

## Proper 11

*Sunday between 17 and 23 July inclusive • (OT 16)*

### Principal Service readings

Genesis 18.1-10a	the apparition to Abraham at Mamre
Psalms 15	The upright find a place in God's tent
Colossians 1.15-28	Christ, the head of all creation
Luke 10.38-42	Mary and Martha with Jesus

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *Mary and Martha with Jesus*

<sup>38</sup>Now as Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup>She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup>But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to Jesus 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.' <sup>41</sup>But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup>there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Luke 10.38-42 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

### Comments and Questions

Is this a story written for the Christian community, or a story from an episode in Jesus' life? It is notable that Luke is the only gospel writer to tell the story. Traditionally, it is seen as a commentary on the balance between contemplation and action. Luke's gospel is often thought of as the gospel of women, since it contains many more stories about women

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<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

than any other gospel. Luke gives a high value to women. Because of this, many commentators have tried to 'rescue' the story, making apologies for Jesus' castigation of Martha, and explaining what he *really* meant. However, letting the story stand as it is, perhaps the criticism coming across is to do with the tension of women being involved in ministry in the church – perhaps too much.

Still, there is a message about the value of 'listening to the Lord'. Perhaps it seems like a weak thing to us in a 'results-oriented' culture. But service that is not rooted in the word of God will not last.

## Quotations

### 1

All over the world, people go to unimaginable lengths to find God-- which is sad when you consider the unimaginable lengths God has already gone to find us.

*Having a Mary heart in a Martha world: finding intimacy with God in the busyness of life /*  
Joanna Weaver. 2000

### 2

This is the picture of a woman cast in the role of a learner, a pupil, even a rabbinic student. Quite obviously this is a prohibited role for women in those days and in that culture. Yet Jesus affirms Mary in that role. Martha, however, rebukes her. Martha demands that Jesus order Mary to abandon the pupil role for the more acceptable domestic role of assisting with the dinner preparations. Jesus supports Mary and defends her consciousness-raising act by stating that she has elected a higher choice.

John Shelby Spong, 1931–2021

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Service; prayer; word of God; hospitality; suffering; justice

## Closing Prayer

Eternal God,  
you draw near to us in Christ  
and make yourself our guest.  
Amid the cares of our daily lives,  
make us attentive to your voice  
and alert to your presence,  
that we may treasure your word above all else.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · Ordinary Time 16, Year C<sup>2</sup>*

CPL • LBC Year C Proper 11.odt • 2022-07-11

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2 *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary /* International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.