

“Seeing Beyond Our Distractions”
July 18, 2010 Calvary sermon by Brian Henderson

Text: Luke 10:38-42

Our text today is fairly well known. In fact, some would say that these verses here in Luke 10 are verses that pretty much preach themselves. I suspect most of us have heard this story, right?

Some of you have probably participated in Bible studies with the theme, *Being a Mary in a Martha's world*. All of us know something about the busyness of life and how hectic reality and family and work can be. We also all know something about distractions and how easily it can be for us to have our focus and attention be pulled in many different directions—sometimes seemingly all at once.

While these verses here in Luke may say something to us about how busy or not we keep ourselves...or how much we may live in a perpetual state of distraction...I wonder if there is something else here for us to hear...something else that maybe the writer of Luke's gospel wants us to grasp as we seek to live out lives of love and commitment demonstrated so powerfully for us by Jesus.

Tara, the kids and I spent a week and a half of our vacation visiting with Tara's parents in West Virginia. While I came home to Colorado last Monday, Tara, Ana, Naomi and Joel will return next Thursday. I am missing them dearly...but I'm surviving.

Well, while at Tara's family's farm...we ate really, really well. Tara's folks love to cook and they make some of the best, down-home, meals anyone could want. One of

the secrets to making such good meals, is that one must spend a lot of time in the kitchen...and in the garden...and at the grill...and in front of the oven...and over the stove...and in and out of the refrigerator. This is just the food prep side of things...not to mention the clean-up afterwards.

Such good meals take a lot of time and effort to create and serve. Some days...while with Tara's folks we would eat three major meals a day. By the time you're done with one meal...you take a few breaths and start prepping the next. The food is wonderful...but the work is often so tiring that you have little energy and enthusiasm left for anything else.

Perhaps this is what happened with Martha. Maybe Martha was envious of Mary who seemed not too concerned with the preparation and serving of a good, down-home-cooked meal.

I wonder however...if this is all we see or hear in this story—one person who worked too hard and another who rested too well—I wonder if we may miss the point...or the points...the gospel writer really wanted readers like us to grasp.

I believe there is much more to this story than just *being a Mary in a Martha's world*.

For starters...the writer of the gospel makes a couple profoundly radical statements that ought to keep us thinking and challenged today...they most definitely challenged the social and cultural mores of first century life and faith.

Did you catch them? Luke's gospel elevates the role of women quite significantly. We're told that Jesus and the

disciples went on their way...they were welcomed into the home of Martha. Now...if this Mary and Martha are the same as the Mary and Martha in John's gospel where we're told Lazarus is their brother...Luke's gospel probably would have said Jesus and the disciples were welcomed into the home of Lazarus.

By entering the home of Martha—a woman—this account reminds us again how Jesus crossed and challenged the cultural-social-theological values of his day. This is further emphasized when we're told next that Martha's sister, Mary, sat at Jesus' feet and listened to what he was saying.

To sit at one's feet meant that one was a disciple...Mary was allowed to be a student of Rabbi Jesus. Such a status and role was to be for men only...so again...perhaps the gospel writer wants us to stop and think about how we view people.

What cultural, theological and social mores do we adhere to that can hinder individuals from being who they are and that may keep individuals from sharing the gifts they have?

The way of Jesus—the way of love—invites us and urges us to look beyond our often contrived standards of acceptability.

Luke's account of Martha and Mary still leaves us with this image of one person being too busy and another being still...taking in the moment and all it offered.

Is this how we're to be? Are we to think about that which keeps us distracted...are we to consider how to slow

down...does Mary's example invite us to live life and experience faith in a contemplative fashion?

Most of us...if not all of us...need to be reminded to smell the roses every now and then. I know I do. So...what do the words of Jesus' communicate? Are we to be like Mary...are we to give our complete and undivided attention to Jesus and not worry about anything else?

At one level...this is probably not a bad idea. For many of us...it may serve us well to slow down and listen more for that still small voice of the Divine.

American Baptist preacher and writer, Kirk Byron Jones has written: "Stillness, inner peace, is not a vacation. Peace is a life-style. You have a lake, trails, a forest within you that you can go to anytime you desire. You do not have to go away; just go within."

Perhaps Luke's words and this account of Jesus and Mary (who utters not one word in this episode) is to encourage us to go within...to find that inner peace and to make it our life-style.

But...we would be remiss if we did not observe that this episode comes on the heels of the story of the Good Samaritan—interestingly, another story that invites us and urges us to look beyond our often contrived standards of acceptability.

Jesus seems to affirm Mary's ability to be still—to be contemplative. But at the end of the Good Samaritan story...the words of Jesus suggest that we must go and do.

So...I wonder...if maybe a life of love...a life committed to the way of Jesus...is best lived out with balance.

Concentrating on being...concentrating on listening and learning like Mary, alongside of being ready to respond and to do—to put our faith into action—like the Good Samaritan—is perhaps how we can most effectively live out the faith we profess.

What must we be about—what must you be about this week? Is it time for quiet...is it time to slow down...is it time for prayer and reflection...is it time to be silent?

Is it time for action? Is it time to do for someone else? Is there a way you can make a difference or have an impact in the life or lives of others? Maybe even our church family and community here at Calvary?

Lest we stay distracted like Martha...how will you *be* this week and what might you *do*? Amen.