

SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2022

LUKE 10:38-42

Traditional

I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE... I AM ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO LOVES TO HAVE COMPANY OVER FOR DINNER, BUT I SOMETIMES PANIC AT THE THOUGHT OF PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER. I LOVE WELCOMING PEOPLE INTO MY HOME, BUT THE PREPARATION CAUSES ME TO GO INTO A FRENZY. AS A RESULT, I HAVE COME UP WITH SOME "CREATIVE" RECIPES TO EASE THE STRESS. THE FOOD IS ALWAYS A HUGE SUCCESS, AND THE REVIEWS ARE STELLAR. LET'S JUST SAY I GET LOTS OF HELP FROM MY VERY GOOD FRIENDS AT GFS AND SAMS ALONG THE WAY.

SEE, I HAVE KNOWN PEOPLE WHO DO ALL THAT PLANNING, WITH EXQUISITE MENUS, PRECISELY PREPARED COURSES, FANCY TABLE SETTINGS, AND PRESENTED THE MEAL JUST SO, BUT WHILE THEY MAY ENJOY ALL THAT PREPARATION, BY THE TIME THE COMPANY ACTUALLY ARRIVES, THEY ARE FRAZZLED AND ON EDGE, AND CAN'T ACTUALLY ENJOY THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME TO PARTAKE OF THEIR BEAUTIFUL FEAST.

WHILE GREAT FOOD IS A WONDERFUL THING, IT'S THE ATMOSPHERE, THE ATTITUDES AROUND THE TABLE THAT REALLY MAKE A MEAL A TRUE FEAST.

WHICH BRINGS US TO TODAY'S GOSPEL. AS THE HOSTESS FOR JESUS AND HIS CROWD, MARTHA FINDS HERSELF "DISTRACTED" OR WORRIED BY ALL SHE NEEDS TO DO TO GET READY FOR THIS GATHERING. THE BIBLICAL WORD FOR WORRIED IN THIS CASE MEANS TO BE PULLED IN TWO – IN OTHER WORDS, TRYING TO KEEP FOCUSED ON ONE THING, WHEN IN REALITY OUR MIND IS SOMEWHERE ELSE. CAN YOU RELATE? SOME OF YOU MAY BE SITTING HERE RIGHT NOW WORRIED ABOUT WHAT TOMORROW MAY BRING.

SO HERE'S MARTHA GETTING READY FOR A PARTY FIT FOR A KING, AND SHE'S WORRIED, WHEN THE KING HIMSELF, THE ONE WHO HEALED THE SICK AND FED MULTITUDES SINGLE HANDEDLY, AND CAST OUT DEMONS, IS IN HER HOME. HOW CAN SHE WORRY WHEN THE ONE WHO CALMED THE STORM WAS SITTING IN HER LIVING ROOM READY TO CALM HER OWN DOUBTS AND FEARS? HOW CAN WE?

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO A DINNER OR A HOLIDAY MEAL WHERE A MELTDOWN OCCURS? YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...SOMEONE SAYS SOMETHING AT THE TABLE THAT RUFFLES FEATHERS, OR SOMEONE HAS ONE TOO MANY, AND BEHAVES BADLY, OR THE TURKEY IS

UNDER – OR OVERCOOKED, OR AUNT TILLY ISN'T SPEAKING TO COUSIN FLOSSY AND NO ONE KNOWS WHY.

THE BASIC PROBLEM IS THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE WRONG THING – WE WANT THE NORMAN ROCKWELL SCENARIO EVERY TIME WE HAVE A FAMILY GATHERING – PERFECT DECORATIONS, PERFECT FOOD, PERFECT GUESTS, A COMBINATION THAT UNFORTUNATELY DOESN'T OCCUR THIS SIDE OF THE HEAVENLY BANQUET. MELTDOWNS ARE COMMONPLACE AND PREDICTABLE. BUT JESUS' RESPONSE IS ANYTHING BUT.

JESUS IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF MARTHA, AND YET IN HER ZEAL TO HAVE EVERYTHING JUST SO, SHE MISSES THE ENJOYMENT OF THE COMPANY SHE SERVES. JESUS ISN'T CHIDING MARTHA, RATHER HE IS SETTING HER FREE TO SEIZE THOSE MOMENTS – TO LIVE BEYOND HER RESPONSIBILITIES TO BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE HIM IN THE MIDST OF THEM.

