

JULY 17, 2022 – MARTHA AND MARY  
Our gospel today comes from Luke 10, 38-42

Today, we consider the classic gospel, Martha and Mary, and yesterday Bill Wagner told me this was his favorite Scripture Story.

And, I must say, I can really relate to Martha's anxiety.

You know, not too long ago, in houses company came.

And, of course, I went into Martha mode.

I cleaned from top to bottom.

I mean, I even dusted, it took me three days.

I wanted it to be just perfect.

I took the Bob Dylan poster off the wall and replaced it with something more suitable.

I set out books that could be prominently seen picked and read.

I had the Beatles song book on the music stand with Beethoven.

I lined up the pillows on the couch here, they were perfectly symmetrical.

Kitchen counters all wiped down. The place was immaculate.

You know how it is.

Then, she came.

And the only time that she even walked into the house was to use a small downstairs bathroom to change, which just happened to be the only room that I did not completely spit shine.

Now, of course, every bathroom has its required reading material.

And the only book lying out was a joke book called 11,002 reasons to be miserable.

It's a funny book, but it's not necessarily what you want others to catch your reading.

And, when she came out, his only comment was interesting reading material, Pastor.

Oh, well, busted.

She didn't walk into the kitchen.

And, I had been so anxious, which is just silly, because family visitors are the best, a humble in no way judgmental

And she doesn't just talk Jesus, he lives it. So, why was I so anxious?

Well, because like Martha, today, I really wanted to impress her. Why?

Because I wanted her to love me. Why? Because she's family.

And isn't that how we act?

Think about it.

If somebody happens to call you on the phone and man say, hey, you know, I'm real close by.

So, I'll drop by shortly. What, what, what do you do? Well, I know what I do.

I run around the house, throwing everything into the closet, because I want to make it look like

architectural digest, because I want to make a good impression. Why?

Because I want people to love me.

Meanwhile, if my brother comes by, I don't pick up a thing.

I don't need to impress him, because I already know he loves me for the slob that I am.

So, let's talk about our gospel today.

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him.

She had a sister named Mary.

Now, like I said, this is a classic gospel.

It's one that many of us know.

And it's one that I think that many of us can relate to.

Martha and Mary.

But, today, I'm going to retile this, who's coming for dinner?

And, it starts with Jesus making a house call, and Martha, running around like crazy. Why?

Because, she wants everything to be perfect.

Meanwhile, Mary is sitting at the knee of Jesus and not helping at all, which causes Martha's anxiety to turn to anger, which, again, is something I think that we can relate to.

I mean, why aren't you helping, Mary?

Why aren't you helping me impress our honored guests?

What is wrong with you?

So, right away, we see a pretty stark contrast.

We have Mary sitting below, at the feet of Jesus, while we have Martha standing over Jesus.

And, I could just see her, spatula in hand, hands on her hips, and she is not happy.

We call this **triangulation**, which, again, is something that I think many of us can relate to, that family squabble, where two get into it, and turn to a third, say, well, whose side are you on?

Not me. I'm walking away.

So, here we have Martha.

She's very much telling Jesus what he needs to do.

Tell my lazy sister to get off her keister and help me.

And, Jesus responds, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things."

I just love that. I do.

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things."

That could be one of my favorite lines in all of scripture, because we all have a little Martha in us, and we're all so distracted.

Now, the original Greek word here is **paris pomai**, directly translating as pulled from all directions.

When you think about it is an excellent description of life.

The Greek word for anxious is **thorobazo**, translated as troubled, distressed, emotionally upset.

And this is where we find Martha, hands on her hips, she is not a happy camper, and she needs Jesus to do something for her.

Now, it's really easy for us to sit back and judge Martha.

We might even get the impression that Jesus is annoyed, but Jesus is not criticizing her.

And I like the double "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things."

That's a rhetorical device.

It's called **conduplication** and it's used to indicate compassion or empathy.

So, I really don't think that Jesus is criticizing Martha here, even though that we know that Jesus is certainly capable of criticism.

