

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."

Luke 10:38-42, 2016

Do any of you have siblings who thought you were lazy while you grew up together?

Or, did you think your brother or sister was lazy and got away with not doing their part?

We might chalk this story up to a squabble between two sisters, but you know if Jesus is in the middle of it, there is something else we need to pay attention to.

And there is more to it than that.

These two women are different types of people, obviously.

Martha is the doer of the two.

As a consequence she is concerned about providing the best hospitality for their guest,

and I suspect not just because it is Jesus, but she would serve any guest in their home with such great care.

Mary, on the other hand, is not concerned about all the busy work of hospitality. She wants to hear what Jesus has to say.

Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens and learns.

Jesus does make a qualitative assessment comparing what the two women have chosen for themselves saying,

“Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

So you may wonder does this mean that it is better to sit around and listen to Jesus,

and not get the daily chores done, provide hospitality to guests, go to work or school,

or do any of the other things that need to be done in the course of a day?

I would say no, although there should be time set aside to be in Jesus presence, hear his words,

and in that way know something about what you are called to do and why.

Oh, we come back to that theme from some weeks ago,

coming to Jesus, hearing his words and acting on them.

You notice the coming and hearing are first and the acting later.

I am not sure what Mary would have done next after listening to Jesus if the story continued,

but you don't come to Jesus and hear his words without being moved to some outward demonstration of how that word has changed, or informed your life.

In today's world I believe that message is significant.

You know how busy your own lives are. How do you make time to stop and listen to Jesus, have a conversation with God,

and that means doing the listening part as well.

We are so busy we don't take time to stop and be with many people in a fully present and authentic way,

let alone a God whose face we cannot see,

and whose voice we cannot hear as we would a family member or friend sitting right in front of us.

I believe these days are days we especially need to stop, sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his words before you get on Facebook, twitter or Instagram or whatever social media you may use,

And say whatever you think needs to be said;

or before politicians, and others appear on media outlets espousing their messages that continue to wound others and separate us.

It is worthwhile to stop, listen, then act on, or in a way you may understand from Jesus' words.

There is another message for us in this brief passage, and it has to do with our differences.

In this world there are all kinds of people. One of the gifts God has given us is our differences.

Some people are doers and some people are thinkers, some people have specific technical skills and are good with their hands and other can organize,

Some people are more sensory and others not.

But all of these abilities and characteristics that make us all different are God given, and all these different people are needed in this world.

The world would not be the same without both Martha and Mary.

And so, the true meaning of the story probably has less to do with the difference between the two women than some other matter.

One last, but maybe surprising message in this passage could be found in Martha's response to Mary's choice of sitting at Jesus' feet.

Martha is incensed by this, and she comes to Jesus whining that Mary isn't doing her part of the work and demanding that Jesus tell her to help.

You know Jesus' response is to not honor that request, and he in fact lifts up Mary's decision as the higher calling.

What has happened here?

Martha has wrongly judged Mary's inaction and is too worried about what others are doing.

Martha is doing valuable work. But, it is her work, not someone else's at this point,

And she doesn't need to be judging someone else for not seeing that as their work also.

Now, I know you have all seen this type of thing go on in the work place, in school, and I dare say, even in the church,

Although I am sure it has never happened here.

Each of you are given gifts to share with others in your life, and who you encounter along the way.

They are gifts with which you are intended to serve others, to lift them up, to be an encouragement, to heal, to comfort, to teach, to help them mature, to lead.

Each gift is valuable. Each of you are valuable,

and as you look around the others you see are valuable in
God's eyes

and deserve the gifts you have to share with them.

We each play a role and judging others for what they may or
may not be doing doesn't accomplish anything,

Or contribute to God's mission in the world.

There is much to be done.

The children in summer camp don't get cared for unless
someone prepares for them, and others watch over them
throughout the day.

The school kits for Lutheran World Relief don't get
prepared unless someone plans and prepares the activity,
and the others take the bags home and fill them with the
supplies and brings them back.

And then someone sends them off to those who will
get them to the children in some far away part of the
world who want to go to school and learn,

but don't have the supplies they need.

The bulletins don't get done unless someone prepares
them, prints them, and puts them together.

The sermon doesn't get preached unless it gets written.

Communion doesn't get served without someone preparing it.

The community doesn't get helped unless we get out there and do it.

But where does it all start?

sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to his words.

What is your role?

This may be the moment for you to sit at Jesus' feet and allow him to speak to your heart,

or maybe it is time for something else.

Come to Jesus, hear his words and then act on them with love and grace toward others.