

Fan Into Flame

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Date: 18 October 2025

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[0:00] So glad you're here. And I have a question for you. Are you offended if I call you ladies?! That is a southern thing for sure. Ladies? Okay. I always wonder about that. The other thing I want to say, we have some lovely Collins in this room.

So if you cannot see me, do me a favor. Pull your chairs out. Go ahead and move them. Actually, for just a minute, stay at your table and then you can relocate. You can turn around. You're going to be doing some things at your table for a few minutes.

But after that, when I call us back together, feel free to relocate to where you can see. Because the worst thing is trying to see a speaker when there's a column in your face. So I am thrilled that you're here. Thank you for coming and being a part of this event. I was telling my table, I said, this is my jam. This is my jam here.

First of all, I love events and I love working with teams. But probably the thing that, if it is not at the top of my list, it is at the top two of my list, is teaching women.

And so I'm super, super excited to be able to teach you today and to share with you. So we're going to be looking at Martha and Jesus and the story of discipleship. And to get us started, I'm going to have you do something around your tables.

[1:15] The first thing I want you to do is I want you to, as a group, I want you to talk about what is discipleship to you. And then the second thing that you're going to do is you're going to read Luke 10, 38 through 42 together.

This is the story that Martha is most famous for. So you're going to read that together. And based on that passage, I'm going to ask you to paint her portrait.

What do you see in her story? Who is she? Draw a picture of who she is. And then we'll share some of those things. So go ahead and take a few minutes around your table and do that.

So what is discipleship to you? And then paint a portrait of Martha. Well, I would absolutely love for a few of you just to share your portrait of Martha.

Let's hear what you came up with. Whoever wants to be brave. She loves Jesus and she wants to serve. She loves Jesus and she wants to serve. Can I get an amen?

[2:15] Amen. What else? What's your portrait of her? Say it one more time. She had the gift of hospitality.

She had the gift of hospitality. So she's just trying to do what she's gifted to do, right? Sometimes she gets overwhelmed.

Yeah, sometimes she gets overwhelmed. Now, I'm sure that never happens to any of us in this room. Amen. She is bold and she is honest.

Yeah. She is hurting. She is hurting. I think she has a deep sense of responsibility because it's her house. Yes. She has a deep sense of responsibility because it's her house.

She was willing to be corrected. Yeah. She was willing to be corrected. At least we think so because we don't really know the rest of the story.

[3:14] The whole story. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, one of the reasons I wanted to do that, I wanted to see if anybody, maybe at your table, somebody said this. Did anybody put down that she was a disciple of Jesus?

No. No. Guess what? That is not uncommon because often we don't think about Martha as a disciple.

We think of her as a servant. And, you know, if we do that with Martha, guess what? We're going to do that with ourselves as well. So we could go home after that right there.

So instead, let me pray for us and then we'll jump into this passage. Father God, I praise you and I worship you this day. And I thank you that you brought us together. It is an honor and it's a privilege to be able to study your word.

We ask, Lord, that you would speak to our hearts and that you would give us a bigger picture of who Martha is and what it means to actually be a disciple. We ask that you would pour out your spirit upon this place and that you would be glorified and honored above all else and we would walk away from here changed, that we would walk away from here different because we have been with you.

[4:26] In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. So, like I said, her story is about discipleship, but we often miss the bigger story because we're so focused on that one part of her story.

And in Luke 10, Martha receives this unexpected visit from Jesus and his entourage. Now, if it were only Jesus who were showing up at Martha's door, this would not have been that big of a deal.

But we know from the scriptures that any time Jesus traveled, he had a group of people with him. I mean, just think about it. He had 12 disciples. There were women who traveled with him.

And we also know from the Gospels that other disciples traveled with him who were not called the 12. So, can you imagine opening your door and seeing this crowd of people there?

Well, what's interesting, if you notice in the scripture, is that Jesus didn't knock on her door and say, Martha, can I come stay with you? Martha said, would you come stay with us?

[5:29] Come stay with us. And so, Jesus is going to do exactly what Martha tells us. So, when he arrives in Bethany, Martha opens her home to him. And this likely means, because it's her house, that she's the older sibling.

So, she's the older sibling of Lazarus and Mary. And she strikes us as this take-charge person, right? I mean, how many of us can identify with her? Probably a lot, right?

So, she strikes us as this take-charge person, which is typical behavior of a firstborn, right? That's usually how they think. So, she kicks into hostess mode, and she begins to prepare this meal for Jesus and his disciples.

And Luke's description of the incident strikes every chord within us as women. Here she is. There is a lot of work to do, and she finds herself alone. How many times do we find ourselves in that situation?