We see that on full display when Simon, the Pharisee, invited Jesus to dinner, which is in the seventh chapter of Luke.

You can read it, but it happens to involve Mary very much in that scene.

So, Simon, the Pharisee, invites Jesus for dinner.

And, as he is dining at this house, along with probably some other big wigs, a Mary bursts in unannounced.

She's not on the guest list, but she bursts in and starts to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears and dry them with her hair, which must have been something to see.

I'm not exactly sure what would cause her to do such a thing, but, obviously, something had happened between her and Jesus.

And my guess is that she had experienced the grace of his forgiveness and was filled with gratitude.

If you recall, Jesus looked up at Simon, and said, you know, when I came in here, you did not offer to have my feet washed, which would've been protocol.

Of course, it wouldn't have been Simon that washed the feet of Jesus.

That would've been the job of a slave of which I'm sure he had many, but he didn't even make the offer.

And Jesus points that out.

So, we know that he is capable of criticism, but he's not criticizing Martha here.

Because, when he says, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things," there is only need of one thing, and Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken from her.

He's not saying that what Martha is doing is wrong.

He's just saying that **what Mary's doing is better.**

Mary has chosen the better part.

So, what's the better part?

Well, what's Mary doing?

Well, let's start with what she's not doing.

She's not trying to impress Jesus.

She's not trying to feed Jesus, but rather she is feeding on Jesus.

And that's the better part.

I'm the bread of life. Unless you eat of the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you will have no life in you.

That's what Jesus wants.

He wants us to feed on him. Why? Because **you are what you eat.**

And, if you feed on the anxiety of this world, you're going to get heartburn, my friend.

But, if you feed on the prince of peace, you will have peace.

So, here we have Jesus very much turning the tables on Martha, because she thinks that this dinner is for Jesus, but he's saying no, no, no. This dinner is for you.

Mary gets that.

She has chosen in the better part.

She understands that Jesus is not the dinner guest that needs to be impressed.

She understands that, actually, Jesus is the host, welcoming them to his table.

And, at that table, Jesus feeds us with the bread of life, despite our messy house, despite all the skeletons in our closet, despite the sins that haunt us, despite our shame, despite our embarrassment, even if the bathroom isn't clean, despite our futile attempts to impress Jesus, he feeds us. Why?

Because guess who's coming to dinner? We are.

Now, just before my coffee break, we were talking all about how Jesus has come to the house of Martha and Mary for dinner.

And Martha is running around like a crazy woman, very much like I do when in-house guests arrive.

Why?

Because she thinks that she has to impress Jesus. She thinks that she has to earn his love, which is silly, because he already loves her, which is why I didn't clean the house when my brother came to town because I already know he loves me, which is where we find Mary right now.

Why?

Because she thinks that she has to impress Jesus. She thinks that she has to earn his love, which is silly, because he already loves her, which is why I didn't clean the house when my brother came to town because I already know he loves me, which is where we find Mary right now.

Where we find Mary right now.

I mean, wouldn't it be wonderful to have her perspective, to just know in your heart, that no matter what, Jesus just loves you to pieces.

Despite your dirty house, Mary got that, Martha didn't, what love Jesus has for us.

Think about it.

Even when he was hanging on the cross, bleeding, and dying, suffering so, what did he say?

"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

He even loved the very people that were putting him to death.

Yet, we are so anxious.

We're so concerned about so many things.

We're so caught up on doing everything just right.  
No more so than in church, because if the liturgical  
color is wrong, oh.  
Somebody pronounces a word wrong, oh, oh.  
Oh, that's a scandal.  
Should we sit?  
Should we stand?  
Should we go and receive?

Help me, Jesus.  
I want to make sure I'm doing all this right.  
"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and concerned  
about many things."  
Can we just sit at the feet of Jesus and trust him,  
knowing that we don't have to try to impress him or  
bargain with him?  
Can we just choose the better part?  
For God so loved the world that he gave his only  
son, so that we who believe in him may be saved.  
Can we really let that sink in? Mary did.  
Can we choose the better part?  
Now, I have to be careful here, because I don't want  
to be too hard on Martha.

