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***Being Mary in a Martha World***  
***Luke 10:38-42***

I think you'd all agree to the statement that we live in a  
***Chaotic, noisy, and distracted world.***

I mean, can you count how many times you've heard a cell phone ring  
the last time you went out to dinner, or shopping?

Or the number of times you've seen someone text and drive?

And it's a ***multitasking*** world too—people are rarely doing just one thing.  
Of course there's the people talking on the phone, and doing just about  
everything else at the same time.

And according to the Houston Chronicle, we can multitask enough to squeeze  
***31 hours of*** activity into a 24-hour day—according to the American  
Management Association.

The study concluded that people today can and do add almost 50 percent  
more activity to a typical day of 16 waking hours. Similarly, according to U.S.  
Labor Department figures, the average yearly increase in U.S. workers'  
productivity has doubled from 1.5 percent during the period from 1987–1996  
to 3 percent from 1997–2006.

***But at what price?*** Through technology, people are accomplishing more in  
less time, but they are feeling overwhelmed by the multiplicity of their lives,  
according to Ed Reilly, CEO of the AMA. "There's a sense of fatigue that comes  
from multitasking," he says. "You can force yourself to keep doing things, but  
you may not be as effective."  
*Houston Chronicle (6-21-06)*

We are constantly bombarded with ***supposedly urgent tasks***,  
But what is actually important these days?  
How should we be living in such a fast-paced world?

The story of Mary and Martha has some ***real insight*** for us,  
If we will stop and listen to the wisdom God has for us.

But first a reminder--the story of ***Mary and Martha***  
is one of those stories where you really need to take a second look.

It's been so simply interpreted and reinterpreted over the years

On the surface it just looks like one woman is praised for doing the right thing, and the other is scolded for doing what is wrong.

But just like everything else Jesus does and says—we have to ***dig deeper***.

And talk about stirring up ***arguments***, the Mary and Martha story has generated plenty of them.

After all, some of us are more like Mary—more prone to sit and listen, and some of us are more, well busybodies like Martha.

So is Jesus saying to all the busybodies in the world, sit down and be still?

***Well, not exactly.***

Martha's doing what was necessary to feed Jesus and the others in ministry.

It was also a ministry of hospitality to feed and welcome Jesus.

What Mary was doing was strange—staying out of the kitchen, abandoning her sister to do the lion's share of the work, sitting with men in the living room! It was almost unheard of.

And Jesus sure had an appreciation of service and hospitality.

He loved Martha and valued her gifts.

But ***Martha*** gets so tired of doing all the work while Mary sits, she can no longer contain her feelings.

Now, we might expect her to chide Mary, hey I could really use some help in here. But instead she tries to get Jesus to tell Mary to get to work.

"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me."

"Martha, Martha," Jesus says, "you are ***worried and distracted*** by many things, but there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen it; Mary has chosen the better part."

This is the part of the story where people start arguing.

Is Jesus saying ***Mary is right and Martha is wrong?***

Be like Mary, not Martha?

What exactly is he saying?

Well, let's listen again.

"Martha, you are ***worried and distracted*** by many things, there is need of only one thing and Mary has chosen it."

Worried. And distracted by many things.

***Ring any bells?***

I don't think this is necessarily a story about ***personality types*** at all. I think it could just as easily have been Mary in the kitchen getting all upset, and needing to be at the feet of Jesus! Her being worried and distracted!

***We've all been there***—worried and distracted by many things, and needing to sit at the feet of Jesus, to rest and hear his Words, to sit in his presence.

When was the last time ***you were worried*** and distracted by many things, Or are you right now making the to do list, reviewing the last week, running over in your mind the upcoming week, and planning your upcoming projects?

It's not that ***Martha's work*** in the kitchen was bad—not at all. It was a beautiful, necessary ministry of hospitality. In fact, had she been at peace, she could have been just fine.

We can ***find God in each and every detail*** of life, down to the ironing, the laundry, the lawnwork, and the dishes. We can serve God while counting the offering, polishing the pews, sweeping the carpet, or washing the windows of the church—all necessary pieces of ministry.

But we ***need that time with Jesus***.

We need to be filled and refilled with the presence of God. if we try to serve without having what Mary was getting at the feet of Jesus. We will become worried, distracted, and eventually worn out.

I like what a university chaplain told a former professor of mine, "If you do not have some vision of what God is doing to repair the world, you can't get up every day and work in a soup kitchen. ***It finally beats you down.***

*" (Rev. Tom Long, July 22, 2007).*

If you don't have some vision of what God is doing, it finally beats you down. Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens to his Word, listens to that vision, and

without that Word, we cannot go on like Martha, preparing meals of hospitality for the world.

It will finally worry us, distract us, anger us, exhaust us, and beat us down.

**With that Word**, though, we can prepare meals for the hungry, care tenderly for the sick, show hospitality to the stranger and keep on loving and living in the name of Christ.

*(Rev. Tom Long, July 22, 2007)*

**How do we live** in this fast-paced, multitasking world of ours?

By taking time to be like Mary.

To be in the presence of God, to sit at the feet of Jesus.

To take in His Word, His love, and His life.

It is true: **We should never be too busy** or pressured or tired to make a time and place for God in [our] lives. After all, God has to manage the whole world, and he's never too busy for us.

*Sadie Delany, Christian Reader, Vol. 33, no. 2.*

Once we take that time with God,  
Then, we can go out into our Martha world,  
full of life, and purpose, and energy for the journey ahead.

It's like an **elementary school teacher** in the poorest part of Jamaica, teaching a chaotic group of little ones, loving and listening to every single one. A visiting youth group on a mission trip decided that the only way she could do this was that she must really love being a teacher. But they were surprised to hear her say, "Oh, I don't come here everyday mainly because I love teaching. I come here every day because I love Jesus, and I see Jesus in every one of these children."

*(Rev. Tom Long, July 22, 2007)*

Oh to **be able to say that** of whatever we are doing—  
That we do it because we love Jesus, because we love God.  
Not because we have to, not because we are doing ten things at once,  
But because we love God.

May we all **find the time** to be like Mary,  
Lest we become worried and distracted by far too many things in this world,  
And lose sight of the fact that he is waiting for us to come and sit at His feet,

Amen.