



# Malvern Mashal Makon 71

In this edition:

**Exploring Silence with Mary of Bethany**  
**A Word for the Nation from Steve Rayment and Paul Miller**

## *Exploring Silence with Mary of Bethany at Jesus' feet*

I love to discover heroes and heroines of the faith who we may not previously have given enough thought and honour to. Mary of Bethany most certainly comes into that category. She lived with her brother Lazarus and her sister Mary in the hill village of Bethany, a few miles from Jerusalem. When Jesus came to their village, Martha opened the family home to Him. Mary must have been immediately overwhelmed with love and respect for this man whom God had sent.

It was highly unusual for teachers of the law to permit women to become their disciples, but, as in other recorded instances, the Lord Jesus wasn't in the least worried about overturning human expectations and traditions. Mary quickly became one of His closest friends, just like any of the better known disciples.

Michael Ross Watson points out that in all three of the Biblical references to Mary, she is shown at Jesus' feet:

- i) She gladly 'sat at Jesus' feet, listening to what He said.' (Luke 10:39)
- ii) After Lazarus died, we find her falling at His feet, sharing her grief with her special friend. (Luke 11:29,32-33)
- iii) Shortly afterwards, when deep mourning had turned to joy, she takes the most precious possession she owns – a flask of precious ointment – and pours it over His feet. Then she anoints His feet with it, wiping them with her hair. (John 12:3)



Mary's heart was full to bursting with love for Jesus. It is a scene of the utmost devotion and reverence, even though Judas Iscariot was there sniping at it. (John 12:4) The time would surely come when Mary would play her full part in the running of the household again, but she had chosen the higher part, devoting herself to the King of the Kingdom – and Jesus praises her for doing so.

Her example is a timely reminder to us. It is not only outward activity that God endorses: giving Him the love and trust of our heart is infinitely precious to Him. It also leads so often to receiving His wisdom as to how we can do the things we are called to do.

We know that Martha found her sister's preoccupation with sitting at Jesus' feet hard to handle. Does your upbringing incline you to be a Martha? With His usual unerring discernment, Jesus sees through to the heart of the matter, and tells her straight that she is 'cumbered' and 'preoccupied' on account of her many cares.

Many of us are far more influenced than we should be by the outward appearance of things. We devote so much trouble to our image whereas the Lord sees as truly beautiful those who sit at His feet and listen to Him.

When Mary laments to Jesus that Lazarus would never have died had Jesus been present, her's is not the reproach of unrighteous indignation so much as the heart cry of grief. Mary is upset precisely because she knows what the Lord *could* have done, had He only been present. So too will we often find ourselves grieving over all that is missing in people's lives, or in the dynamics of our churching together.

Without for one minute neglecting matters that really do need attending to, let's make sure we seek first the King of the Kingdom. Otherwise we risk doing what Martha did: judging her sister and, effectively, reproaching the Lord. ("Don't you care that my sister has left me all alone?")



*Which are we more like: reproachful, bitter and querulous as Martha risked becoming – or humble, devout and favoured as Mary was? Pause and pray!*

## Profound Compassion

Notice next how Jesus responds to her. He is deeply moved by her tears and gives Himself entirely to comfort her. So far from browbeating her with formulas of faith about what God can do in impossible situations, the Greek words that are used here describe exceptionally powerful emotions. The first word denotes *passionate* indignation, perhaps against the ravages of sin and death that had snatched Lazarus from them.

The second word, (*etaraxen*) expresses the deepest possible level of heart agitation. This is not fleshly 'upsetness' but true compassion, which is the deepest and most costly of all emotions. Perhaps this is the reason why so many people hide their sympathy and emotions behind a 'professional' pose,

By contrast, Jesus is passionate! 'In all our distress, He too is distressed – and the angel of His presence saves us' (Isaiah 63:9). The fact that the Lord knows what He is going to do concerning our deepest distresses does not mean that He does not sympathise with us during them! The more we allow His concerns and compassion to be ours, the more we will see many situations raised from the dead!

Unlike the 'instantaneous' healings that happened in the encounter with Jairus' daughter and the widow of Nain's son, Jesus purposefully delayed His visit to Bethany by several days. Incidentally, it says much for the disciples' loyalty that they were willing to return with Jesus to the lion's den – the region around Jerusalem – especially now that visitors and mourners from Jerusalem were pouring into the village, and would be sure to inform the hostile authorities of Jesus' return.

