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Being Mary in a Martha World
Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named **Martha** welcomed him.^[k] ³⁹ She had a sister named **Mary, who sat at Jesus's^[l] feet and listened** to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ 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.**" ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are **worried and distracted** by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—**indeed only one.**^[m] Mary has chosen **the better part**, which will not be taken away from her."

We live in an incredibly **chaotic and noisy world**.
Everywhere we go, we hear television and news,
we see people stuck on their cell phones,
we hear conversations,
we are bombarded with videos online....it's relentless.

And it's a **distracted** world—people are rarely doing just one thing at a time.
While people are talking on the phone,
They are doing just about everything else too, including driving!
Most of us are guilty of this, at one time or another.

I once read from the American Management Association that we multitask so much, that we squeeze **31 hours** of activity into a 24-hour day!

People in this country are **so productive** that we,
rarely use all of our vacation or sick time,
and now since Covid, most of us are working 24/7—why?
Because we can '**work from home**' online!
Even our kids know this because sick days or snow days,
when school is canceled is almost a thing of the past with online options!

So we are able to do a lot, at once, but at what price?

Through technology, people are accomplishing more in less time,
but they are also feeling more and more overwhelmed.
Because what happens when we keep **multitasking**?

Fatigue.

And we may be getting more done in less time,
It might be **quantity**----but is it always **quality**?
Many times the answer is NO.

No matter who we are,
we are constantly bombarded with **supposedly URGENT tasks.**

That's why we multitask!

But what is **really** important?
What is actually **urgent** in your life? Today? Right now?
And how should you be dealing with that?

What if the story of Mary and Martha has some **real insight** for us?
What if we stop, and listen for God's wisdom in this story?

First, we need to step back and re-examine these characters,
Because the meaning of **Mary and Martha** has been so assumed.

On the surface it looks like one woman is **praised** for doing the **right** thing,
and the other is **scolded** for doing the **wrong** thing.

But just like everything else Jesus says—
we really have to **dig deeper** to see his meaning.

And talk about stirring up **arguments**,
the Mary and Martha story has generated plenty of them over the years!

After all, **some people are more like Mary**—more prone to sit and listen,
and some are **more, well busybodies** like Martha.
Which one do you identify with as you hear the story?

Do you think that Jesus saying to all the busybodies in the world,
Just sit down and be still?

What if he's NOT saying that?

After all, Martha is doing what was necessary
to feed Jesus and the others in his ministry.
It was a **ministry of hospitality** to feed and welcome Him.
This was important and meaningful work!

Jesus relied on people's hospitality, to be welcomed, and fed!

And we know from the Gospels how much Jesus
appreciated service and hospitality.

This is the man who said he came to serve, not to be served.
And here, it says that **Martha is the one who welcomed him.**
Jesus loves Martha—we can be sure of that.

What **MARY was doing here was strange**—staying out of the kitchen,
abandoning her sister to do the lion's share of the work,
and sitting, likely with the men, listening to Jesus!

But **Martha** gets so tired of doing all the work while Mary sits at his feet,
That she can no longer contain her feelings.

We might expect Martha say to her sister Mary,
hey I could really use some help in here.

But instead she tries to get Jesus to tell Mary to get up and help.
**Lord, Don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?
Tell her to help me."**

"Martha, Martha," Jesus says, "you are **worried and distracted** by many
things, but there is need of **only ONE thing.**

Mary has chosen it; Mary has chosen **the better part.**"

Now, this is the part of the story where people start arguing!
Is Jesus saying that **Mary is RIGHT and Martha is WRONG?**
Be like Mary, and not like Martha?

I used to think this story was just about different **personality types**,
and somehow Jesus prefers a quiet listener over a busybody!

But is that what he's really saying?

What IS Jesus saying?

What if this is not just a story about **personality types?**

What if it could just as **easily been Mary** in the kitchen getting upset with
Martha, who was sitting at his feet?

What if Mary had been the one worried and distracted?

Well, let's listen to Jesus again.

*Martha, you are **worried and distracted** by many things,
there is need of only **one** thing, and Mary has chosen the **better** part.*

Notice what Jesus emphasizes.

He says you are **worried and distracted** by many things.

Does that ring any bells?

Haven't we all been there like Martha—

worried and distracted by many things?

How much do we need to sit at the feet of Jesus,

to rest and hear his Words,

to just be in his presence?

When was the last time you did that?

The last time that ***YOU just stopped to listen to God—***

To be with God in nature, or in a good book,

in the Bible, or just in silence?

When was the last time you dedicated time to God in prayer?

What does time with Jesus mean to you? Breathe deeply and think about that.

And how often are ***you worried*** and distracted by many things?

Are you-- right now?

Are you physically here, but mentally making a 'to do' list,

Or reviewing your weekend,

Or planning your week,

Or thinking about various projects or problems?

We know that temptation, right?

