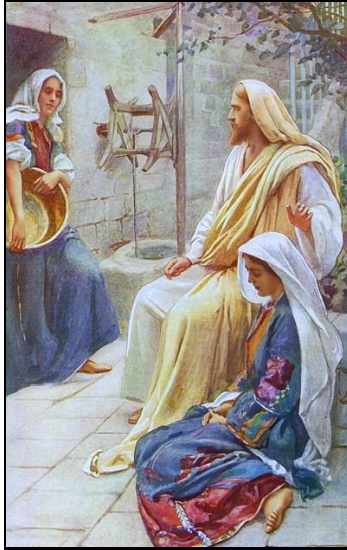


FAITHFUL WOMEN UNITE!



Scripture:

Colossians 1:24-28

²⁴I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But 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." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



Last week, we looked at how the point of the story of the Good Samaritan is not just about Jesus asking the question, “Who is your neighbor,” but more importantly about “Are you being a good neighbor?”

Now this week let’s look at how Jesus teaches Mary and Martha that he understands each of them have a unique way of being his disciples. This applies to all of us as well.

THE BACKGROUND OF MARY AND MARTHA

Mary Ann Beavis, Professor at St. Thomas More College expands on the background of Mary and Martha. In an article on this subject she said, “Although contemporary understandings of their significance to the early church have been eclipsed by a preoccupation with the other Mary, Mary Magdalene, this Mary and Martha were highly revered by ancient Christians, and their role in the Gospels and beyond is starting to be recognized.”

We know that Lazarus, (who was raised from the dead) is the brother of Mary and Martha.

Jesus and Lazarus were close friends so he must have known Mary and Martha well, too. What we don’t know is the economic status of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, but we can guess they were probably fairly wealthy and able to support Christ’s ministry with some of their resources.

A LARGE HOME

According to theologian Marg Mowczko, they must have had a home large enough to accommodate Jesus and his entourage. And Mary is the one who had used very expensive perfume to anoint Jesus head and feet. It was worth a year’s wages. Some scholars presume Martha and Mary were widows who had not re-married. Lazarus their brother lived with them and most likely other family members as well.

An interesting side note: The name “Martha” is the feminine form of an Aramaic word meaning “lord” or “master.” Martha was regarded as the mistress of the house. Mary was the younger sister (and probably more social) while being less motivated to do the work to prepare the meal. Is that true in your family?

The typical interpretation of this passage is that Martha is being admonished by Jesus for being focused on the tasks of preparing the meal for Jesus and his entourage rather than sitting at his feet listening to his words. Sitting at a teacher’s feet was the usual posture of a student in those days. Some of the other men and women who travelled with Jesus were also likely to be sitting alongside Mary while Martha was busy supervising the preparation of a big meal.

TIME TO SAVOR JESUS’ PRESENCE

Rather than look at the differences in the way these two women show their support of Jesus, let’s look at the way they are united.

Jesus’ tone as he speaks to Martha is an empathic one, not an admonishment.

There are no exclamation marks after, “Martha, Martha.” He could have said it like this: Martha...Martha, like a compassionate Daddy. Jesus loves both women and wants them to know that now is the time to focus attention on being in his presence. Jesus knows this is one of their last time’s together on earth. Jesus knows his arrest is imminent. Now is the time to savor Jesus’ presence.

THE MESSAGE IS FOR ALL OF US

This message to Martha is for all of us. Now is the time to attend to Jesus rather than focus on your to-do list. Now is the time to reschedule your life and re-prioritize how you spend your time. Spend your time on what is meaningful and don’t waste time worrying about the future. Now is the time to enjoy your family and friendships and God-given love for them, too.

Faithful women (and men) must unite to promote the church of Jesus Christ and act on our faith in community, not in cliques or in competition with each other. (Next week Pat Kerrigan, the famous radio news host from KRSO will be here and she plans to preach on Faith in Community.”)

NOW IS THE TIME

When Professor Caroline Lewis talks about this passage, she says, “We all need this reminder every once in a while. *Now is the time* to look around and see what difference faith is making in your life and maybe, how your life needs to change because of your faith.”

THE LISTENER AND THE DOER

Mary and Martha demonstrated two different kinds of discipleship. Mary as the listener and Martha as the doer. If we are honest, most of us have been both at some point in time. We need to be both, for different reasons at different times. When we realize both the doer and the listener are needed, we start to realize that faith is diverse and so are personalities and abilities.

There are times for doing and times for listening and learning, praying and pondering, together and alone. But when you have a chance to sit at the feet of Jesus, you should take the opportunity to do so. We all operate differently and make choices in life based on how our brains function.

BRAIN STUDIES

Many brain studies have shown that women are able to multitask more effectively than men. But they also found that gender differences became closer to the same as people age. Women in their reproductive years are better at multitasking than in our retirement years. So, we should all be patient with one another. As we lose gray matter in our brains, we need to think more slowly, do more listening and ponder more carefully. That is just how we are created. Our brains shrink with age.

Exercise and brain stimulating activities may slow down the shrinkage depending on how healthy you are in general. But all our hearts, minds and souls benefit from a close relationship with Jesus whose love can guide all our ways whether we try to multi-task or not.

PRACTICING FAITH

No matter how fast our brains work, the point is described this way by Reverend David Lose:

Faith can be as easily practiced in the kitchen as in the study, at school or at play, while working the farm or on a train.

What matters is not so much what we are doing, but our attentiveness to God's presence during all the varied activities and responsibilities we have.

David Lose also says, "Jesus wants to draw each and all of us into a relationship that lifts us beyond the everyday limitations of this life so that we might glimpse the sacred holiness with which each moment is imbued (permeated)."

That is "the one thing" that is needed for all of us to be aware of, and then to focus on learning who Jesus is (through the gospel message), to develop our faith and understanding of who God is. Then everything flows from that faith into daily life.

Ponder what is worrying or distracting you that prevents you from sitting at the feet of Jesus? Listen to how much he loves you and learn how to love the world on his behalf.

And let's cut Martha a break. Consider her brain may be an effective multi-tasker and Mary's is more focused on one thing at a time. God doesn't want us to promote division between types of women (or men) but unite all of us with a patient understanding of our God given

differences. Here is a poem that empathizes and understands Marthas.

Martha Loved Him Too By Elwood McQuaid

We've been too hard on Martha
Because of that rebuff
I think somehow we feel
She didn't love her Lord enough.

No, quite to the contrary,
Martha's love was such
That in her eagerness to serve,
She tried to do too much.

For there's a time for serving,
And there's a time for rest.
Everything in season;
Choosing what is best.

That hour had its "good part"
In sitting at His feet,
Taking in the blessed Word
Which is our bread and meat.

Things must stay in balance,
So let us pray from youth:
God, give me Martha's diligence
And Mary's love for truth.

**Benediction:
May the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the love of God and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with
you now and forevermore. Amen**



**The Rev. Dr. Cindy Alloway
Presbyterian Church of the Roses
2500 Patio Court
Santa Rosa, CA 95405**