



Sunday, July 20, 2025
Luke 10:38-42 (Sixth Sunday after Pentecost)

Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Tony Acompanado

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things.”

Considering everything that’s happened over the last few months in our country and throughout the world, not to mention whatever’s been going on in our personal lives, these words from Jesus today might just be the understatement of the year.

Many things have left Martha feeling troubled, anxious, and disturbed. She’s being pulled in different directions. Her life is in pieces. It’s as if there are a thousand different things in her heart and on her mind and she’s not able give time, energy, and attention to the “one thing” that’s needed. Maybe she doesn’t even know what that “one thing” is.

I wonder how many of us here today feel like Martha, *“worried and distracted by many things.”* I know I do...and I wouldn’t be surprised if you do too. Chances are most of us are living a Martha kind of life. In fact, it’s often what happens when we feel overwhelmed and our life is swinging wildly out of our control.

What are the many things that *you’re* worried about and distracted by today? What’s dividing your life into parts and pulling *you* in different directions? And what are those things doing *to you and your relationships*?

I think it’s safe to assume most of us would say that cell phones are an awesome part of our lives. You can do so many things with them these days, from finding new recipes or watching a video on how to fix just about anything, to even running a small business right from the palm of your hand. Cell phones can make our lives easier and better in so many ways, and yet, not always.

Just the other day I was talking with a friend who said she was out running and nearly got hit by a car that started to drift onto the shoulder because the driver appeared to be looking at their phone. She ended by saying, *“It seems like everyone is distracted when driving these days.”* And for whatever reason *this* was one of those simple yet profound statements that stuck with me. Maybe it’s because it feels like this is true not only about driving, but it also feels like a metaphor about how we’re living. We’re speeding through life distracted, and it’s not just dangerous, it’s exhausting.

In today’s gospel, Martha is a distracted driver – and that’s not a criticism of her. When Jesus says to her, *“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things,”* I don’t think he’s making an accusation, he’s making an observation. He’s making an analysis not a judgment.

And when he says, *“Mary has chosen the better part”* I don’t think he’s rivaling Mary, who sits at his feet and listens – to Martha, who’s busy with many tasks. I don’t think he’s saying that Mary is right and Martha is wrong, or that it’s better to sit at his feet and listen than it is to prepare the house and table to welcome a guest.

Just take a look at the life of Jesus. He lives on a Mary-Martha spectrum, as do we all. Sometimes Jesus went off by himself to be alone, silent, and still; to sit, pray, and listen; to be present with his Father. Other times Jesus was active, on the move, in the midst of people, and busy teaching, healing, and feeding. One isn’t better or more important than the other.

Today’s gospel takes a sharp turn when Martha, who’s distracted by her many tasks, comes 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.”*

Some who read this story will cheer for Mary for breaking from traditional roles. Others will empathize with Martha’s resentment of her sister for leaving her to do all the work. Jesus’ response to Martha seems less than sympathetic, scolding her for her distraction and worry, and praising Mary, *“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”*

The problem with Martha isn’t that she’s busy serving and providing hospitality. Certainly Jesus commends this kind of service to the neighbor throughout scripture. The problem with Martha isn’t her serving, but rather that she’s worried and distracted. The original word translated as “distracted” implies being pulled or dragged in different directions.



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And Martha's distraction and worry leave no room for the most important aspect of hospitality – attention to the guest. In fact, she breaks all the rules of hospitality by trying to embarrass her sister in front of her guest, and by asking her guest to intervene in a family dispute. She even goes so far as to accuse Jesus of not caring about her.

Martha's worry and distraction prevent her from being truly present with Jesus and it drives a wedge between her and her sister, and between Jesus and herself. Jesus' words to Martha may be seen as an invitation rather than a reprimand. *Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.* The one thing needed is for Martha to receive the gracious presence of Jesus, to listen to his words, and to know that she is valued not for what she does or how well she does it, but for who she is as a child of God.

In a culture of hectic schedules and the relentless pursuit of productivity, we're tempted to measure our worth by how busy we are, by how much we accomplish, or by how well we meet the expectations of others.

Many of us can identify with Martha – feeling pulled in different directions, feeling worried and distracted by many things – these seem to be common threads of life in our fast-paced world.

And yet, the truth is much of our busyness and distraction stems from good intentions. We want to provide for our families, we want to give our children every opportunity to benefit their lives, we want to serve our neighbors, and yes, we want to serve God. But what it ultimately *should be about* is being wildly, madly, and deeply in love with Jesus.

As soon as Jesus entered Martha's house, he turned the place upside down. He messed with Martha's expectations, routines, and habits. He insisted on costly change. And perhaps Martha's mistake was that she assumed she could invite Jesus into her life, and then carry on with that life as usual, maintaining control, privileging *her own* priorities, and clinging to her cherished agenda and schedule.

But Jesus's response to that assumption? Nope. Absolutely not. That's not how following Jesus works.

However, Mary recognized that Jesus's presence required a radical shift. A role change. A wholehearted surrender. Every action, every decision, every priority, would have to be filtered through this new love, this new devotion, this new passion. *Why?* Because Jesus was no ordinary guest. He was the guest who would become the host. The host who would provide the bread of life and the living water to anyone who would sit at his feet and receive his hospitality.

Jesus *knows* that we ache to be whole. Jesus *knows* that we place brutal and devastating expectations on ourselves. Jesus knows that our resentments, like Martha's, are often borne out of envy.

Martha longed to sit where Mary sat. She longed to feel the deep satisfaction in Jesus's words. She longed to surrender her heavy burden and allow Jesus to host her. And perhaps we long for these good things, too.

But my friends, here's the good news – Jesus invites *all of us* who are worried and distracted by many things to sit and rest in his presence, to hear his words of grace and truth, to know that we are loved and valued as children of God, and to be renewed in faith and strengthened for service. There is need of only one thing – attention to our guest. Because as it turns out, our guest is also our host and has an abundance of gifts to give. Thanks be to God. Amen.