

Words of Welcome

Are you busy, distracted, frustrated, feeling like others need to do more? Or maybe you are not feeling that way today, but know the feeling, and life being what it is, know that this will be something you experience another day. Come along side me today as we look at the familiar story of Mary and Martha. May we hear it with new insight.

Call to Worship

We gather this day from a week filled with needs and demands

We come to find rest and renewal of our spirits.

Open your hearts in love to hear the voice of God.

We want to quietly rest in God's presence, free from the clamor of the world.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Connection: July 17, 2022](#)

Hymn

Be thou my vision

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1. Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.
2. Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my great Father, thine own may I be;
thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.
3. Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my armour and be thou my might;
thou my soul's shelter and thou my high tower:
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.
4. Riches I heed not, nor vain earthly praise,
thou mine inheritance, through all my days:
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
high King of heaven, my treasure thou art.
5. High King of heaven, when the battle is done,
grant heaven's joy to me, O bright heaven's Sun!
heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Words: Irish, anonymous 8th century; translation Mary Byrne (1880-1931); paraphrase, Eleanor Hull (1860-1935), alt ©1994 Hope Publishing. Used By Permission. CCLI License #11276509 + Streaming License #21035127

Opening Prayer

**God of majesty and mystery,
your love and purpose embrace the whole world.
You set us in a world of beauty and bounty
and invite us to meet you in the midst of its wonders.
You call us to love each other in the example of Jesus
to make your world a place of justice and compassion.
In this hour of worship, send us your Spirit of wisdom and grace
so that we can live out the praise on our lips in our day to day living,
which we offer to you, our one and only God.**

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Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that the distractions and busyness of our lives
make it difficult to listen deeply to your voice.

Transform our priorities
so that we make space in our lives to be quiet and listen to you.

Jesus, seeker of the lost, we confess to becoming so shaped by the values of this
age that your call on our lives is increasingly hard to hear.

Transform our values so that they are shaped by your concern for the unloved and
unlovely, and for the weak and powerless in our society.

Jesus, friend of the poor, we confess that too often any mission and outreach
planning is weighed against economic viability.

Transform our thinking so that we risk believing that all things are held together,
not by the bottom financial line, but by you.

Jesus, bearer of reconciliation,
we confess that all too often in our faith communities,
we harbor thoughts which estrange and make us hostile towards one another.

Transform our hearts so that we are filled with the desire
to forgive one another and to make peace.

Jesus, source of our faith,
we confess that we forget all too quickly the words we say,
and pray, and sing, in our time of worship.

Transform our lives
so that they remain connected to you at all times and in all places.

Jesus, Saviour and Lord,

may the posture of our lives be shaped by listening to you;
the goodness of our lives be shaped by love for you;
and the service of our lives be shaped by a humility like yours.

~ written by Moira Laidlaw, and posted on **Liturgies Online**. <http://www.liturgiesonline.com.au/>

God of wisdom, by the leading of your Spirit, open our minds to receive new insight from familiar stories. Open our hearts to grasp deeper truth, revealed through the Scriptures, and through Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

To all who seek forgiveness through confession of sin and commitment to change, God responds with mercy and grace. Ever and always, God welcomes us home to live with joy in the world, to look with hope toward time ahead. Glory be to God.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P101.

Scripture Reading Luke 10:38-42

³⁸⁻⁴⁰ As they continued their travel, Jesus entered a village. A woman by the name of Martha welcomed him and made him feel quite at home. She had a sister, Mary, who sat before the Master, hanging on every word he said. But Martha was pulled away by all she had to do in the kitchen. Later, she stepped in, interrupting them. “Master, don’t you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand.”⁴¹⁻⁴² The Master said, “Martha, dear Martha, you’re fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it’s the main course, and won’t be taken from her.”

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Message Distracted

Mary and Martha. Mary the one who has been portrayed as the sister who got it right as she sat listening to Jesus and Martha as the one who got it wrong because she was so busy taking care of guests. Hardly seems fair. Martha was doing exactly what would be expected of a woman with guests in her own time and in her household and also in ours. To this day, women are often the ones who prepare the meals and host guests, though thankfully things have changed considerably and those tasks are now often shared with others in the household.

