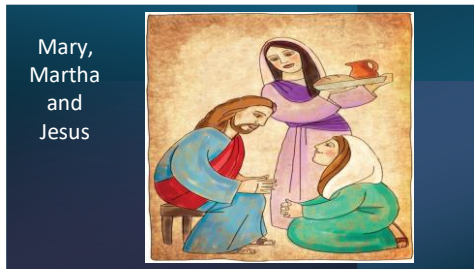


## Sermon Sunday 20.07.2025



Imagine being like Martha and Mary, and you have invited some important guests to dinner. How many times at special events where you are with family or a group of people, have you felt alone and that you were the one doing all the work to prepare for the visit? How did it make you feel? It may not be a meal where this occurs as it may be like where there is a family to care for a relative but the rest of the family make their excuses to not be available and all the work seems to always fall on the one person. How hard, at times does it feel that you are the one carrying all the stress, strife, and burdens to get the work done. How many times do these types of events cause arguments or quarrels in families.

In the gospel of Luke, we encounter the interesting story of Martha and Mary, the two sisters whose brief encounter with Jesus in their home helps us to view our own spiritual priorities and the rhythm of our daily lives. This passage has lessons for us about presence, hospitality, service, and, most importantly, devotion.

The passage opens with Jesus and his disciples entering a village, where a woman named Martha welcomes him into her home. Immediately, we see Martha in action, showing she is busy, eager to provide for her guest. Meanwhile, her sister Mary sits at the Lord's feet, listening intently to his words. Luke helps us to pay attention to the contrast between the two sisters. Martha is "distracted by all the preparations that had to be made," while Mary "sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said." Eventually, Martha voices her frustration: "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Jesus' gentle reply is both loving correction and profound guidance: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha's hospitality in ancient cultures, was welcoming and caring for guests which was seen as a sacred duty. Her actions show love and a desire to honour her guest. If we are honest, many of us see ourselves in Martha as we are busy with the necessary, filling our days with tasks, and striving to meet the needs of others. What then unfolds becomes a source of distraction and anxiety. Her good intentions lead her to a place of frustration, and she begins to feel isolated and unappreciated. turning her irritation toward Jesus, asking him to intervene on her behalf.

Here, we see Martha doing things for Jesus instead of being with Jesus. Our well-meaning busyness, especially in service of God or others, can distract us from the deeper call to relationship and presence.

Mary's position is one of being receptive and attentiveness to Jesus. Sitting at Jesus' feet was the traditional posture of a disciple, someone eager to learn and be transformed. For Mary to assume this place was interesting as it broke the social expectations of her time, where women were rarely encouraged to become disciples in this manner. Jesus affirms her choice, declaring it "the better part." By choosing to listen, Mary demonstrates that being with Jesus, soaking in his teaching, and cultivating a special relationship with God is the foundation of all true service. She embodies the call to prioritise presence over performance, intimacy over being busy.



Jesus' words to Martha, "few things are needed, or indeed only one," invite us to reconsider our priorities. What is the "one thing" that is necessary? The answer, in this context, is clear: being present with Christ, listening to his word, and allowing that relationship to shape everything else that we do in our daily lives. Any

service that we can offer is important and it is important that we look to ordering our lives from the inside out through our relationship with God, so that our actions we perform daily flows from our whole being.

The story of Martha and Mary speaks powerfully to us today, where being seen as being busy is often worn as a badge of honour, but it is also a distraction. The world we live in is a world of endless to-do lists, competing demands, and a relentless pressure to achieve. How often do we, like Martha, find ourselves “worried and upset about many things”? How often do our days become so full that we miss the gentle voice of Jesus inviting us to slow down, to listen, to simply be present?

Jesus does not rebuke Martha for serving, but for her anxiety and distraction. The invitation from this gospel reading, then, is reminding us not to abandon our responsibilities, but to cultivate a heart that is centred on Christ throughout these responsibilities we hold. It is a call for us to turn our service into an act of worship, rooted in the “better part” of relationship.

To “choose the better part” is to intentionally carve out space and time to sit at Jesus’ feet, to listen, to reflect, to pray, and to rest in his presence. It means valuing our relationship with God above the relentless demands of our schedules. This choice is not always easy for us. It requires us learning to let go of the need to be constantly productive or to seek validation and praise through our accomplishments. We may disappoint others’ expectations and leaving some tasks unfinished but Jesus reminds us that what we gain in his presence “will not be taken away.”

Should we strive to be like Mary and never like Martha? Not at all. The Church we belong to needs both servants and disciples as both bring about a united service that springs from a closeness, and this can fuel our loving actions of caring and sharing.

We need to maintain a balance. When we root ourselves in God’s love, our service becomes joyful and sustainable. When we neglect the “one thing needed,” even our best efforts can become burdensome.

Think about your daily rhythms and where you are you more like Martha, busy and distracted. Where can you make space to be more like Mary and be more attentive and listening to those around you. Think about how your acts of service become an opportunity to encounter Christ, rather than be distracted all the time. Remember to set aside moments in your day for silence, prayer, and reflection. Allow yourself to listen for the voice of God.

This one is difficult for many of us but think about how you can release anxiety: When worries crowd in, remember Jesus’ gentle words—“You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.” Value the “better part”: Trust that any time you spend with God is never wasted, and that it grounds and empowers everything else you do in your life.

Luke offers us more than a lesson in hospitality as it calls us to examine the core of our discipleship. Are we so caught up in serving God that we neglect to know God? Do we allow our busyness to drown out his voice? Or are we willing to choose the “better part,” to sit at his feet, and to find in him the source of peace, wisdom, and strength?

As we think about this story, try to hear Jesus’ gentle invitation to Martha as if it were spoken to us. Try to balance service with stillness, action with adoration, so that every part of our lives becomes a living response to his presence. And in doing so, may we find the joy, purpose, and rest that comes from choosing the better part, a gift that, indeed, will never be taken away. Let us try to be still and know that God is with us in our daily lives. Amen

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