If there were no Marthas, I'd be in big trouble.  
Because let me tell you, nothing would get done  
alone.  
So, I'm grateful for the Marthas of the world.  
And, like I said, Jesus is not saying that what  
Martha is doing is wrong.  
He's simply noting that what Mary is doing is better.  
She has chosen the better part.  
So, there is a time for Martha.  
There is a time to get busy but let us never forget  
there is also a time for Mary.  
There is a time where we **listen and reflect**. I guess  
it all comes down to motivation.  
Are we serving other people because we're trying to  
earn Jesus points and impress God?  
If so, we're Martha.  
Or are we serving other people simply because  
other people need to be served, and we very much  
want them to join us at the wedding feast?  
If so, then we're Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus.  
Jesus said that there's need for only one thing. And,  
what's that one thing?  
It's Jesus.  
It all comes down to that. It's Jesus.  
What do you need?  
Do you need Jesus?  
Are you lost?  
Let us feed on the medicine of our heavenly Father.  
There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner  
who repents than ninety-nine who have no need of  
repentance.

Right now, in this moment, Martha, with her hands  
on her hips, represent those ninety-nine.

Meanwhile, Mary sees herself as a lost sheep that  
has been found.  
A while back ago, we celebrated good shepherd  
Sunday.  
And, as we got to the end of that lesson, I told a  
story about a lost sheep who kept on trying to save  
itself.  
I got a lot of mail on that one.  
Evidently, there's a lot of people out there that are  
trying to save themselves.  
But, in case you missed that one, the moral of that  
story was that it is only once we stop to try to save  
ourselves and surrender to his will, that we can be  
actually saved.  
So, here's my question.  
When that sheep was finally rescued, where do you  
think it went?  
My guess is it stayed really close to its shepherd  
because our savior is the source of our piece.  
A piece that goes beyond all human understanding,  
which is a beautiful thing in a world filled with  
anxiety.  
"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried  
about many things."  
Like I said, I got a lot of Martha in me.  
Sometimes, I get up in the morning, and as soon as  
my feet hit the floor, I'm running.  
I'm running.  
People to see, sick people to visit, sermon to edit to  
prepare, people to marry, people to bury.  
I mean, it can be overwhelming. And, sometimes, I  
run off with Jesus.  
Just the other day, I was getting out of my car,  
making a hospital visit.  
And, as I'm getting out of the car, and I'm walking  
across the parking lot, I realize I forgot the  
Communion sets.  
Jesus said there's need of only one thing. And I  
forgot.  
I had run off without the elements. Why?  
Because "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and  
concerned about many things," but there's only  
need of one thing.  
And Mary has chosen the better part.

So, my friends, what have we learned today?  
How can we apply this into our life?  
Well, we can start by understanding that we live in a  
world that is filled with anxiety.  
We are concerned about many things, but there is  
need of only one thing, Him.  
And how do we do that?  
Well, I have found that it is best to start first thing  
in the morning, just taking a little time to check in with  
Jesus, because I have found that, if you don't take  
the time to check in with Jesus in the morning, he's  
real hard to catch up with in the afternoon.

Let us take the time to sit at the feet of Jesus and feed on his peace.

Remember, you are what you eat.

Let's stop trying to practice '**impression management**' and simply feed on him, because guess who's coming to dinner.

We are.

If only we accept the invitation. And the people said, AMEN

Rev. Katie Dailey, Pastor First UCC Richmond  
[daileystory@gmail.com](mailto:daileystory@gmail.com)  
586-202-8644

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***In a nutshell, learn to prioritize what is really important.***

***Kevin and Kyle***, drivers now, drop by to see us sometime when in the area. So many remember when your grandmother would bring you back when you were babies right on through your visits as you grew up. ***Logan, Carissa, Kaleb, Reagan and Mayella***, it is important that you keep the relationship with Jesus active and alive. Check in daily with the Lord. Enjoy Summer, keep well and all of you, check in with those you haven't seen for a time.