It has also been easy to look at Mary and think that she was not helpful at all and Martha had every reason to be frustrated and angry. And to be sure, a household needs people who are willing to serve each other and to work together, especially when there are guests. There was really nothing unrealistic or unreasonable about Martha’s need for help. What became the struggle for Martha was that she was so focused on what needed to be done that she missed really appreciating who was her guest. She was distracted by the tasks at hand.

You can tell where Martha's mind was. She demanded that Jesus make Mary help her as she says to him, "Master, don't you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand." (10:40). Martha is frustrated, as I think many of us would be. We have all likely had an experience where it felt like we were left holding the bag, so to speak, as others went on their merry way, not even recognizing the work or life demands we carry and the stress we are under.

It may be preparing for guests; it may be the number of doctors appointments we have on the calendar and illness we are managing. We may be a lone caregiver or feel like the lone caregiver for an elderly or unwell person. We get angry when we have no one to help with the burden or relieve us of the burden. That can be especially frustrating when there are siblings we think could help and they just don't. Another example would be as a student. How many times in group work does the group pick up the slack of the one who doesn't seem to pull their weight, doesn't research or show up, and yet gets the same mark as all the rest in their group? That never seems fair, but the workers do the work because they don't want their grades to suffer.

And what of the company project? Another place where team work is important, and yet only a few do the work. It can feel the same in a service organization or even in churches where it seems the same people roll up their sleeves and get the work done and others just show up for worship on Sundays or the fun activities expecting the church or organization to be there for them while never doing anything to make sure that the organization or church can do the work it is called to.

My point is, that Martha's are important. People working together to get a job done is necessary. Things do not function without people being willing to pull together and share the load. So, when Jesus responds to Martha with the words, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing." (10:41) He is not rebuking her or chastising her. Jesus knows the work needs to be done. Throughout the scriptures, serving others and getting the work done is an important part of participating in the work of God.

We hear it in the story of Abraham entertaining guests in Genesis 18 (verses 1-8) where he gets people busy preparing and serving a meal to three men who arrived at his camp. We hear it in Acts 6 (verses 1-7) where there was a need to care for the widows who have nothing and so the community of disciples chose from among them those whose work it was to make sure that people were taken care of, provided for. There are numerous stories of hospitality provided to others in scripture as this was and is an important and necessary task. If we are to show care, love, compassion, and work toward a just society, then service to others is a given.

So, what is Jesus getting at in this moment if he is not dismissing the necessary work that Martha is doing?

As usual, context is helpful. At this point in Luke's gospel Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. In other words, he is headed to the cross, his time with people as Jesus in the flesh is running short. The end date is in sight. Of course, the people around Jesus are blissfully unaware of the future event of the cross, but Jesus is well aware of what is going to happen. He has tried to warn those he is with, but though they hear the words, they just cannot get their minds around the fact that this man, who they view as the Messiah, is not going to take Jerusalem by storm, but rather will die the death of a criminal.

When Jesus speaks to Martha about Mary and how Mary has chosen the one thing that is essential, it is the main course, the main event, and choosing as she has, Jesus will not stop her from sitting at his feet to listen and learn, he is, in effect saying, this in the context, he will not be with them long. This is the time to stop doing and just be still for a time.

There will be time for work, for preparing and for serving, but as Jesus is speaking and teaching, while he is with them, it is a time to stop, to not be distracted by all the doing, but to sit with him. Be still for a time. Be renewed and refreshed. Both taking time to be with the Word and in the word as well as doing work, preparing and serving, all are important. Jesus is not saying choose one above the other, but he may be saying that first we need to be still, be with the Word and in the word and then go about the doing.

So, what does this mean for us as we don't have Jesus standing in the flesh before us so maybe it doesn't feel like there is the same urgency to stop and listen. Yet could it be that the principle is the same? Do we also need to stop and listen, spend time in scripture, in worship, and in prayer, in order to go out to do the work, whether it be for our families, friends, or community?

I think the answer is pretty self-evident, and yet how many of us just go about being distracted by the many things that need doing. We go to the next appointment, we clean the house, fix things in the garage, mow the lawn in the summer, and shovel snow in the winter. We get to the next project, the next deadline, the next whatever and don't even really give Jesus or God a nod.

