

Luke 10:38-42

Pentecost 6C

Martha is irritated. You can hear it in her tone.

Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.”

Why would Martha speak to her male guest, her teacher, her Jesus like this? Even in today’s culture, could you imagine asking your houseguest to chide your sister for not helping you with the chores?

When I first read this passage, Jesus ’words to Martha, “you are worried and distracted by many things” rang in my head like a morning alarm clock.

If I were Martha, I’d respond, “Of course, I’m worried and distracted — I’m caregiver for my aunt. I’ve got deadlines to meet, family schedules to track, carpools to coordinate, laundry piling up, and a commitment to myself not to gain a hundred pounds while managing ALL the things. I can’t do everything I’m called to do without being a little worried and distracted.” I’d be irritated, too.

I imagined Martha trying her darn best — cleaning their whole home in preparation for Jesus ’visit; freshening herself up before greeting him, smiling at the door; delivering carefully prepared platters of broiled fish, bread soaked with honey, pomegranates and pickled cucumbers to his table; running back and forth to the kitchen to make sure his wine glass never ran low. And while Martha does all this, there sits Mary at Jesus ’feet, monopolizing his attention and stealing his approval.

Martha is following the expected customs of hospitality, and Jesus and his disciples relied on the kindness of strangers as they traveled. When Jesus tells Martha that Mary is right to sit and listen at his feet, he is not saying that Martha should abandon all her hard work of hospitality. Jesus is not saying that we are not to do for others or work hard or be active agents of

the gospel in the world. Oh, no. Jesus is saying we should be doing all this, *and* we should sit at his feet and listen.

Martha's irritation builds and builds. Out of her frustration comes a question she cracks over Jesus like a whip. "Lord," she asks, "do you not care?"

I'd ask the same question. Don't you see me running around? Don't you realize how much effort and energy all this takes? And yet you want me to stop and pay attention to you? Jesus, do you not care?

This exchange feels familiar, like the recurring argument I have with my husband over whose turn it is to do the late pick up of our kid. But loving relationships aren't built on score cards. And this seems to be where Jesus is really going with Martha.

Jesus asks more of Martha not because he doesn't care, but because he does. He appreciates her kindness, but he also wants time with her. Jesus tells Martha that the care she puts into her relationship with him, the time she invests in sitting and listening in his presence, will not be taken away from her. I know how my marriage has benefited from my husband and I spending daily time sitting and listening to each other each night after our kids have gone to bed. I know how my spiritual relationship has benefited from time spent in prayer and conversation with God. Through these practices, our relationships are stronger, deeper, and richer. Everything we do is fed by it.

Jesus wants a relationship with us that will feed every aspect of our lives and work. If we invest ourselves in him, the gifts we receive in return will not be taken away.

Questions for reflection:

1. What thoughts or feelings arise for you as you read this passage?
2. When have you felt as if Jesus was asking too much? How did you respond?

3. How do you invest in your most important relationships? How do you invest in your relationship with God?



For the Children

Maybe have: piece of bread, bottle of water, piece of cheese, cloth

Who goes out to work from your house? If your mom goes out she really had more than one job as keeping house and kids together takes time. Back in Jesus' time, women worked really hard.

While it was still dark outside they started making bread for the day; they would have to go down to the river or the town well and get water, maybe she would have to milk a few goats and make some yogurt and cheese and she still had to make clothes for the family. She would also work out in the fields to grow grapes and olives and wheat.

In today's story one of the sisters is very busy getting ready for Jesus and his friends to arrive. You know what's its like if Thanksgiving happens at your house: mom is very busy trying to have everything perfect.

Maybe while she is so busy you are watching the TV and the parades that happen on Thanksgiving morning. You sit and watch but she can't, she is just to busy.

Well, in spite of business, Jesus likes it when we spend time with Him. Whenever we talk to Jesus and pray to Him, whenever we read our Bibles, come to church and worship Him, then we are spending time with Jesus. Making that time makes Jesus and you happy. We need to stop and spend some time with Him. Maybe you can do that right after eating breakfast or even before eating. Let's remember to make time to be with Jesus this week.

Maybe if you don't do in-person and you can actually be making biscuits or something of that nature.

God of the sacred and the mundane, your presence is needed among your people. Dirty dishes are piling up,

the trash needs to be taken out, book club is meeting at our house and we've got no appetizers to serve. We are worried and distracted by many things, God. May we sit here at your feet for a moment? May we breathe with you and pray with you and enjoy a little silence? May we remind

ourselves of our one need, considering our many tasks? Yes? Oh, thank you, great God of holy invitation. We praise you for this sacred stillness.

Prince of Peace, our world is broken by violence and our hearts torn with lament. Rage burns hot among those whose rights are violated and stripped away. Power is abused by those not seeking the path of righteousness, but the path of profiting off others' pain. The values of our world are upside down, aiding the rich and punishing the poor. God of the downtrodden, strengthen us for the work of your kin-dom. Recalibrate our world with equity. Balance the scales of justice so all might thrive.

Giver of life, lover of unity, you draw us together in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. But we strain against one another and resist the call to community. In this day of division, help us to work together and build bridges for the good of us all. May our relationships breed trust and dispel past hurts. Lead us in the work of reconciliation, setting aside personal and petty grievances, listening to each other in love. We are your people, and this is Christ's church. Bless us, Holy God, through this community.

In your mercy, Beloved God, hear these prayers of your people. Now, as the Body of Christ, we pray as Christ taught us, "**Our Father, who art in heaven ...**".