



## Focusing on What Matters Most

July 18th, 2010

St. Luke 10: 38-42

What was going on there in Bethany? Sibling rivalry? Kitchen avoidance? Type A vs. Type B personalities? Triangulating? Did Jesus succeed in calming Martha's stress (would that there had been a v. 43, either to learn exactly what Jesus meant or to see how Martha responded)?

This story is placed in a larger travel narrative beginning at chap. 9:51 as Jesus "sets His face to go to Jerusalem" and the fulfillment of His mission through His crucifixion, death, and resurrection. The urgency of His mission is noted in 9:57-62 as Jesus says that those who would follow Him must give Him priority in their lives. Today's Gospel accents that priority: "One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it--it's the main course."

Hospitality, preparing and serving a meal in particular, is a prominent theme throughout Luke. This theme is featured in the travel narrative, with banquet parables (14:7ff; 15:11-32), Sabbath meals (14:1), and the welcome offered to friend or stranger. In the narrative world of Luke, Martha's concern for hospitality is not discouraged.

Thinking of God's conversation, God's Word as the "main course" in the feast of life, however, doesn't give that immediate sense that sitting passively in church or Bible Class or family devotions is *better* than doing. Rather, it places these activities in balance. Whereas the corporate world reminds us to keep the "main thing the main thing," Christians are urged to remember what (better, WHO) the main course is. The main course is Jesus, not Martha or Mary or anyone of us. He, our Lord and Savior, sends us to "teach them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20), to spread the Word like a banquet to nourish and strengthen others. That Word has within it commands both to sit and listen, and to go and do.