So, her sister Mary is nowhere to be found. I'm the youngest of four sisters. Trust me, I understand this story on a deep level. I really do.

[6:32] I would probably have been the Mary. But her sister is nowhere to be found until she realizes that Mary is actually with Jesus. And she is hanging out with him, or as Luke tells us, that she is sitting at the Lord's feet, listening to his teaching.

So, Martha, I think, tolerates this until she can't. I imagine her in the kitchen thinking, well, I'll just bang some pots and pans, and maybe that'll get Mary's attention.

And then she'll come in and help. And no matter what she was doing in that kitchen, nothing was working. And so, like I said, she tolerated until she couldn't. And then she goes out to confront.

Now, I don't know if it struck anybody else, but it struck me as interesting that she doesn't confront Mary. Who does she confront? Jesus, absolutely. So, in a moment of frustration, she says to him, and I picture this.

I don't know that this is what happened, but I picture her walking into that room. Not walking, marching. Marching into that room, hands on hips, and saying to Jesus, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

[7:46] Tell her, then, to help me. In a moment of frustration, what she's doing is she is spewing accusation and critical words that are directed at Jesus.

There we go. The room comes to a screeching halt is the way I see this happening. Now, we don't know this. Luke doesn't say that. But I'm pretty sure if somebody walked into a room where there are a lot of people, and that one person is getting in the face of Jesus, that everything stops.

Everything comes to a halt. And I also imagine that every eye that was before fixed on Jesus, now gets fixed on her.

So, there she stands, as every eye in the room is looking at her. Can you imagine how she felt? Sure, you can. You have been Martha.

I mean, which one of us hasn't done what Martha did, allowed our frustration to get the better of us? And say something that we wish we could take back immediately? And felt ourselves go beet red from shame and embarrassment.

[8:54] If you haven't had that experience, praise God for you. I've had it more than once. But there she stands. And she probably, as she's looking at these people who are with Jesus, she sees this shock and disbelief on their face.

And here's why, that I make this conclusion. Who speaks to Jesus like this? Well, I'll tell you who speaks to Jesus this way.

Someone who has a deep personal relationship with him. Someone who believes that he can take it and he will not leave her. That's who she is. We think that Jesus is mad at her.

I don't think so, and I'm going to show you why. So after she talks to Jesus this way, we know that Jesus says to her something. And he uses two words to compel her to look at him.

Because I would almost guess that she's looking at everybody looking at her. And then all of a sudden he says, Martha, Martha. Now, I don't know how you hear him say to her, Martha, Martha.

[10:01] But it's probably a reflection of how you think he would speak to you. If you think he's disappointed in you, you're going to hear disappointment in his voice. If you think he loves you, you're going to hear love in his voice.

So whatever it is, whatever tone he used with her, I believe at that point she looks straight at him.

And the question that we have to ask is, what did she see? What did she see in his eyes?

Did she see condemnation? Did she see disapproval? Did she see judgment? Did she see shame? Well, we know from Scripture that the answer to that is no.

That is not what she saw. But how many times do we as Christ followers think that that's how Jesus is looking at us? You're falling short, therefore.

But the reason that we know that Jesus did not look at her that way is he knew that he was going to the cross. And he knew that he would die and take her judgment and her condemnation.

[11:03] He didn't have to judge and condemn her in that moment because he was going to take it for her. So he wasn't going to look at her that way. So I think when she looks at his, into his eyes, what she sees is the love of a master who's willing to teach a rebellious and frustrated disciple.

So give her a break, right? Because Jesus did. So Jesus, and here's the point, Jesus now has Martha right where he wants her.

Because where has she been up to this point? In the kitchen or whatever it would have been at that time. She's in there serving him and now she is at the place that he's always wanted her to be.

She is right there with him. And he doesn't treat her as she should have been treated. Instead, he treats her like a disciple who needs to be taught.

We may use the word correction, but if we put it in the context of discipleship, discipleship does involve correction. But at the same time, discipleship is that God recognizes we need to be taught because we don't fully understand what it means to walk with Jesus.

[12:13] And so we are always learning. And he says to her, Martha, Martha, you're anxious and troubled about many things, but only one thing is needed.

So anytime you see God using repetition in the Bible, we know to pay attention to that, right? And so when he uses somebody's name twice, it's as if God is saying, I need you to pay attention because what I'm getting ready to say to you is very important.

And so Jesus says, Martha, Martha. And just as Martha's rant at Jesus revealed a close relationship between her and Jesus, the fact that he repeats her name twice like that reveals that he has an intimate knowledge of who she is.