Jesus pays no attention to their presence but allows the weight of His compassion for Mary and her family to spur Him into action, calling Lazarus forth from the grave. (John 11:40-47)

Never let the devil tell you that the 'Mary' spirit – the desire to draw close to Jesus in true devotion – is lazy or self indulgent! Heaven *moves* when we are entwined with Jesus – and Hell is alarmed. It knows that its own kingdom is about to be plundered, and many satanic plans thwarted.

What a wonderful thing it is to sit at Jesus feet and to enjoy him with us in our homes. His word to us is to '**sanctify** our homes.' May His peace and power move freely through them. This is going to be so important in the days to come.

Should not our conversations and the longings of our heart take us to this point of longing for deeper communion with Jesus, the Lover of our soul? Should it not grieve us where this is absent, and occurs but rarely, if at all?

Mary had found the one her soul loves and it would not be taken from her. So too for us. What we sow and give to God, and the love we show to others, will never be forgotten. (Heb. 6:10) It will become our heavenly reward. (Matt. 6:6,18) Take *time* to sit at His feet and love, listen and to learn. Mary is a model for our call to entwine ourselves with Jesus – first in our will and then in our affective emotions.

People need comfort – we gain it best at the feet of Jesus.

People need human comforters. When times are really tough, isn't it the Marys of this world that we want to turn to?

May the Lord help us to overcome the myriad 'noises' and distractions that come our way from life, from satanic forces and from our own inner 'clutter'. Practise sitting at His feet – yes, *practise*, for 'it is by constant use that we learn to distinguish good from evil.' (Heb. 5:14)

Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair – which is a woman's crowning glory. But she never said a word. Love does not always need to. There is such power and value in shared silence. Be generous towards Jesus because He is generous to those who give Him the love of their hearts.

### **Silence deepens our compassion**

Silence enables us to discern people's needs at a distance. There are times when these 'nudges' come so fast that we have to do a rapid *triage* to decide which burdens we need to pray for and follow up straight away, and which we can afford to attend to later. The one thing we must not do is to miss what God had in mind when He sent them!

The Lord uses silence to remind us of many things we need to do – or sharper ways of doing the things we are involved in. It is more than sensible to keep pen and paper within reach!

It is not always 'new' knowledge that He shares with us; silence gives us a wonderful opportunity to have 'a second bite of the cherry' – to pick up on words and nudges that would otherwise disappear into the blue yonder. He may put His finger on things we need to face up: words we have spoken and attitudes we have struck.

Never be afraid of His silence. Even if there are times when He takes us to the cleaner's because He needs to take His work a notch or two deeper, it is only so that we can become freer in His presence through facing up to the things He highlights.

Deep is calling to deep. Let His strong presence and His clear leading come on us now. If times of silence bring us the reassurance of His deep comforting presence and the clarity of His leading, we are blessed. If not, then we are honouring God by showing that we are prepared to put His first whatever the state of our emotional life. He is no man's debtor!

**You can explore more online about silence in Robert's illustrated book *Intimacy and Eternity* – especially chapters three, four and five.**

<http://ruachministries.org/intimacyandeternity.htm>

## **A Prophetic Word for the Nation: Steve Rayment and Paul Miller**

The Lord has given me a picture that I felt was for the nation, but it may well apply to other nations too. It began with a picture of a hand. I felt it was the Father's hand. He had a cork block with sandpaper round it – a rectangular block like those you wrap sandpaper round to sand and smooth a piece of wood.

I felt the Father say, "Steve, if I used a plane, a wood plane on the timber – the shouts against it in the nation would be incredibly strong. All you really want is a bit of smoothing off. Then I saw a picture like a tree that had been almost coppiced where you take out the central trunk leaving all the other new branches to grow. The central trunk was still in place, with lots of new branches growing from the ground, and I felt the Father say, "If I took the saw to the base of this plant to cut out the dead wood, the shouts and screams and gasps at the depth of pruning out of dead wood to take out of the plant would be incredible in the nation."

We are not ready to hear the word for the plane, never mind the depth of cutting that would be involved were a saw to be taken to take out the dead wood from the tree.

