

## Mary and Martha - Hospitality to Jesus & Others – with Skit.

Hospitality is exceedingly important in the biblical world in general and in Luke's Gospel in particular.

When Jesus comes to Bethany, Martha demonstrates hospitality by welcoming Jesus into the home she shares with her sister Mary. She then busies herself with the tasks of serving their guest (*diakonian*). Although we are not told precisely what those tasks are, a good guess is that she began preparing a meal.

**Meanwhile her sister Mary sits at Jesus' feet**, listening to his words. Rather than assuming the role expected of women in her culture, she takes her place at the feet of Jesus. She assumes the posture of a student learning at the feet of a rabbi, a role traditionally reserved for men.

### **Distraction and Worry**

This pleasant story takes a sharp turn when Martha, distracted by her many tasks, comes to Jesus and asks, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me"(10:40).

Many who read or hear this story may cheer for Mary in her taking on the male traditional roles.

**Many may also** empathize with Martha's resentment of her sister for leaving her to do all the work. Jesus' response to Martha seems less than empathetic, chiding her for her distraction and worry, and praising Mary: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.\* Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her" (10:41-42).

The problem with Martha is not that she is busy serving and providing hospitality. Certainly **Jesus commends** this kind of service to the neighbor many times, notably in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which we heard last week, that immediately precedes the story of Mary and Martha. The problem with Martha is not her serving, but rather that she is worried and distracted. The word translated "distracted" in verse 40, *periespato*, has the connotation of being pulled or dragged in different directions.

**Martha's distraction** and worry leave no room for the most important aspect of hospitality — gracious attention to the guest. In fact, she breaks all the rules of hospitality by trying to embarrass her sister in front of her guest, and by asking her guest to intervene in a family dispute. She even goes so far as to accuse Jesus of not caring about her (*Lord, do you not care...?*). (Have we ever tried to embarrass our sibling in front of others, when we are angry.)

**Martha's worry** and distraction prevent her from being truly present with Jesus, and cause her to drive a wedge between her sister and herself, and between Jesus and herself. She has missed out on the "one thing needed" for true hospitality. There is no greater hospitality than listening to your guest. How much more so when the guest is Jesus! So Jesus says that Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.

**Jesus' words to Martha** may be seen as an invitation rather than a rebuke. *Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.* The one thing

needed is for Martha to receive the gracious presence of Jesus, to listen to his words, to know that she is valued not for what she does or how well she does it, but for who she is as a child of God.

### **The One Thing Needed**

In a culture of hectic schedules and the relentless pursuit of productivity, we are tempted to measure our worth by how busy we are, by how much we accomplish, or by how well we meet the expectations of others. Preaching on this text may provide a rich opportunity to address this cultural malaise.

**Many people in our congregations likely identify with Martha.** Feeling pulled in different directions, feeling worried and distracted by many things — these seem to be common threads of life in our fast-paced world. And yet, as Jesus says in Luke 12:25, “Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” We know that worrying does no good, and that much of what we worry about is not so important in the larger scheme of things, and yet we cannot seem to slow down our anxious thoughts and frantic activity.

Luke’s story is left suspended. We do not know what happened next — whether Mary and Martha were reconciled, whether they were all able to enjoy the meal that Martha had prepared, whether Martha was finally able to sit and give her full attention to Jesus. Lets find out.....

### **Skit - The Morning After... Mary and Martha talk about their differences.....**

Questions..... (see below)

**It is true that much of our busyness** and distraction stems from the noblest of intentions. We want to provide for our families, we want to give our children every opportunity to enrich their lives, we want to serve our neighbors, and yes, we want to serve the Lord. Indeed, where would the church be without its “Marthas,” those faithful folk who perform the tasks of hospitality and service so vital to making the church a welcoming and well-functioning community?

**And yet if** all our activities leave us with no time to be still in the Lord’s presence and hear God’s word, we are likely to end up anxious and troubled. We are likely to end up with a kind of service that is devoid of love and joy and is resentful of others. Spend time with the Lord, today...

**Both listening and doing**, receiving God’s Word and serving others, are vital to the Christian life, just as inhaling and exhaling are to breathing. **Yet how often do we forget to breathe in deeply?** Trying to serve without being nourished by God’s word is like expecting good fruit to grow from a tree that has been uprooted.

We do know that Jesus invites all of us who are worried and distracted by many things to sit and rest in his presence, to hear his words of grace and truth, to know that we are loved and valued as children of God, to be renewed in faith and strengthened for service. As we heard in scripture earlier..... There is need of only one thing: attention to our guest. Jesus. As it turns out, our guest is also our host, with abundant gifts to give. Amen.

