

## **20250209 Worship Message: Luke 10:38-11:13**

The title song, Who Are You, on the album, Who Are You, by the rock group, The Who, released in 1978 could be the theme song for today's readings. For those of you who watched the crime show, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, may recall this song was used as the theme song for the show.

The lyrics, unsurprisingly, start out this way:

Who are you?

Who, who, who, who?

And later the songwriter amplifies the question, who are you, in this way:

Well, who are you? (Who are you? Who, who, who, who?)

I really wanna know (who are you? Who, who, who, who?)

Tell me, who are you? (Who are you? Who, who, who, who?)

'Cause I really wanna know (who are you? Who, who, who, who?)

So who are you? Martha or Mary? And gentlemen this applies to you as well so don't go wondering off to some happy place in your head!

Martha often seems to be seen as anxious, perhaps even irritated, certainly stressing, by many when this scripture comes up. Seen as busy being the hostess with the mostess, becoming irritated with her sister who is sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to him, and asking Jesus to tell her sister Mary to get up and help her with all the work she has to do.

Its probably helpful to be reminded of the expectations placed on women in the day of Jesus. In Proverbs 31, we can get a glimpse of those expectations not only for what they should do, but also who they should be.

- <sup>11</sup> Her husband has full confidence in her  
and lacks nothing of value.
- <sup>12</sup> She brings him good, not harm,  
all the days of her life.
- <sup>15</sup> She gets up while it is still night;  
she provides food for her family  
and portions for her female servants.
- <sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it;  
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
- <sup>24</sup> She makes linen garments and sells them,  
and supplies the merchants with sashes.
- <sup>27</sup> She watches over the affairs of her household  
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- <sup>28</sup> Her children arise and call her blessed;  
her husband also, and he praises her:
- <sup>29</sup> “Many women do noble things,  
but you surpass them all.”

Needless to say, this list is pretty idealistic and it probably came from a man, which might explain the idealism. But perhaps we can begin to empathize with Martha and why she is stressing out. She is trying to live up to very high standards, taking care of her family and their home for which she has responsibility for managing. All that she needed to do before she invited Jesus in still had to be done. So, I might stress too if I invited the person they were calling the Messiah into our home. We don't know for sure if the disciples were invited in as well. But just

imagine how you might feel if I and my 12 followers were invited into your home right at dinner time! You'll have to imagine it, because I don't have 12 people following me around, hanging on to every word I say.

So its not too surprising that Martha goes to Jesus and asks, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me."

I can think of times when we have hosted family gatherings, for which I typically cook for, and when I have become Martha. I take pride in delivering an excellent, well-prepared meal for all to enjoy. But on occasion, I have found myself becoming irritated with others, perhaps even resentful toward those who are sitting around enjoying themselves while I am working. I have even thought, "cant they see how busy I am and how much there is to do yet!"

In those instances I was just as irritated that I even had to ask someone to help. I had become Martha.

And yet they are enjoying catching up with family members, listening to the stories, being involved in each others lives, in relationship, which was the point of the day. They are Mary.

We don't know if Martha had asked Mary to help and Mary didn't respond. We don't really know the tone of Martha's plea to Jesus to tell Mary to help. I think her question was likely said with exasperation, if not irritation, and perhaps directed toward both Jesus and Mary.

Jesus seems to have a knack for rebuking with grace. His response to Martha acknowledges her many distractions, but he clearly identifies the one thing that is truly needed in the moment. To sit and listen to the words of the Lord as shared by his only son, Jesus. "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

So is this an issue of right versus wrong? For me It is not so much an issue of who is right. It is an issue of balance. Martha and Mary show us that both work and worship are needed, but that they each have a place in our lives. That there is a time and place for everything that is needed in the kingdom of God.

We don't always understand what the Mary and Martha's of the world bring to our lives. My mother was a saint who worked hard to keep our home clean, ensure we had food to eat, clothes to wear, etc. She created a home that was seen as welcoming and generous toward others. She passed on many life lessons that I have come to more fully appreciate over time. She could be a Martha – keeping order in the house when my brothers and I were fighting. She would grab the hair on the back of our necks and march us on our tiptoes to the couch where we had to sit and hold hands until we could behave nicely. That never took very long!

She could also be a Mary – or maybe really like Jesus. It was later in life after my mother passed away that a cousin shared the advice my mother gave her when my cousin was worried about keeping the house neat with kids running around and toys scattered all over. Mom told my cousin – those kids won't remember how neat the house was growing up, they will remember the time you spent with them. Choose the better path that can't be taken away. Just like Mary.

So who are you today? Who did you bring with you to church today? Mary or Martha? Sitting in the pew comes with a lot of space for either one. There have certainly been times when I brought Martha with me to worship. I would be consumed with issues at work, an argument with a family member, a perceived slight, the divisiveness in our nation, anything but worship. I would look at my watch fretting about how long was worship going to last, worrying about all the things I needed to do. I was in the church building, but not in worship. I wasn't engaged with the community that I so need to be better at living out life in a Christ-like manner. The space I was in was my headspace. By the way, did you ever notice that you can't change the length of worship by checking the time?

For me I have taken intentional steps to bring Mary to church with me. Mary was intentional about her choice to sit at the feet of Jesus. For example, I stopped looking at my watch, and started being intentional about listening to the readings, listening to the sermon, talking to my fellow pew dwellers.

Surprisingly, I stopped being irritated about worship lasting too long. I, for the most part, stopped bringing my personal and work phones into worship – was there really a text message, email, or facebook post I needed to read and respond to during worship? Nope not for me.

Now first responders like our volunteer firefighters and others, I want you to bring your phone or pager or whatever device you need to be able to respond when you are needed.

Our scripture readings today also tell us that the Lord our God wants to be in relationship with us. <sup>9</sup>“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

He wants us to be intentional and persistent. From the parable about the neighbor knocking on the door asking for bread, he says to us, <sup>8</sup>I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything out of friendship, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. It is clear that we must Keep knocking at the door!

He also makes it clear that what we ask for may not be what we get. Martha likely didn't get what she wanted, but she was shown what she needed by the path chosen by Mary in that moment – to be with the incarnate Jesus, probably the only time that was going to happen.

We will get what we need and we were told what to ask for using the words Jesus offered when asked by one of his disciples said, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” <sup>2</sup> So he said to them, “When you pray, say:

Father, may your name be revered as holy.

May your kingdom come.

<sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread.

<sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

Amen!