He knows her. He sees her. He understands her. And what she needed in that moment was she needed to be pulled out of that world that she was living in.

And we know that world, right? Anxious, busy, distracted. So he teaches her that there is a better way by explaining to her what is happening.

[13:24] And that's how Jesus works with us. He doesn't say, okay, I want you to go read this Bible verse and fix yourself. No, he says, let me explain to you what's going on here in your own heart, in your own mind, in your own life.

Let me help you. So he says, you're anxious and troubled about many things. Now, troubled means disquieted. In other words, she has lost her sense of peace.

So she's disquieted. And I'm pretty sure we all understand what that feeling looks like. Trust me, planning a women's event, there are lots of opportunities to be disquieted.

The other thing that he says to her is you are anxious. And when you're anxious, you're distracted. And when we're distracted, we're being drawn away from Jesus. All right?

So the next time you feel distracted, recognize, wait a minute, this is all designed to draw me away from him. And what I actually need to do is to go to him. Isn't it a good thing that she walked out of that kitchen and marched into that room?

[14:30] Because she put herself right where she could actually hear from him. Now, this is where Scripture gets interesting. I love God's Word. So at the beginning of Luke 10, Jesus sends out 72 disciples into the towns that he would soon visit.

And interestingly, he gives them a set of guidelines of what to do once he gets there. So in Luke 10, 5 through 7, and this is right before our story of Martha here at the end of Luke 10, this is what Jesus says.

When you enter a house, first say, peace to this house. If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him. If not, it will return to you.

Stay in the house, eating and drinking, whatever they give you. And right after this, Jesus shows up at Martha's house.

He extends peace to Martha, but she can't receive it. And Jesus actually had a lesser demand of Martha than she had of herself.

[15:34] Because I see it this way all the time. He could take how many loaves of bread and how many fish and feed 15,000? Martha, this is not a big deal for Jesus.

All right. I mean, I think based on this Luke 10, 5 through 7 passage, I think this is what Jesus is saying. I'm happy with whatever you put before me. PB and J works for me.

So, sadly, instead of enjoying being with Jesus, she is easily drawn away. And we have to ask the question, why? I mean, we always attribute it to the fact that she has so many people at her house. But that's not what's going on here. The reason that she's drawn away from Jesus is because of expectations. Cultural expectations, gender expectations, and misguided or perceived expectations.

Culturally, hospitality was a high value in her culture. So, if you were opening your home and sharing a communal meal with someone, it had great significance. It was an invitation to share life and do fellowship together.

[16:46] So, there's a cultural expectation of her. There's a gender expectation. She defined herself, if not primarily, almost always.

As a woman, I have got to be a good hostess. In her culture, that was what they valued. And so, she has this gender expectation. And then, she has this misguided or this perceived expectation of herself.

And her perception of this, is what she believed about Jesus is what he expected from her. what she perceived about Jesus is what he expected from her.

So, Martha's complaint about Mary was that she wasn't fulfilling this cultural, this gender, and this perceived expectation. Tell her to help me.

Tell her to get in that kitchen and do women's work. How'd you like that southern slang there? But Jesus says to Martha, only one thing is needed or one thing is necessary.

[17:54] In the Greek, it actually says, one thing is of necessity. So, we need to hear this message that Jesus is saying to us as women, there is one thing that is needed.

And when we get the order straight, the other things will fall in place. The one thing that is needed is to be with him and to learn to him and not be defined by the expectations. Boy, if we can do that, hallelujah.

Right? You see, Martha's lesser mistake was rebuking Jesus. Her bigger mistake was being drawn away from him. And I think we can all understand that.

How many times have we been so busy that we don't get to spend time with Jesus and then later we're like, I wish I hadn't left this rod be in my time with you. So, Jesus goes on and he says, Mary has chosen a good portion which will not be taken from her.

Now, he is not saying to Martha, you need to be like Mary. God didn't create Martha to be Mary and he didn't create Mary to be Martha.

[18:58] What he is saying to her is, you need to be with me. That's the one thing. Not be like your sister. Be with me. And so, Luke ends this story without telling us anything about Martha's response.

I mean, it's just done. And we have to realize that that's intentional because the Spirit of God is inspiring him to write. It's intentional. It's not an accident.

It's intentional because this is only a small part of Martha's story. She has a much bigger story. And we have to ask the question, well, what does he want us to understand from this?

And this is at the heart of what I believe women's discipleship is to be about. We are to disciple women as disciples first and roles second.