**(You might want to go back and read Colossians 1:15-28 too)**

**The Morning After for Mary and Martha based on Luke 10:38–42 by Mary Parsons, Munn's U.C., Oakville, Ont.**

**Setting:**

*A contemporary home kitchen with a table and two chairs placed at the front of the sanctuary. A teapot and two cups are on the table. A crocheted blanket is on the back of one of the chairs.*

*Martha is seated in the other chair. Behind her is a laundry basket full of dirty clothes and linens.*

*Mary enters.*

**Read Luke 10:38-42 first.....**

**Martha:** Good morning, sleepy-head. Your breakfast is ready, but can you sit with me first? I need to talk.

**Mary:** Oh...okay! I need a cup of tea first, though. Is there still some in the pot?

**Martha:** *(sarcastically)* Of course, Mary. When have I not had hot tea ready for my dear sister?

**Mary:** Ouch! What's with you? Didn't you have fun last night? Lazarus and I sure enjoyed ourselves. Talking with Jesus was so inspiring!

**Martha:** Hmmmm.... Was it? I saw you and Lazarus hanging on his every word while I got supper ready.

**Mary:** Ah, c'mon Martha. If you would just leave the kitchen once in a while and sit with the rest of us, you would be more relaxed. Didn't you hear what Jesus said to you last night when you bugged him about me not helping you? You did sound a bit whiney with your complaints.

**Martha:** *(again, sarcastically)* Nice, Mary.... Oh, I heard him all right!

**Mary:** *(reaching across to take Martha's hand; Martha pulling away and folding her arms)* You are just overtired, Martha. I know you worked hard preparing that feast yesterday, and I saw how you fussed cleaning the house and setting up all the tables and decorating for our guests.

**Martha:** Exactly! I am tired.... I am tired *every day* while you sit and think your great thoughts, or chat and make plans with your friends and Lazarus, or take off after Jesus to hear his latest speech!

**Mary:** Wow! You are ticked! You seemed to listen to Jesus last night when he told you to just "let it be." You do get worked up for nothing! I thought you understood him.

**Martha:** Oh, I understood him all right! I need to be more like you, listening to him teach about God's plan for us all. And then what? If I go traipsing after Jesus like you do, who is going to get things done around here? Who will get the groceries? Who will keep the house tidy? Who will make all the meals? Who will make the pot of tea? You like clean clothes, Mary! Who do you think does all that laundry?

**Mary:** Did you stay awake all night fussing about this, Martha? You were so polite after Jesus answered your question about why I wasn't helping you more.

**Martha:** *(throwing up her hands in the air)* Of course, I was awake all night...thinking and brooding. Sure, I would like to be more like you. I love Jesus, just like you do. He is a wonderful man, and I know God has special plans for him and for us!! Jesus has done amazing things, just like you have told me. But I am hurt. What about me? What does that really look like for me? I can't help it—there is always just so much to do around here.

**Mary:** I'm sorry, Martha. I guess my head is in the clouds these days. Jesus' work seems so important, and I am afraid I just take you for granted.

*Mary reaches out to take Martha's hand and Martha accepts the gesture.*

**Martha:** Thanks, Mary. I was hoping you would understand...just a little.

**Mary:** I tell you what, Martha. Let's do the laundry together today. Then you can have some time to yourself later this morning. And I'll make lunch!

**Martha:** Okay, Mary. Sounds like a deal. But you'll have to pay attention to what I show you. You can't mix the dark-coloured clothes with light-coloured clothes.

*Both start laughing.*

**Mary:** Okay, Martha. You teach me! Then after lunch, let's both catch up with Jesus and Lazarus and the rest of the followers. We both have a lot to learn...

- *To which of these women do you most relate? Why?*
- *Why do you think that (Sabbath) rest is one of the ten commandments?*
- *How do you manage rest in your life?*
- *What would it mean to you to think of rest as a spiritual practice?*

*Mary Parsons, Munn's U.C., Oakville, Ont.*

## **Scripture Readings – July 20, 2025 – for Little Current UCPC**

### **Colossians 1:15-28 NRSV Ue.**

#### **The Supremacy of Christ**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, <sup>16</sup> for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup> And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, <sup>23</sup> provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a minister of this gospel.

#### **Paul's Interest in the Colossians**

<sup>24</sup> I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. <sup>25</sup> I became its minister according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup> the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

### **Luke 10: 38-42**

#### **Jesus Visits Martha and Mary**

<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, <sup>42</sup> but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

May God's spirit shape our understanding of these words.

**And may they awaken in our hearts.**