It's ***challenging*** to step back from worry and distraction--

It seems natural to let all that fill our hearts and minds!

And you know what?

I think we are conditioned by our society to do just that!

We are told that we ***should be worried and distracted***—all the time!

We're even told that it's the ***price of a successful life***, according to the world!

Busy-ness is rampant in our culture.

How do most people respond to: ***'How are you?'***

I bet 90 percent say something like—*I'm so busy. And I'm so tired. There's not enough hours in the day.*

How often do we meet people who say:

Me? I'm NOT busy!

I'm just taking it easy these days.

I find that I'm resting a lot.

You know, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

That would almost be unheard of, right?

What if ***Martha's work*** in the kitchen was NOT bad—at all?
 What if it was a beautiful, necessary ministry of hospitality?
 And if she had been ***at peace inside***, all would have been well?
 If she had taken time to join Mary at his feet, listening to what he had to say...

Anne Voskamp's wrote an incredible book called "***One Thousand Gifts***"
 She writes about finding God in the everyday and ordinary,
 Down to the soap bubbles while doing the nightly dishes.
 She writes beautifully about seeing God in the daily chores of home,
 The simple tasks that must be done,
 And, can be done from a ***spiritual perspective***.
 She reminds us that ALL of the work we do—is spiritual.
 And we need the Marthas of this world.
 What we ***don't need is the worry and distraction***.

How do we let go of that?
 We ALL ***need to sit at the feet of Jesus***.
 We need to be filled and refilled with the presence of God.
 We need to receive and be empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 Without that—we run dry.
***If we try to serve without ever sitting at the feet of Jesus,
 We will end up worried, distracted, and eventually worn out.***

I like what a university chaplain told a former professor of mine, Rev. Tom Long, "*If you do not have some vision of what God is doing to repair the world, you can't get up every day and work in a soup kitchen. It finally beats you down.*" (Rev. Tom Long, July 22, 2007).

Isn't that true? If we don't sit at his feet, and get that vision of what God is doing, The world will finally beat us down!

We CAN do the tasks of daily life, without having time Jesus—

But at what *cost*?

What will happen to our mental, emotional and physical health?

Where will we find the love we need to give to others,

If we never stop to be filled with the love of God?

Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens to his Word,

She listens to his vision.

If we take the time to listen to Jesus and his Words,

we will be able to ***not only prepare meals*** for the hungry, care for the sick, show hospitality to the stranger,

but we will ***find JOY in it!***

We will find the ***energy and ability to really love God and neighbor.***

We will find ***a life worth living!***

If we take time to listen like Mary,

We can be ***empowered by the Holy Spirit—***

and find the freedom to follow God—with **JOY. With peace.**

This is so different than relying on our own hard work.

Remember Joan Gray's book the "***Sailboat Church***"?

Our goal is to let the Holy Spirit fill our sails and lead us,

Instead of working so hard on our own—to be a rowboat!

We want to be sailboats, not rowboats.

Mary was sailing. She was listening, and she was being filled with God's Spirit, just like we need to be filled today.

So how do we live in this fast-paced, multitasking world?

By taking time out--

To be in the presence of God, to sit at the feet of Jesus.

To pray, read, just sit.

To take in His Word, His love, and His life.

Stop right now—breathe deeply—in and out.

Make a commitment to spend time with God—because God so wants to spend time with you!

Let's not let ourselves get too busy

to make a time and place for God.

Think about this: ***God has to manage the whole world,***

and God is never too busy to make time for us!

Shouldn't we do the same for God?

And here's the thing--***once we do take that time with God,***

Then, we can go out into our Martha world,

full of ***life, purpose, and energy*** for the journey ahead.

It's like an ***elementary school teacher*** in the poorest part of Jamaica, teaching a chaotic group of little ones, loving and listening to every single one.

A visiting youth group on a mission trip decided that the only way she could do this was that ***she must really love being a teacher.*** But they were surprised to hear her say, "*Oh, I don't come here everyday because I love teaching. I come here every day because I love Jesus, and I see Jesus in every one of these children.*" (Rev. Tom Long, July 22, 2007)

What if we could ***say THAT about whatever*** we are doing?

That we do it because we love Jesus, because we love God.

Not just because we **have to,**

And not because we've got to do doing **ten things at once** to survive,

But because **we love God.**

Because we want to be a part of that **love,** that **commitment,** and that **joy.**

Friends, hear the ***Good News*** today.

Our lives will be changed,

If we ***find the time*** to be like Mary, in our Martha world.

So here's your homework.

Make time—today, this week. This month.

Set it aside. Morning, night, it doesn't matter ***when.***

Inside, outside, home or away, it doesn't matter ***where.***

Set aside time to be with God.

Set aside time to let go of the worry and distraction

And just sit at Jesus' feet.

There is need of only ONE thing—and that is it.

And for that, all God's people can say together: Amen.