We are to disciple women as disciples first and roles second. Jesus is teaching Martha to prioritize discipleship over everything else. Even the traditional role that she has in her culture and the way that she proves her value and her worth to other people, to God, and especially to herself.

[20:09] discipleship. Right? These things may be important. I'm not saying they aren't important. But they must bow the knee to discipleship because being with Jesus and learning from him is what we are called to do.

Martha is a disciple. You, if you know Jesus, you are a disciple. So Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to what he's teaching. And Jesus says that she's chosen a good portion.

Well, isn't that an interesting phrase, a good portion? Because he understands if you choose the good portion first, the other portions will fall into place. But it's when we choose the other portions and we neglect the good portion that we end up like Martha in the kitchen frustrated.

But Jesus says this is not going to be taken from her because any amount of time that we spend with him is an investment in who we are. And he has promised it won't be taken from you.

In fact, it's going to bear fruit in your life. And so Jesus is teaching Martha to shift her priorities and to sit with him and to listen. He is inviting her to be a disciple.

[21:22] Now the next time that we see Martha and Jesus together is in John 11. And in John 11, it's the story of Lazarus dying.

If you remember that story, John tells us, and he's the one who finishes the story of Martha, it's not Luke, but John tells us in John 11.5 that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

But isn't it interesting that he is specifically telling us Jesus loved Martha because what he is seeing is telling about their relationship. So when Lazarus becomes ill, Mary and Martha send to Jesus and say, the one you love is sick.

Come heal him. And of course, if you've read the story, then you know that Jesus delayed two days, which meant by the time he actually got to Bethany, Lazarus had died.

And when Martha hears that Jesus has actually made it to Bethany, she takes off and she goes out to meet him. And the first thing that she says to him, and again, you see the intimacy of the relationship in this comment.

[22:33] Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But then she says this, but I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.

Now the rest of the story tells us that she was not expecting Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead. That's not what she's thinking at this point. So don't misunderstand her words. The point that John is making you that is this, that in the midst of crisis, Martha's impressing him with her faith.

But even, but I know that even now, God will give you whatever you want. In other words, she's saying, Jesus, I believe in you even though this bad thing has happened.

Well, that sounds like a disciple, right? And the other thing that this tells us is we don't see any shame. We don't see any condemnation here. Martha and Jesus are okay, right? And what happened in Luke 10 does not define her. It was forgotten. And in a moment of crisis, we see her true character. And is it not true that in a moment of crisis, we see ours?

[23:42] And so, we see that she's a woman of great faith. And Jesus treats her as that. Because what happens from here on out, this is, this is, again, I'm always saying this is so interesting.

But this is where it gets interesting. In the midst of grief, one of the saddest experiences of her life, he teaches her. And he says to her, your brother will rise again.

And Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day. Faith statement right there. I know there's this plan. He will rise again. And Jesus said to her, the thing that he had not said to anyone else, at least recorded in scripture, I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me will live even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? And then, she makes a statement that very few people make before the cross.

She says to him, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who is coming to the world.

Martha is not just a servant. She is a disciple of Christ.

[24:53] So after talking with Martha, Jesus spends time with Mary. And Mary says the same thing, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But this reaction to Mary is different.

His reaction to Mary is different. He doesn't talk to her about the resurrection. Why? Because she didn't need that. What Mary needed in that moment was comfort.

His presence. And so, he asks, where is Lazarus buried? And then he weeps. He weeps with Mary because that's what Mary needs. He knows us so well.

We think he can't understand what we're going through or what we feel. He's like, I understand you better than you understand yourself. So he weeps with Martha.

You know, the same question, two different responses. Weeps with Martha. Teaches Martha as a disciple, here's what you need to understand. Do you believe this? And once again, we see him inviting Martha to come and spend time with him and to listen and to learn because that is what a disciple does.

[25:59] And so he uses discipleship, believe it or not, to reframe the loss of her beloved brother in the way that she thinks about death. And at that moment, Martha needed that.

She didn't need what Mary needed. But what did she need? What was he actually offering her? And for all the thinkers in the room, this is where you might want to say hallelujah because you'll get it.

She needed theology to encourage her faith. She needed something that she could hold on to. And Jesus gave her that. She needed a new way to think about death.

And I don't know if you've lost anyone. I've lost two sisters and both of my parents at this point. And when you walk through that type of loss, you begin to think about death and you begin to think about what does this mean, Jesus?

How are you involved in this? And so that's what's happening here. And he was reminding her, Martha, because you're a disciple, right now, you feel incredibly insecure.

