



AT
THE
FEET
OF
JESUS

THREE MEDITATIONS BY BRUCE
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First Meditation

Sitting at Jesus' Feet in Faith

Luke 10:38–42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

- Jesus had friends at Bethany, and Martha “opened her home to him.” What would it look like for you to show hospitality to Jesus and welcome him into your life and your home? What would it mean to show friendship to him? What do you want to say to Jesus about this?
- What in your life could be distracting you from the presence and gifts of Jesus, just as Martha was busy with preparations? What are some of the “many things” that worry and upset you? Are there any ways even in preparing and working for Jesus that you have been distracted from him? What does Jesus say to you about this?
- Martha went to Jesus with her resentment, rather than keeping it pent-up inside. Have you ever felt exasperated with Jesus like Martha, saying, “Lord, don’t you care?” Can you trace the movement in your own life from busyness to exasperation to resentment? If you find yourself in this same situation, where it seems like you are all on your own (“by myself,” said Martha), what would you like to say to Jesus? What would he say to you?
- Place yourself with Martha in the passage, and imagine it is you in this dialogue. Can you hear the Lord Jesus call you by name? Substitute your name when he says “Martha, Martha.” Can you listen to this gentle rebuke and invitation to be still?
- Notice Mary now, sitting at the feet of Jesus with rapt attention. What is she feeling and thinking? Try to take your place beside her and listen to Jesus. What is he saying? Can you trust that this is enough, to be here and to listen to him? What do you want to say to Jesus as you sit at his feet?
- Listening to Jesus is the “one thing” necessary among the “many things.” Listening to Jesus and his word is “better” than the “many things.” This will outlast the “many things.” Can you take some time quietly now to worship and adore Jesus, to see something of the beauty of his presence that Mary saw? What would it look like to offer Jesus this loving contemplation, this rapt attention, in the midst of your own busy life? What would help you to keep this focus in your day-to-day life?



Second Meditation

Falling at Jesus' Feet in Hope

John 11:17-44

The Meeting with Martha

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

The Meeting with Mary

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

The Meeting with Lazarus

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

- Sometimes distractions keep us from discerning the presence of Jesus. At other times suffering blinds us in crisis. Where is Jesus in this? Have you, or has someone you love, felt that Jesus was too late to help? That he did not show up when he was needed? “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” What comes to mind when you contemplate the sisters’ disappointment? As you sit with these feelings, what would you like to say to God about this in prayer? What do you sense he wants to say back?
- Sometimes, like Martha, we have the right answer (“I know he will rise again”) but we miss the presence of Jesus himself (“I am the resurrection and the life”). Can you hear Jesus saying to you, as to Martha, “Do you believe this?” Substitute your own name for Martha’s: “_, do you believe this?” What do you want to say to Jesus in response? What would it mean for you to live out of this hope in the person of Jesus?
- Hear Jesus asking for you by name in your sorrow, as he did Mary, wanting to raise you up to come to him. This was Mary’s mini-resurrection. Maybe it can be yours. You can go back to verse 28 and add your name. “The Teacher is here . . . and he is asking for you, _____.”
- In the pain and bewilderment of suffering, we do not just sit patiently at Jesus’ feet listening. Instead, we fall at his feet in tears. Imagine yourself for a moment in the place of Mary. In the midst of your own suffering, you can fall at the feet of Jesus and express honestly your own emotional confusion and disappointment. What are you prompted to say?
- See Jesus asking about your problems with compassion, deeply moved and troubled by the pain of the world, by your pain. Hear him ask where you have laid your griefs and hear yourself inviting him to come and see. See him weeping tears over your sorrow. Can you see him nearby—not as a distant God, but a God who sees and cares and enters into your suffering? He went to the cross to bear your sin and your suffering. What do you want to say in response? What is he saying to you? How does this change your perspective on your own sorrows?
- In a sermon on this passage, Augustine suggested another possibility: “Let us hear and rise again,” he said. “How many are there in this audience who are crushed under the weighty stone of sinful habits?” Augustine knew that sin and death were connected. Not all our suffering is innocent, even if it still invites compassion. If this speaks to your condition, you might offer a confession of sin and picture its

crushing weight removed by Christ. You can walk free, like Lazarus, fully forgiven by Jesus.

- See the stone, your stone, being rolled away. Hear the voice of Jesus calling not quietly, but loudly, “Lazarus! Come out!” See the grave clothes coming off. This miracle is a sign that Jesus himself is our life and resurrection. Jesus himself is our hope. He alone has conquered death and transformed suffering into real joy. What might it mean to live out this hope in the midst of your own situation? With your mind and heart situated right there at the grave where Lazarus emerged alive again, take some time for conversation with God.



