

ARE YOU DEAD OR ALIVE?



Living Hope Jeremiah Yao

If someone came up to you and said, "Are you dead or alive?" you'd shake your head.

"What's wrong with him? Can't he see? I'm breathing. I'm walking, talking. I had my breakfast this morning. Of course I'm alive!"

Yet, as far as God is concerned, most people who are breathing, walking, and talking, are essentially dead. Of course they don't know it.

The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who pay attention shall live."

"I'll follow you, Lord, but first let me go and bury my father."

"Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but as for you, go and preach the kingdom of God."

Satan says to Jesus, "You're going to starve to death if you don't eat something soon. If you're the Son of God, turn these stones into bread".

Jesus answers, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

According to Jesus, you're dead, until you hear words from the mouth of God---until you hear those words in such a way that they enter you and become your life.

Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-40

Here's Martha, slaving in the kitchen to prepare a nice lunch for Jesus. And Mary? She's sitting in the living room at Jesus' feet, drinking in his words, never lifting a finger to help her sister. And what does Martha get for all her effort? A rebuke.

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."



Martha and Mary Chris Higham

So Mary gets the gold star for doing nothing. Martha gets a rebuke for trying to be a servant! For 2000 years people have been hearing Jesus rebuke Martha for simply trying to give him a nice lunch. So let's make it up to her. Let's give Martha the gold star. Somebody has to stick up for Martha!

One reason why we stick up for Martha is because we have a lot more Martha in us than Mary. We identify with Martha. Martha comes from Lunenburg County! She knows how to work! She knows how to cook! She knows how to get things done! She doesn't sit around and dream and waste time.

So where's Jesus coming from? Giving the bouquet to Mary instead of Martha? He's setting a bad precedent. There are enough lazy slobs in this world! If we all sat around, meditating, doing nothing, we'd all soon starve to death.

When you think of it, it looks like Jesus is playing favorites. Maybe he was flattered with Mary sitting at his feet listening, looking up at him with her big blue eyes. Maybe he was annoyed with Martha, making angry noises in the kitchen, banging those pots and pans. No. Jesus wasn't playing favorites. Jesus was putting his finger on something most of us are missing, while we run around trying to get things done, while we worry and fret over things we cannot control. Here's what we haven't figured out yet, and Mary had: What was going on in the living room that day was 1000 times more important than what was going on in the kitchen.

God was speaking through his Messiah.

And when you get a chance to hear God speak, you forget about making lunch.
You go into the living room and pay attention.

There's more to life than getting lunch ready. There's more to life than scraping a pile of money together.
There's more to life than making love. There's more to life than making a name for yourself.

**When you get a chance to hear God speak,
you drop whatever you're doing, and you go there and listen!**

We don't live by bread alone.

We live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God!

When God speaks in heaven, a million angels hold their peace and listen. When God speaks on earth, it's time for us to push everything else aside and pay attention.

***"Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!"
"Yea, rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"***

Luke 11:26-28

Here's what was really going on that day.... While Martha is fretting in the kitchen, Mary is in the living room getting connected with God.

To be connected with God---heart, soul, strength and mind----

**---is the essential need of our lives,
the One Thing Needful.**

To be connected with God.

To know God.

To be alive with God's Spirit.

**And there is only one way to be alive with God's Spirit:
you have to hear God speak!**

You live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

That's what Mary was doing.

Martha could have been doing it too. She could have said to herself, "Jesus is in there teaching, and I need to hear what he's saying. I'm going in there and listen until he's through. And if lunch is late, too bad! If nobody eats today, too bad!"

The reason our faith is so dull and dry is because we haven't figured out what comes first. We're banging around in the kitchen, chasing after this world's bread, while the Bread of Heaven is being passed out, free-of-charge, in the living room.

We're all bent out of shape, pursuing a thousand distractions, fretting over a thousand worries, while the real prize---life from God---is being offered. And we're missing it.

"Okay," you say, "but for Mary and Martha it was a simple choice. Jesus was right there. They could see him. Touch him. Hear him speak. If I could hear him like Mary was hearing him, I'd be there too. But today there are a thousand different voices out there, all claiming to speak for Jesus. Who's right?"

It's true. There is a lot of religious garbage out there, claiming to be the gospel. False prophets. Religious hucksters, preaching the gospel for money. Conflicting voices. And Jesus warned us that it would be like this.

But he also promised that his words---the words he spoke in Martha's living room, the words he spoke by the Sea of Galilee---would echo through this world and stay alive on this earth through all generations.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

His words. Pure, clear, living words, can be heard. If you want to hear them, God himself will get you there and open your ears.

"Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

If you really want to hear the living Word, God himself will make sure that you do. But you will first have to downgrade all the stuff going on in the kitchen, the garage, the bedroom, the local bank....

.... and start listening **first** for the Shepherd's voice.

First.
Above every other voice that calls to you.



Mary Magdalene Chris Higham

Funny thing about God: he doesn't even exist for you, until he gets top priority in your life. You can be super-religious. You can be in church seven days a week. You can be acclaimed the "Outstanding Christian of the Year." But until God himself is Number One in your life, above everything else, you don't know God. You're too busy fretting in the kitchen.

God becomes real in your life only when he is Number One.

So that when he speaks, you drop everything and listen.

So that once you have heard, you rise from your fanny and act.

Mary understood this. She "got it."

Martha didn't "get it" that day.

So what about us?

Are we listening for his voice?

Are we walking in his light?

The biggest tragedy in the life of religious people like ourselves is to come to the end of our days, and discover that we spent our whole life fretting in the kitchen, while Jesus was giving out the Bread of Heaven in the living room.

Prayer- Lord Jesus, without you we are dead, all our busyness is meaningless. We admit, we're missing out on the Bread of Heaven because we've been too busy fretting in the kitchen ... and the result is we're starving ourselves to death. Help us to put down the things that keep us in the kitchen, that keep us malnourished. May our hunger cause us to come running to you ... So we can connect with you, heart, soul and mind.... So we can truly hear your voice... So we can be filled with your Living Bread and come back to life again.

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