



Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42
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In Colossians 1:15-28, a mere 2 decades after his death, the Church already believed in the **divinity of Jesus**. With plenty of people walking around who'd seen him risen from the dead, **Christ** is regarded as pre-existent, there at the start of Creation, above all and in all and beyond all. It's poetry: we need elevated language to speak of such elevated realities; the ordinary language is insufficient and won't do.

The first part of today's lesson (vv. 15-20) tells us about the significance of the divine essence of Jesus. The second part (vv. 21-23) moves the focus to what Jesus did for God's people, the outcome of his ministry. Because of what Christ is doing in the work of reconciliation, the people of God have reason to hope. The third part (vv. 24-28) speaks of Paul's ministry in relation to the community to whom he is writing.

In other words, Paul is asking the believers in Colossae to be clear about who Jesus is, about what Jesus has done, and about how he, Paul, is connected to them.

The poetic vision of Jesus as the visible image of the invisible God does not isolate him from humanity. On the contrary, it illuminates **our own potential**. If Christ is the fullness of God

revealed, and we too are said to bear God's image, then **his life and teaching become a mirror and a map for us.**

By following the Word of our Heavenly Teacher (living with compassion, hospitality, justice, solidarity and self-giving love) we participate in the slow **unveiling** of that divine likeness within ourselves. Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, we are already presented "holy and blameless and irreproachable before God."¹ Aware of and living into that precious gift, we can make God's presence evident even now. One day, totally transformed by grace, we too will radiate God's glory, our lives fully revealing the beauty and light for which we were made.

In Christ, therefore, it is not just divinity clothed in humanity we see, but **the promise of humanity's own transfiguration into radiant, visible bearers of God's image**. Christ, being the "firstborn," leads the way. Paul tells us that, "all things hold together" in Christ. That is, the purpose of our life is to recognize that we are one with God and neighbor. That's the resurrection story and its promise: no fear but hope.

God's intention is **reconciliation** with estranged humanity. In the footsteps of Jesus, that becomes the Christian's work. This text invites us to consider the intersection of God's work, our personal faith commitments, and our communal response. The gracious, hope-filled, and reconciling work

¹ Colossians 1:22

always begins with God in Christ and continues with a gentle and consistent nudge for our faithful response: “Follow me. Learn from me. Imitate me. Be as compassionate as the Father.”

Participating in that saving ministry is an honor.

Mary of Bethania, sister to Martha and Lazarus, understood that. And so did Martha, her sister, eventually.

In today’s gospel, Luke tells us that as Jesus entered the village of Bethania, **Martha invited him to her home**. That a woman would invite a man into her home was rather unusual: there's no mention of a husband or brother to legitimize the presence of a male guest and his friends.

Martha, the responsible and God-fearing hostess, gets **busy** preparing what is deemed necessary to receive an honored guest. She does everything that is culturally expected of a woman in first century Palestine, which was much changed for the worst from ancient times. Greek and then Roman occupation imported household codes that negatively impacted the role and life of women in Judean society.

Jesus very clearly offered **a breath of fresh air** in the way he engaged with women, breaking with contemporary norm.

In Luke 10:38-43, “Mary, mesmerized by Jesus’ teaching, is caught by her sister Martha sitting and listening to Jesus’ teaching with the male disciples. This could have been quite a social embarrassment to the family. The role of women

was to serve the family and support the education of the men, and Martha becomes very angry at Rabbi Jesus for not enforcing the norms by telling Mary to go help. But Jesus passionately defends Mary's choice to sit and listen. In doing so, he counter-culturally affirms women's roles as fully fledged disciples and implicitly invites Martha to join her sister among the disciples.”²

While Mary may not have noticed, Martha was only too aware of the contrast between them. And she was fuming.

This is the first time that Martha saw Jesus and, perhaps, she dreamed of offering her esteemed guest a fabulous meal; perhaps, she wanted to be seen as a devoted disciple, or at least as a respectable woman staying in her place and doing her job as expected by all. And Mary was not cooperating.

Imagine Martha's sighs, cutting stares, raised eyebrows. She doesn't even speak directly to her sister, but goes at Jesus, and with the strong character of one who takes matters into her own hands, she chides Jesus himself: “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?” we will witness Martha's strong personality in the future and in another gospel when her brother Lazarus falls sick and dies and Jesus delays in coming to save. She doesn't hold back: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³

² [The Role of Women in the Bible - Jews for Jesus](#)

³ John 11:21-27

In her **anxiety**, Martha was drawing Jesus into a **triangulation** with Mary, and in her prayer request (or, in her pouting, was it a demand?), she tells Jesus what he needs to do (is it representative of how we pray at times?) Jesus resists that and redirects her attention to something greater. In calling her by name, twice, he is not using contempt (he is not criticizing Martha). He is exercising **compassion**: Jesus wants to shake her out of her anger and judgmental picture of Mary, her fabricated perception that Mary is uncaring, insensitive, decisively wrong.

Martha could have taken his rebuke as unfair: a large meal doesn't prepare itself. But Martha is not offended by Jesus' reprimand; she doesn't kick him out of her house or out of her life. On the contrary, she displays humility and wisdom. She understands what he means and becomes his disciple, too. We know this by recalling the previously mentioned episode of the death of Lazarus: once again she expresses her fiery personality. In her upset, Martha fires out her passionate rebuke of Jesus who has arrived late at Lazarus' death. It is during the exchange with Jesus that she declares to believe that indeed Jesus is the "resurrection and the life."

Jesus is **not comparing** the two sisters and expressing approval of one above the other. He is not in the dualistic mode that frames reality into an either/or approach. Being active and getting things done is commendable. Yet, there is a more supportive way of doing things when we engage in

prayer, study and meditation. Activity can be sustained for the long run if a personal connection with what grounds us is consistently maintained.

“One thing is needful,” he says. Is the one thing Jesus himself? Listening to his words? Being near him? A focus on love for God and not getting sucked into the vortex of busyness?

Luke breaks down for us the commandment he mentioned earlier: “You shall love the *Lord your God* with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind *and your neighbor as yourself.*” (Luke 10:27)

With the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke encourages us to practice our love of our neighbor (Luke 10:30-37). Now, he instructs us on how to sustain our neighborly love through a constant focus on Jesus.

Prayer is not a surplus, not something we can pick up every now and then, and certainly not something we turn to when all our resources are exhausted. Prayer is at the foundation of a spiritual life, Christian or otherwise. It’s the constant zeroing in, the single-mindedness and childlikeness of a disciple (Luke 10:21-23). We learn to pray all the time.⁴

May we discover the One thing needed and focus our gaze on him. Amen.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18