Third Meditation

Anointing Jesus' Feet in Love

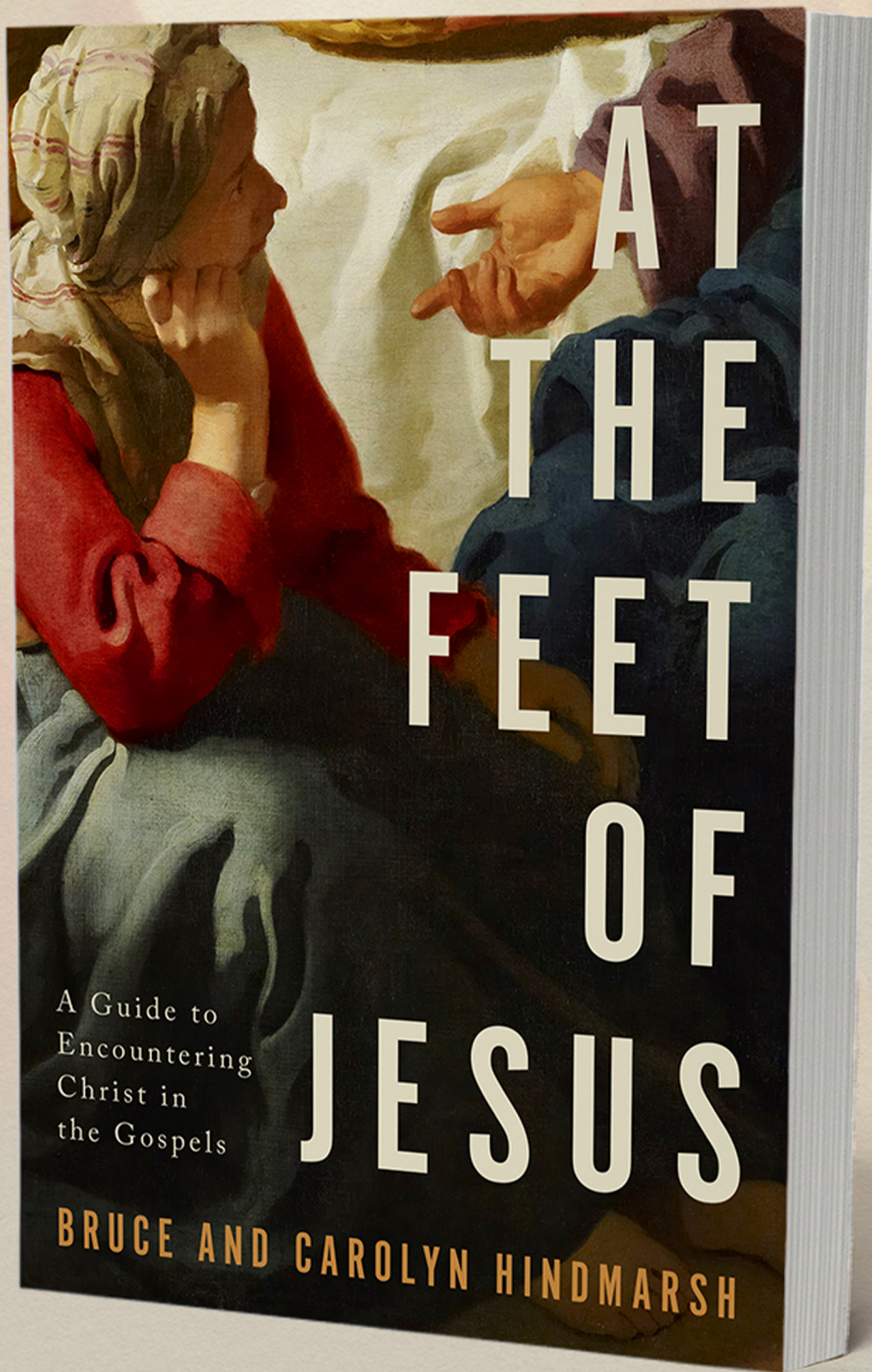
John 12: 1-8

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

- When you have experienced Jesus as the resurrection—when you have trusted him and seen the glory of God—then everything else is revalued in the light of your desire to adore him. Notice the transition after Lazarus’ resurrection from grief to joy: a dinner in Jesus’ honor and Mary’s costly gift. Take time to express your gratitude to God as you ponder similar experiences of his grace in your own life. What would you like to say to him as you see him revealed in this Scripture?
- Have you given anything in the past to God that others judged to be wasteful? Picture Jesus receiving your gift, defending you from accusation. How does this change your memory of that experience?
- Notice Mary’s reckless disregard, her absence of prudence, both in matters of social and financial propriety. Are there ways that worldly prudence holds you back from a more radical and entire adoration of Jesus? How would you express your love for Jesus if you didn’t care about what people think?
- Mary arrived at a place where she was ready to give up everything in service of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you are in the midst of a big decision in your own life. Could this be an opportunity for deeper dedication to Jesus? What might Jesus be asking of you? What do you want to say to him or do for him?
- The pint of nard for anointing was costly, worth a year’s wages. What is your pint of nard today? What would it mean to pour it out on the feet of Jesus? As you take your place alongside Mary of Bethany, is there anything you feel called by God to do with your time or money?
- Notice the contrast between Mary’s sacrificial consecration and Judas’ calculating betrayal. One keeps nothing in reserve; the other steals a little for himself. Is there anywhere in your life where you sense God calling you away from betrayal—even small pilfering—toward a love that holds nothing back? Hold this passage up like a mirror. Can you identify an area of your life where the Spirit is convicting you?
- Jesus defends Mary’s extravagance even in the face of pressing needs, such as the plight of the poor. Every other good becomes a relative good in the presence of Jesus. What are the pressing needs around you (even those that are truly legitimate) that might distract you from making the adoration of Jesus the primary thing in your life? What is the still, small voice of the Lord saying to you about expectations you must ignore and release in order to serve him—including expectations concerning the urgent needs of others?



InterVarsity Press