

August 1, 2004 (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)

9th Sunday after Pentecost [c]

[Hint for telling the story: Put Mary and Martha on opposite sides.]

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ *While Jesus and his followers were traveling, Jesus went into a town. A woman named Martha let Jesus stay at her house.* ³⁹ *Martha had a sister named Mary, who was sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to him teach.* ⁴⁰ *But Martha was busy with all the work to be done. She went in and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me alone to do all the work? Tell her to help me."*

⁴¹ *But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things."* ⁴² *Only one thing is important. Mary has chosen the better thing, and it will never be taken away from her."*
(New Century Version)

[same story, in the lectionary gloss]

LUKE 10:38-42

38. While the group was-walking, Jesus arrived at the city, and a woman named MARTHA invited Jesus into her home.

39. MARTHA had a sister named MARY, and she sat near Jesus' feet and listened to Jesus speak.

40. But MARTHA was-worried about all the house work to prepare for the visitor. MARTHA came and asked, "Lord, please tell my sister to come and help me with all the work."

41. Jesus answered, "MARTHA, MARTHA, you worry about many things.

42. But there is only one thing that you really need. MARY made the right decision, and no-one take-away that from her."

Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus had a big house.
That big house became the meeting place for their many friends.
Often, their house became a hotel for Jesus and his 12 Disciples.

Martha had a special gift from God.
Her gift - her skill - was-what?
Serving other people in her home.
The English word for that gift is HOSPITALITY.

When Jesus and his 12 Disciples visited Jerusalem, He often stayed in the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They lived in a town named BETHANY, about 2 miles east from Jerusalem.

Imagine how much work it is for that family to feed 13 or more hungry visitors. Everyone in the family must help cook.
Remember - no microwave ovens. No refrigerators. No GAS or electricity.

But now, notice that our story today says nothing about food.
...nothing about cooking. The lesson only says: *Martha was busy with all the work to be done.*

Cooking meals, that was only part of their work for their visitors.

But Mary, Martha, and Lazarus loved to have Jesus visit them.
He blessed them with His teaching God's Word.

Then... happen!

Jesus taught.
Mary listened, feeling good.
Martha worked, feeling angry.

If someone wanted to listen,
Jesus wanted to teach.

And if Jesus wanted to teach,
Mary wanted to listen.

But if anyone wanted to eat,
someone must cook!

Often it happened, Jesus became so focused [attention] with teaching, He forgot to eat!

One time Jesus visited the city named SAMARIA. There he met a woman near a water WELL, while His Disciples went to the city to buy food.

Later the Disciples came back with food;
they interrupted Jesus' conversation with the woman,
they offered Him lunch.

Jesus said, "No."
He wanted to focus on saving that woman,
not think about feeding His stomach.

Now that happened again, while Jesus taught Mary.

But Martha saw a different responsibility.
She want to take-care-of her visitors.

Martha came to Jesus and complained about her lazy Sister.

The New Living Bible translates Martha's complaint this way:

"Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

We can wonder --

Did those two sisters often have arguments?

Why didn't Martha herself ask Mary to come help?

Martha could, in a nice way, say something like [as],

"Mary, remember we still have much to do for our visitors."

But when we feel irritated,

we don't have nice words

or nice emotions.

Right?

So... Martha doesn't speak straight to Mary about her [Martha's] problem. Instead, Martha complains *about* Mary, speaking to their visitor. Martha is searching for one more vote on her side against Mary.

Imagine-if we were that visitor, and Martha complained to us about her sister. We would feel embarrassed, right?

But Jesus is not embarrassed.

Jesus sees the real problem.

Using today's language, Jesus said to Martha:

"Relax! You don't need to be that busy."

But Martha wanted to be busy *for Jesus!*

Martha wanted to *serve Jesus!*

Can anything be wrong with that!?

Yes.

Jesus CARES little about our work for Him.

He CARES much about our relationship [connect] with Him.

He wants our service, yes.

But He wants our fellowship more.

Martha understood serving. That was her gift from God.
But Mary understood relationship, fellowship with Jesus.

Martha wanted to feed Jesus' stomach.
But Jesus wants to feed our souls.

Martha prepared food for their bodies.
But Jesus has His Word as food for our souls.

Jesus must serve us first,
then we can serve Him.

Many things every day steal our interest from God.
Two big things most steal our interest from God:
busy,
and worry.

Both those problems say,
"I must do... I must do... I must do...
Sorry, Jesus, I have no time today.
I must do, do, do...
I have no time to read your Book.
I must do, do, do...
I will pray only for things that I must do.
You help me get my work done, Okay?"

Jesus answers from our story today,
"No. Not okay. Relax."

Trust Jesus.
Read His love letter to you - the Bible.
Talk to Him.

Your work will NEVER be finished, never.
You will always have more work to do.

Nothing we can do can earn our place in heaven.
Jesus already did everything for us
through His death on the cross for us.

And now God's Word, that Jesus serves to you,
that you will never lose.

Remember what Jesus said about Mary:
"Mary made the right decision."
And Martha can't take-away that from her.

We all fail, yes.
But Jesus still loves us.
Jesus forgives us.

Jesus meets us every day to talk to us.
Jesus wants to us to give all our worries away to Him.

Now, one curious thing about our story today:
While Jesus taught Mary, what did Jesus say to her?

We don't know.
But we already have much from Jesus' teaching, in the Bible.

We see Jesus teaching "good" religious people.
He gave them strong warning.

We see Jesus teaching people with
humble hearts,

broken hearts,
people with deep pain,
Jesus gave them words about His
love,
forgiveness,
healing,
peace.

Jesus accepts you. Jesus says that You are in His family.
You have no need to worry. He will take care of you.

What you have in Jesus, no person can take away from you.

Amen.