

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Bible reading Luke 10, 38 – 42

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As a theme for this Conference we have chosen “for such a time as this”. The quote is taken from the Book of Ester and we will meet this quote in different shape throughout our Conference.

In this service our angle is: for such a time as this, choose the good part, because that will not be taken from you. As you have heard it written from Luke 10.

It is not an easy text to understand. Did not Jesus see that he needed food and that someone had to make that food for him?

I think I will always struggle a bit with this text. In my opinion Marta is treated unjust, and maybe you feel the same. But I will try to give you a perspective, a way to handle this text, and maybe that will give you some points for further reflection.

Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were three siblings who lived together in the city of Bethany. Martha owned the house and was busy looking after it. Lazarus sold beautiful fabrics in the square and made money for food and clothing for the whole family.

Maria was a little sunbeam, fond of picking flowers.

One day Jesus visits Bethany with all his disciples. Lazarus runs home to his sisters and asks them to make a dinner for Jesus and his friends.

But who is Jesus, the two sisters wonder?

He is the son of God, said Lazarus.

Then I have to pick beautiful flowers for him, Maria thought.

Then it will be me who must make the dinner, Marta realized - and then she started. And there was no easy whip in the pan she wanted to make. No, she thought someone who was the Son of God deserved a great dinner.

What she didn't have of ingredients herself, she got hold of from the neighbours around: Chicken, eggs, parsley, onions

Then Jesus comes, before the food is ready. On the way he met Maria who had woven a flower wreath for him.

Both Marta and Lazarus are sorry that the food is not ready yet. But Jesus takes it easy, he has plenty of time - and he has already got something, he has got flowers.

Jesus is spending the time telling about his father, God, and all the wonderful things he has given us.

He tells about heaven, stars and planets, and angels and their eternal song. Everyone listened wonderingly to what he was saying.

Apart from Marta. Because she was in the kitchen making dinner: roasted lamb, goose liver, Yorkshire pudding, haggis – lots of nice food. (*Choose some nice local food*)

When the food was ready, everyone went to the table. They got the first course, apricots baked with wine and honey.

Jesus continues to tell about creation, about plants and animals and fishes - about everything that lives.

And how they all rejoice in God and each other and the beautiful planet they live on. Everyone listened with wide open ears.

Apart from Marta. Lazarus asks Marta to sit down at the table. But Marta doesn't have time to eat. There is still a bit to do in the kitchen.

For Jesus must have a great dinner. The best thing she can prepare - and it takes time.

Now Mary asks Martha to sit at the table saying: Jesus says that the flowers I love are my little sisters. But Marta still doesn't have time.

I'm really going to sit down straight away – I just have to get something in the kitchen first! she says

Jesus continued telling while the evening was falling - and the food was eaten up. Jesus told that God loves mankind higher than anything else he has created. And everyone listened.

Apart from Marta. Because she struggled to decorate the cakes she had baked.

Then Jesus asks Martha to sit down and listen to him, as Martha came stalking under a mountain of almond cakes - all shaped like small sparrows with feathers of almond chips and rose petals.

Yes, Martha replies, quite sour. I can do that if Maria can come to the kitchen and help me a little. But Jesus answers: Mary has chosen the good part; it should not be taken from her.

The makes Martha angry: But don't you see how she has left all the work for me! She cries out.

Thank you so much for a wonderful meal, Jesus says. But why didn't you choose to make something easier, so you had time to sit down and listen to what I was telling?

But, Martha says, with such fine guests I would make the best I could

Jesus looks at her. He sees her deep in the eyes. Deeper than she has seen herself. Now I understand, says Martha quietly. I had to make such a nice dinner because I thought I wasn't good enough. Therefore, I had to prove it so that I was sure you were happy with me.

I have seen that, dear Martha, Jesus says. But you don't have to struggle like that. I love you anyway, just the way you are, whether you make the best dinner, or give me just a piece of bread to eat.

Martha has shown you something important, says Jesus to the others. So many believe that you must be the nicest, the best or the kindest, for someone to love you.

But Jesus says. It's not like that. God has created you just as you are and love you the way you are. Remember that and love each other as siblings you too. And Martha heard and understood and felt happier than ever. It was as if a big knot inside her had been tied up.

And while the stars were spinning and the grasshopper buzzing, and the twelve friends of Jesus sat down in the warm grass under the olive tree, Martha and Mary and Lazarus gave each other a good hug. And Jesus watched and smiled.

The idea and are taken from the book *Marta, Marta* by Trygve Skogrand:

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