites her to regroup and re-center, not to stop serving.

The Better Portion - Jesus says Mary has chosen the good portion. This echoes language in the Old Testament (Numbers 18:20, Lamentations 3:25, Psalm 16:5) that point to God as the true inheritance—an enduring, intimate relationship that transcends material possessions. There may also be a play on words here with the potentially complex meal Martha is making, in phrases like “only one thing is needed” and the “better portion.”

Cultural Resonance - The story speaks to our distracted age. Like Martha, we are often overwhelmed by noise, notifications, tasks, and expectations. Jesus invites us to make space for presence, relationship, and renewal.

Closing Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
we praise and glorify your holy Name
for all your faithful servants,
who have shone with the light of your truth,
nurtured life with courage and compassion,
and borne witness to your love.

Grant that we, inspired by their stories,
may run with perseverance the race that is set before us,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

