

Grounded in Grace

LIVING IN BETWEEN HURT, HOPE AND HEALING PT 7 Finding Answers in the Contexts of Questions

20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." 28 And 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." John 11:20-28 (NIV)

Last month, we took a look at Jesus' tears and the way he loved Mary and Martha through his compassionate heart for those who are hurting. This month we are going to back up a little bit and look at this previous dramatic scene. We will find two hearts that are living in between hurt and hope. In the midst of Mary and Martha's statement, "Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died," we will find several answers about our God in the context of questions from our souls.

1. Jesus allows us to question him in the midst of our puzzlement

Although, both Mary and Martha have the same question, it is Martha who asks it first. If we remember, usually Martha is the one who is the busy body trying to make things perfect. Mary was usually at Jesus' feet. Now the roles are reversed. Martha is the first to greet Jesus. Where is Mary? (We will see in a few minutes.)

When Jesus gets there, Martha approaches him with her frustration and desperation. Can you hear it in her cry? "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!" And even in the midst of her confusion, Martha still had some kind of faith. Notice that she states, "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask" (11:22). Sometimes faith expresses itself in questions and reinforces statements of belief in our souls. Also notice that Jesus doesn't rebuke Martha but listens to her puzzling cries. Jesus knows that we don't understand all of what he does in our lives (even the disciples didn't get it when he told them what he was doing). However, Jesus is patient with our limited view and allows us to question his puzzlements.

2. Jesus replies to our questions with the context of HIS eternity

Jesus dialogues with Martha on eternal realities and uses this opportunity not only to promise the impossible (Lazarus raising from the dead) but the importance of belief in the true Son of Man. Jesus desires Martha to know him in a different way than ever before. In essence, he is saying, “I desire that you know that I can heal deadness in life. I bring life not only in eternity but I bring life into the now. I am the hope that shines through your hopelessness. So trust in me even when my timing does not agree with your timetable. I am going to do something amazing even though you must endure pain to get the promise.”

3. Jesus responds to our questions with his own question

Jesus responds to Martha with the question, “Do you believe this?” It is a question that begs an answer, as if he were saying “Do you believe that I am the Son? Martha, it is not an intellectual belief or a temporal belief to relieve pain. It is a belief that will change your soul. It is a belief that rearranges the way you see and view life. It is a question that when answered will rearrange the way you interact with people, with yourself and with me. Do you believe that I am God?”

4. Jesus asks us to come out of our home of hopelessness

Lastly, where was Mary? I really believe that Mary stayed home because she was living in the home of despair and disappointment with Jesus himself. I could imagine Mary’s pain when she learned Lazarus had breathed his last breath. There was the pain of death but even more so the pain that Jesus had not come in time to intervene. Perhaps she wondered, “He had the ability to save him. He had saved others. Where is Jesus when I need him?” She experienced the hurt of death, but even more, the pain of Jesus’ silence. Often times the most painful noise we hear is silence!

And it is in this one verse, “The teacher is here and is asking for you,” that Jesus calls Mary out of her home of disappointments and despair. He calls her to come out and see the Savior. And Jesus calls us to come out of our home of despair and confusion. He calls us to come with our questions and our disbelief. Throughout the gospels, Jesus calls us from our fears and into faith. This is exactly what Mary does. She comes out and bows before Jesus (11:32). And in doing so, there is a glimmer of hope in the midst of questioning and even faith in the confusion.

What home of disappointments is Jesus calling you to come out from?

Where do you need to find hope?

Do you believe that you can find it?

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