

July 21, 2019  
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost  
**Word and Work**  
Luke 10:38-42

Martha speaks:

“I knew the minute I saw Jesus that what he’d been trying to say was true. He would not be with us much longer. This might be the last time he visited my home, ate at my table. This might be the last time that I could give him what he needed and appreciated: a hot meal, cool water, warm company. The knowledge of it plunged a knife into my heart. As he crossed the threshold, I felt my knees go weak, felt the keening of the funeral procession already beginning in the back of my throat. Better to keep busy than to have him see me like this. My hands in the dough, cutting the dates into pieces just so, cooking the fish just as he liked it. I flew around the house. I knew that doing something – anything – was the only way to keep myself from the truth of the loss that lay ahead.”

Mary speaks:

“I knew the minute I saw Jesus that what he’d been trying to say was true. He would not be with us much longer. I had never seen the depth of sorrow I saw in his eyes that day, although he was as kindly gracious as ever. As he settled in the house, the others gathered around as always, asking questions or reaching out for healing or just offering a raucous welcome. I was immediately curious about this new sorrow that I saw in him, that I felt reflected in my own heart. Where did it come from? Where would it lead him? I felt I just had to know more. Maybe if I understood, I could meet him in that place. Maybe if I knew more, I could help him somehow. So I knelt at his feet as close as I could. I absorbed every word he spoke, drank in every movement. Soon, the flurry and bustle of the room faded, as I focused on his face, his voice.”

We imagine what Jesus’ friends, the sisters Mary and Martha, might have felt when they saw him soon after he predicted his own death to his disciples. Mary and Martha each sense Jesus’ grief, and each feels their own. Martha distracts herself from her feelings and is able to channel her emotions into hospitality; Mary stays present and curious to her emotions, but is unconcerned with her own physical needs, as well as those of her guests.

These are two ways to respond to strong emotions. There are many others. Take a few minutes to share with a friend or spiritual guide or in a journal how you respond when grief enters your home and sits down at your table. Now consider your response. Is that how you’d like to respond? Or is there another way that feels more authentic for you? Ask Jesus to help you meet your emotions the way you would most like to.