One would think that as a minister I should be good at giving time to God, but I can be as distracted as anyone. There is the next meeting, the next sermon, the next service, the next funeral, the next...and my list goes on. Lately the list never seems to have an ending. It has been very easy to pray on the go, or read and study scripture only to get the next sermon and service prepared and done.

We all have our distractions, and they may be very good and reasonable distractions, ones that mean others are cared for, things get done for the good of others, and we like to think that all of that demonstrates our love for God. And it does! But just like Martha, we are distracted by the need to get things done. What Jesus is saying is first take time to sit and be with Jesus, whether it be in worship, in prayer, in nature, in reading the Bible. Take time to get your direction, your purpose, your energy from the well-spring of life which is God. All those other things will always be there, and we need to make time for them, but we also need to make time to be renewed, to be fed, to build the relationship between us and God. It doesn't happen on the fly. It only happens when we spend time with God, setting aside all of the to-dos and sitting, like Mary, at Jesus feet.

Relationship building takes time, effort, perseverance, and vulnerability. That is true in our human relationships and it is true of our relationship with God. Take the time. Make the time. I assure you that your life will not get busier, or harder, rather the demands of the world will become easier to bear. We may even get better at determining what God is asking us to do and be. What we endeavor to take on will be seen in light of what God is doing in the world through us. We will be more at peace, less likely to be frustrated by ourselves and others. Over time our focus will shift from what needs to be done to in whose name we do it.

May your life contain both the best of Mary and the best of Martha. Both are necessary and needed. Only, take time first to be with God in whatever way that means for you, knowing that as you grow into the relationship, those ways of being with God will also grow and change. Then go out to serve with joy, with love, with God's purposes lighting and guiding your way.

Be both a learner of the Word and a partner in God's work. In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Lord God, Loving God,
We come before you in prayer, trusting that your power works in the world
in ways we cannot even imagine,
calling goodness forward, supporting love, and creating justice
even in situations that seem hopeless to us.
Draw on our prayers as signs of your Spirit at work in our lives.

God of the world and all its peoples:
we pray today for those who lift up their voices in troubled nations,
for those working to bring justice and negotiate peace,
for those bringing aid to the vulnerable,
and those offering shelter to anyone fleeing violence.
Call the powerful to account, O God,

and inspire them to hear the voices that cry out in pain and desperation.

God of our everyday lives:

we pray today for our community and our neighbours

whose everyday lives have been disrupted

by months of pandemic restriction and response,

and by economic realities beyond their control.

We remember neighbours whose livelihoods depend on undependable weather systems, and those fearing fire, flood or drought this summer.

We pray for communities that lack safe drinking water or adequate medical care and places where there is high unemployment or a worker shortage.

Inspire leaders to combine compassion with good planning,
and consider the needs of all those who feel desperate.

God of the courageous and compassionate,

we pray for those who live out their commitment to the well-being of others day by day,
in public service, health care, education,

social work, community organizations, and environmental concern.

Thank you for their dedication.

Support those who feel stress or exhaustion

and inspire those who can speak out when they see needs being neglected.

God of neighbourhood and nation,

we pray for friends and neighbours near and far,

for all who travel this summer

and for those who find themselves strangers in new communities.

We remember in silence those on our hearts, facing some kind of challenge this day:

Draw near to each one in deep need, O God.

Equip us to support those lives that intertwine with ours

for we are your people, embraced by your love,

which we claim in the words Jesus' taught us:

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to the offering

In gratitude for all that God has done for us, we present our gifts to God. These gifts allow the church to continue its work of worship, outreach, and being with others.

If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Hymn

Take my life, and let it be consecrated

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| 1. Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days:
let them flow in ceaseless praise. | 2. Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee. |
| 3. Take my voice and let me sing
always, only for my King;
take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee. | 4. Take my silver and gold:
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose. |
| 5. Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart: it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne. | 6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself and I will be
ever, only, all for thee. |

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Benediction

Go out into the world to serve God with love.
Be ready to laugh with delight at the good news God has to offer you.
Make room at your table for unexpected guests.
When the work of discipleship leaves you weary or frustrated,
rest in Christ's presence and listen to what he is saying.
And the blessing of God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit,
go with you today and always. Amen.

~ from *Welcome the Guest: Service Prayers for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost*, written by Rev. Heather A. Moody.
Posted on the United Church of Christ's **Worship Ways** website. <http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/>