

# John 11:17-27. Christ Converses With Martha at Bethany.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

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*Jesus' conversation with Martha at Bethany reveals the importance of faith, the power of prayer, and the significance of believing in him for eternal life.*

**Scripture:** John 6:40, John 11:21, John 11:23, John 11:25, John 11:32, John 11:40, John 11:43, John 14:6, 1 Corinthians 15:51, 1 Thessalonians 4:13

**Topics:** "Faith And Doubt", "Eternal Life"

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## Description

Favell Lee Mortimer reflects on the emotions Martha experienced when meeting Jesus after her brother Lazarus had died. Martha expressed a mix of joy for Jesus' arrival and grief for his delayed coming, not realizing it was a divine arrangement for a greater purpose. Jesus' response to Martha's sorrow and doubt was filled with compassion and a reminder of the power of belief in Him as the resurrection and the life. Mortimer emphasizes the importance of believing in Jesus to truly live and never die, finding comfort and hope in His presence even in the face of death.

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## Transcript

How mingled were the feelings with which Martha went to meet her heavenly Friend! Joy she must have felt because he had come at last--grief because he had not come sooner. It appeared to her an unfortunate coincidence that her brother should have been seized with a fatal illness at a time when Jesus was absent. She expressed this feeling as soon as she beheld him, saying, "If you had been here my brother would not have died." But what appeared an unfortunate coincidence was in truth a divine arrangement. The Lord himself viewed these circumstances in a different light, when he said to his disciples, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you might believe."

But why did Martha say, "If you had been here." Was not Jesus always there and everywhere? Yes; but she knew it not. She needed not have sent a messenger to inform him of her brother's illness--a prayer would have reached him from the furthest end of the world. He witnessed the expiring agonies of Lazarus, and told his disciples when he fell asleep. There is not one of his numerous family that has occasion to say with a sigh, "If you had been here." When those we love droop and die, it is not because Jesus is not near, but because he designs to bring us nearer to himself by separating us from the creature.

It was natural that Martha should have hoped for the restoration of her brother, when she had heard of so many being restored to health who were not reckoned among the friends of Jesus. It seemed hard to her that one he so tenderly loved should not participate in those benefits. Some faint hope was lingering in her heart when she said, "But I know that even now whatever you will ask of God, God will give it you." Though she does not appear to have understood fully the power of Jesus, yet she understood one important truth that he continually taught to his disciples. It was this--that the Father loved his Son, and granted all his petitions. The Son of God is the channel of the Father's mercy. Whatever we desire we must ask in his name, for we can only receive it through Him.

The Lord's reply was suited to fill Martha's heart with joy, "Your brother shall rise again." Had Jesus added the words "THIS day," the sorrowing sister would indeed have rejoiced--but she was unsatisfied with the distant prospect of the resurrection at the last day. She wanted her brother's company to cheer her while she lived; and she was not willing to wait until all the just should rise to enjoy eternal life. The gentle Savior did not rebuke the human weakness betrayed in the hour of sorrow. But he made use of this opportunity to instruct her concerning spiritual truths. Had she in former days, like Mary, sat at his feet, perhaps she would have been more familiar with divine doctrines.

How many hearts have thrilled, in hearing these words uttered when the beloved form of a child or a parent, a brother or a sister, has been carried to the grave! "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

The Savior taught by these declarations, that none really live, except those who believe in him; and that none really die, except those who do not believe. To breathe--to move--to feel pain or pleasure,--that is not to live--to know God--to love him--to be like him,--that is to live indeed. To lie for a time in the tomb while the spirit rests above--that is not to die; to be cast into the lake of fire--that is to die. Do WE believe this? Then are we happy indeed, if we can say with Martha, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." If we really believe this, we live now the only happy life that can be enjoyed on earth; if we really believe this we shall never die, but only fall asleep in Jesus.

Many on their dying beds, when they have been asked whether Jesus was precious, have replied, "Never so precious as now." But it is not only on our own dying-beds that we may hope to feel him precious. When we see the eyes we loved closed in death, then we feel that we owe all the peace we shall henceforth enjoy to Him in whom the dear departed sleeps securely; then we feel, "Were it not for Jesus, I should have no hopes of seeing my friend, my child again; nor any assurance that he is happy while absent from me. But now, when I lie down, I think his spirit needs no rest; and when I rise up, I think, while I have been resting, his spirit has been uniting with the angels--

Who all night long unwearied sing

The praises of their heavenly king."

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