

Year C – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; Lectionary 16 – July 20, 2025

Pastor Megan Floyd

Luke 10:38-42

Colossians 1:15-28

Grace and peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is our center and our focus. Amen.

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Martha... Martha... Martha...

Poor Martha gets a bad rap from this story... but I understand her, and I bet you do too... especially if you're an older sister or sibling.

The text doesn't explicitly say *who* is the older sister... but I think anyone who knows sisters knows... that she's the older one.

She has welcomed the traveling Jesus into her home and is bustling away at all the many tasks of hosting, while her sister sits at his feet, not lifting a finger... just listening... ugh!!

Oh Martha...

You know the stories that make us cringe... this is one of them for me... which tells me there is something in here that I need to pay attention to.

Before we get into it, though, there are some interesting things I'd like to point out...

The first is that we tend to harmonize our four gospels... and what I mean... is that in our remembering, we tend to blend the information between them, rather than remember the specifics between each of the gospel authors.

There's nothing wrong with that... after all, that's how we tell the full story of Jesus' birth!

But it also means that when we hear a story about Martha and Mary, we might immediately remember that Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, had two sisters... Martha and Mary... and they lived in Bethany.

Except that Luke never mentions Lazarus... nor does Luke write that Jesus is passing through Bethany. What he writes is...

“Now as they went on their way, he entered a *certain* village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into *her* home.

If they were sisters to Lazarus, or any other male, it would have been *his* home... but no... this is Martha's house.

And that right there is something to notice... Jesus could have chosen nearly any other home in this *certain* village, where the host of the home would have been a man.

That would have been expected and proper... but Jesus chooses to honor the home of two single women.

And then... we hear that sister Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to what he was saying and learning from him. She is wholly focused on Jesus.

But women weren't usually given this preferred place of discipleship... and yet, Jesus chose her... he teaches *her*.

And Martha... poor Martha... Martha was doing what anyone at that time would have expected of her... she was busy in the kitchen and distracted by all the tasks of entertaining company.

We've talked about hospitality in the ancient world before... Martha was offering hospitality to these travelers who had come to her home.

So even with these seemingly small details, we can take note... Jesus is, once again, turning things upside down and breaking down barriers.

So given the entirety of this situation... when I read his rebuke of Martha... I hear him speaking to her in a loving and warm tone.

He may be telling her that Mary has made the better choice, but I hear him speaking in a loving way... inviting her to consider that he's not your typical guest.

He tells her... she is worried and distracted by many things, but right in that moment... with Jesus in her home... there is need of only one thing... Him.

I so... resonate with this story. I find it so easy to get caught up in details and plans that I can forget what the goal was at the start.

And I know faith communities are not immune to this... we gather here in the name of Christ, but how often do congregations get wrapped up in unnecessary details?

We've only just begun our time together... you and me... but I know at some point, this will come up because it's a completely human thing to have happen...

We'll get sidetracked and distracted by details, and we will need to remember that *Jesus is why we gather for worship and study, Jesus is why we give of our time and our treasure, and Jesus is why we serve.*

*The focus of our mission here... is simple... it's Jesus.*

So... as you all know, we just concluded a very fun week of VBS. We had a small group of kids... and a wonderfully large group of older youth and adults who showed up to volunteer.

They busied themselves in the kitchen, preparing our dinner and cleaning up afterward, and they planned bible lessons, crafts, and games.

All so that our small group of little kids would feel surrounded by love and support as they learned about Jesus! ...Jesus was our mission.

By those counts, it was a very successful week!

These folks all showed up ready to serve... just like Martha served... except their focus was on Jesus... just like Mary.

You see... I don't think Jesus was telling Martha that her tasks were bad... I think he was telling her that her focus was off.

She was focused on her tasks instead of being focused on him.

Jesus doesn't say that serving others is bad... keep in mind that immediately before he comes to Martha and Mary's home, he has just told a lawyer that serving your neighbor in love is how we serve and honor God.

Serving is good... and learning is good...

So it's not *what* you are doing... It's *why* you are doing it.

Why do you serve... study... sing... worship? What is your motivation?

I do these things... and I think you do too... because we follow Jesus, and we know that giving time and space in our lives for Jesus changes the way we interact with the world.

Love... changes how we interact.

When we remember that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, and through him, all things on heaven and earth were created... and that in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and that through him, God was pleased to reconcile all things back to God.

When we remember all this... and that the great mystery of it all... is that Jesus Christ dwells in each of us... because of love... we are changed... transformed!

Jesus is calling us to himself, and Jesus is the better part of anything we can do... because Jesus knows that if we allow the love of Christ to be central in our lives... then the world will never be the same.

And so, we rejoice! We rejoice with Martha and Mary... with Peter, James, and John... With Pheobe and Lydia... with Paul and Barnabas...

We rejoice with all those who have come before us in the faith, and all who will come to Christ after...

We rejoice that Jesus Christ is our focus... no matter the shape of our ministry in this world... be it cooking, nursing, driving, feeding, cleaning, studying, praying, singing silly songs with kids... or any number of other ways we can show love in this world...

We rejoice that Christ is at the center of it all... the truest source of love, and our reason for being.

Amen.