[27:01] But I am here to tell you that your identity is safe and your security is safe because you're mine. You don't have to be with Lazarus for you to be safe. So as the story continues, Jesus, we know, goes and he stands in front of the tomb where Lazarus is buried and he tells the people to remove the stone because he's getting ready to raise Lazarus.

And Martha says that he has been in there for days and there's going to be a bad odor. Now, I'm not, I don't know a whole lot of the King James version of the Bible, but this is my favorite verse in the King James.

He's stinking. I mean, there you go. The next time you're having a bad day, you can say to Jesus, he stinketh.

But Jesus says back to her, Martha, did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God? He isn't discounting her grief. He isn't rebuking her for lack of faith.

He's discipling her in the midst of it. Here's what you need to understand. Do you believe this? And once again, there is no response for Martha. John doesn't tell us what she says at that point.

[28:14] Instead, he tells us that Jesus raised Lazarus. But what we know because of the conversation is where is she? Right there with Jesus, right by his side, where he's wanted her all along.

We have one more story of Martha in John 12. And it's at a dinner that was being given in honor of Jesus. And John finishes Martha's story with two words. Just two.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here, a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served.

So her story has come full circle, right? We're back where we started. But everything has changed. You don't see her anxious.

You don't see her distracted. You see a sense of peace in her. And the reason for that is because she prioritized discipleship even over her grief.

[29:14] And so again, the question for us is how is this connected to us? And why is this important for us personally? Does it have any bearing on our lives today? Well, I think the point is this.

Jesus, the same does, comes at his feet, learn from him and recognize that our identity is first and foremost as a disciple of Christ. And as we think about women's discipleship here at Trinity, honestly, I don't have a grand vision to give you today.

I wish I did. I don't. But here's what I know. What I know is this. We are called to disciple women as disciples of Christ first and based on their roles second.

There's an order to this. We are called to encourage one another to come and sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen and to learn from him. We're called in this ministry to encourage one another to define yourself based on who you are not what you do.

Here's the thing. Identity is never based on how others see us but it's always based on how we see ourselves through the eyes of Jesus and the gospel.

[30:26] And we may think everybody else is telling us who we are. No. We're telling us who we are. So, in this ministry I hope and pray that we will be able to encourage one another and say don't allow your life and your responsibilities distract you from Jesus.

Trust that he will make a way for all. Trust that if you prioritize the good portion he gives you enough in that good portion to do all the other things.

there will be enough for your family your career your education and your blank whatever that blank is. Right?

If you come and you learn from me Jesus says it will not be taken from you. It will grow and it will transform you into the person that I created you to be all along.

You know what? Jesus never told Martha to stop serving. He just put it in a perspective that if you want to be the best servant you can be I have to be your priority.

[31:33] Well, we know based on Romans 8 29 that God has a plan for every one of our lives and that plan is for those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

So God's goal for each one of us in this room is to make us like Jesus and the only way that we can be made like Jesus is to spend time with Jesus. It's not complicated and yet it is.

Again, when I think about women's discipleship here's where I'm going to encourage us. Together, as sisters in Christ as disciples of Jesus we want to help each other recognize that our first and foremost identity is as his disciple.

We want to be women who live and work and serve from that identity rather than all these expectations that other people have for us or that we have for ourselves whether it's cultural gender or misguided.

We want to be women who are free from this idea of perfection. It is a lie. None of us in here will ever be perfect. We don't need to be perfect. We have a perfect savior who is perfecting us.

[32:44] So we need to be women who are free of ideas of perfection released to be redemptive works in progress because that is who we are. And we need to be women who know and believe that just like Martha it can

be said of us Jesus loved Debbie.

Jesus loved Selena. Jesus loved Erica. Jesus loved Jamie. Jesus loved Shirley. Jesus loved Mona. I could go around this room and say these things to you because I know they're true. Jesus loves you. Now here's the thing about women's discipleship at Trinity.

We will never do it perfectly. It may look one way one day and it may look a different way the next day and I hope so because I hope that's because God is leading not me. Leading me as I lead you. but the direction that we're going is there. We want to encourage each other first and foremost as disciples of Jesus and I promise you there will be room to equip you to be better leaders, better moms, better wives.

[34:01] Those things are important. Just as Jesus does not invalidate serving, he does not invalidate those things. He just says okay let's make sure that we have our order correct.

So my question for you today is will you come along? Will you come along with what, not what Pamela Hall says, but will you come along with what scripture says?

And would you help me build a women's discipleship ministry where someday people will say they love Jesus because they knew he loved them?

Would that not be the greatest? I think so too. Okay. So shifting gears a little bit, I'm going to give you some time at your table to do some discussion and then I'll bring us back together in a little bit. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.