Steve then had a tongue which Paul interpreted.

I felt the Lord saying that there is a tremendous change coming to this nation and the family of nations that we know. It is change that is going to be outside our expectations. Tumultuous change.

"For I am shaking the nations and you have only begun to see the gentle shaking of the trees. You have not yet seen more of the full force of my wind. For indeed this will go through the nations but it will also go through my church – and that is so that my church may be truly founded on the Rock who never changes and who cannot be shaken. I am giving you forewarning of this again and again and again, even though it is not a new warning, but a wakeup call. These things are settled and are not going to be changed, but it is for you, My people, to be awake and aligned with what I am doing, so that you may know how to respond in that day in a way that is honouring to Me and a witness to the peoples."

There was then a second tongue and Paul continued . . .

I felt in the second part that the Lord was picking up on the reason we are here, and saying that we have gathered together as friends. The Lord says, "I am gathering you as My friends if you are willing to respond to the invitation. For these are days in which I am calling My church higher from a place of servant hood and obedience into a place of friendship where I can show you in advance what I am about and what I am doing. For friends know what the master is about. And this is an invitation to you that if you will accept the call into friendship with Me I will begin to share with you the things in my heart in your localities, in your contexts and in your situations so that you can have a head start in the purposes that I have and understand how to work them in.

I am willing to share some things with you on no other basis than this friendship. There are some things I would want to say to a friend that I would not say to a servant. Some difficult things. There are responsibilities and privileges of friendship that exceed those of servants. But I want to encourage you not to be afraid to hear My voice when the plane comes, and even when the saw comes. For this is for your good that you may be conformed to Jesus. For as that begins to happen in this nation then the world will stop walking past you and stop to pay attention.”

### **Tumultuous Times**

It is always tempting to link this word about ‘tumultuous changes’ to specific events. The latest crisis that the Euro is facing would be an obvious example, together with the enormous pressure the EU put on Ireland to accept a large scale bailout. Sally Mowbray wrote to me the other day that she was concerned about this, both because of the matter of yet further diminishing sovereign state sovereignty, but even more because of the old adage that ‘whoever controls the debt controls the debtor’.

There is no doubt at all that the heads of the EU are seriously concerned about the possibility of the Euro collapsing. The consequences on individual nations are likely to be huge. Greece for example has now been downgraded to little more than a ‘protectorate’ since receiving its bailout. The influential German magazine *Der Spiegel* has this to say about the situation there.

### **An EU Protectorate**

The Greek parliament and government are now virtually stripped of power. They're not allowed to decide on any new expenditures without EU approval. Finance Minister Giorgos Papakonstantinou is required to report every four weeks on progress made in budget restructuring.

Brussels, not Athens, now controls whether and how the austerity program takes effect. If "detailed and ongoing inspection" shows that the actual results fall short of those predicted, Almunia says, then Brussels' watchdogs will demand additional measures. There have even been calls at the European Parliament to send a special EU representative with extensive authority to Greece. The small country has become little more than an EU protectorate.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/0,1518,676507-2,00.html>

These are areas for prayerful concern, but rather than linking the word exclusively to specific issues, it is wiser to view specific ‘episodes’ as contributory endorsements rather than the sole fulfilment of it. What the Lord is saying is very clear. He is warning, to use the concept He expressed through the prophet Jeremiah, that the work of refining has not been sufficiently responded to in order to avoid immense consequences.

As the second part of the prophecy makes clear, the Lord is also stressing the importance of our friendship with him. He truly does want us to take Malachi 3:16 to heart:

Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured His name. "They will be mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession.

Cultivating and strengthening strong ties with our fellow believers is always crucial, and never more so than in the days we are moving into. We are certainly experiencing this here in Malvern as the Lord continues to 'wrap' a new framework around existing relationships.

We very much hope you will take the time to sit at Jesus' feet this week, just as Mary of Bethany did. Do continue to enjoy the prayers and music from *Spirit of Prayer* <http://www.ruachministries.org/spiritofprayer2010sampletracks.htm>



*As Jesus comforted Mary after the death of Lazarus, so may we allow Him to comfort us, and be ready to comfort others.*

In His love,  
Robert and Rosalind

[www.ruachministries.org](http://www.ruachministries.org)