



Faithful Listeners

The call to take up the role of discipleship encompasses a call to ground our daily living in the word of God. Each day there are opportunities to hear and follow God's word, if only we pause and listen. The action of faithful discipleship is informed by reflection on Christ and the way of God's realm.

Focus Scripture: Luke 10:38–42

The gospel of Luke positions this familiar story as the "second panel of a triptych" of teaching about what is central to the life of discipleship. This series of three stories started in Luke 10:25 with the story of The Good Samaritan. In this passage the focus is Jesus' teaching about the importance of grounding our lives in faith.

Martha and Mary are important to Jesus. Jesus and the disciples come to their village and are welcomed, invited into their home, and provided with food and fellowship.

In a surprising turn of expectations, Mary – rather than taking the culturally assigned role of providing the physical necessities of hospitality – places herself at the feet of Jesus. This is the traditional place for the disciples (always male) of a teacher. Jesus affirms Mary's choice to learn from him.

To a casual observer, Jesus might look and sound like a normal rabbi or

teacher with disciples at his feet. To those who perceive God at work in Jesus, however, there is much more going on. Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Jews and the Gentiles who will preside over God's never-ending realm (Luke 1:32–33; 2:29–32). Mary's insight into Jesus' mission opens her to embrace the "one thing" that is needful for a disciple of Jesus – hearing and responding to the word of God.

It is not too difficult for us to imagine Martha's reaction to Mary's choice. In this instance, the role of hostess distracts Martha from the importance of learning from Jesus. Jesus calls Martha to account for this, while still honouring the choice she makes. (In John 11:17–27, we learn of Martha's trust in what Jesus has taught the disciples about God's purpose for the Messiah.)

Many Christian women who have been told to express their faith through acts of serving have heard this text as Jesus' criticism of who they are and what they do. Others have heard it as an admonition to balance contemplation and service – to "do it all." For all men and women who feel guilty for not contemplating more or not serving more, this text proclaims that Jesus is "the better part."

Colossians 1:15–28 puts Christ at the centre of everything. The uni-

verse came into being because of the action of God in Christ. The universe is being reconciled to God through Christ. Christ changes all priorities, cutting through our distracting customs.

In actions that stray from the prophetic injunction to ground everyday living in God's word, the people in **Amos 8:1–12** refuse to acknowledge God and live justly and righteously. Despite having the law to guide them, they play elaborate economic charades while the poor starve. They face judgment for their faithlessness.

The wisdom of trusting in God's word is described in **Psalms 52**. Regardless of how "mighty" people might be, those who place their trust in the wrong things will not last. The one who trusts in God is like the olive tree, one of the longest living trees. These faithful ones will endure.



We are called to listen to God's word of grace, and then let it shape our lives each day. In God's reign, it is Christ – and not our own actions – that holds all together. Which of our customs and traditions are blocking us from faithfully listening and responding to God's word? In what ways are our actions as disciples informed by reflection on Christ and the way of God's realm?