HERE'S THE THING, MARTHA IS THE PRACTICAL ONE. MARTHA IS THE NO-NOONSENSE ONE. SHE IS THE IMPATIENT ONE. AND MARTHA IS THE LEADER. SHE IS THE KIND OF PERSON WHO, IN ANY SITUATION, ENDS UP TAKING CHARGE. SHE KNOWS WHAT TO DO BEFORE ANYBODY ELSE. SHE'S VERY DECISIVE AND VERY QUICK TO TELL OTHER PEOPLE WHAT THEY SHOULD BE DOING AS WELL. SHE'S AMBITIOUS. IF YOU NOTICE IN VERSE 38, IT SAYS MARTHA INVITED JESUS INTO HER HOME.

WHY IS IT MARTHA'S HOUSE? WHY ISN'T IT MARY'S HOUSE? WHY ISN'T IT LAZARUS' HOUSE? APPARENTLY, MARTHA HAD THE FINANCES UNDER HER CONTROL. SHE IS THE ONE WHO BASICALLY HAS FIGURED OUT HOW THE FAMILY IS GOING TO LIVE.

PEOPLE HAVE LOOKED AT MARTHA OVER THE YEARS AND SEEN THE CONTRAST WITH MARY. PEOPLE WOULD SAY, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MARTHA AND MARY IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SECULAR LIFE AND THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE.

BUT HERE'S THE PROBLEM WITH THAT WAY OF THINKING. IF MARTHA REPRESENTS ANYTHING, SHE REPRESENTS A PERSON VERY MUCH IN FULL-TIME MINISTRY, BECAUSE WHAT'S SHE DISTRACTED WITH? SHE'S NOT DISTRACTED WITH SECULAR WORK, SHE'S DISTRACTED WITH MINISTRY TO JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES. EVERYTHING SHE IS DOING, SHE'S DOING FOR HIM. SHE'S INCREDIBLY BUSY. SHE'S RUNNING AROUND LIKE A CHICKEN WITH HER HEAD CUT OFF. AND IT'S ALL FOR HIM.

AND HERE'S THE THING – IN EVERY CHURCH, THERE ARE A LOT OF MARTHAS. THEY ARE THE ONES WHO GET THINGS DONE. THEY ARE THE 20 PERCENT OF PEOPLE WHO DO 80 PERCENT OF THE WORK. THEY LEAD THE BIBLE STUDIES, THEY COOK THE MEALS, THEY MAKE THE QUILTS AND BUILD THE BEDS, THEY LEAD THE YOUTH AND ORGANIZE FOOD DRIVES. THEY ARE VERY, VERY, BUSY. THEY ARE DOING IT ALL FOR JESUS, AND YET, THEY OFTEN GET TO A PLACE WHERE THEY LET IT SQUEEZE THEM. THEY LET ALL THAT MINISTRY, ALL THAT DOING FOR JESUS ACTUALLY GET IN THE WAY OF FOCUSED ATTENTION ON JESUS, AND IN THIS TEXT FOR TODAY, THEY ARE THE ONES WHO ARE GETTING REBUKED.

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOU FIT THIS CATEGORY? IT'S NOT A MATTER OF DOING, YOU SEE, BUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE MIDST OF IT. FIRST OF ALL, THERE'S THIS INNER TURMOIL. JESUS SAYS TO MARTHA YOU ARE WORRIED AND DISTRACTED BY MANY THINGS. YOU HAVE SO MUCH GOING ON – YOU ARE SO BUSY, AND AS A RESULT, YOU ARE BEING TORN TO PIECES. YOU LOOK LIKE THE PROACTIVE ONE, THE LEADER, BUT YOU ARE BEING TORN IN SO MANY DIRECTIONS. AND IT'S MAKING YOU MISERABLE.

JESUS ACTUALLY SAYS, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND MARY IS THAT MARY NEEDS ONLY ONE THING. AND MARTHA SAYS TELL HER TO HELP ME. SHE'S UPSET BECAUSE MARY DOESN'T HAVE THE SAME GOALS. AND THEN MARTHA BECOMES SUSPICIOUS OF GOD – SHE SAYS, LORD, DON'T YOU CARE? SHE'S UPSET BECAUSE SHE IS DOING EVERYTHING FOR JESUS – BUT IF IT REALLY WAS ALL ABOUT SERVING JESUS, THEN SHE WOULDN'T BE UPSET. SHE LOST FOCUS ON WHY SHE WAS DOING ALL THESE THINGS.

DO YOU SEE? IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU ARE AN INCREDIBLE SERVANT, BUSY ABOUT MANY THINGS FOR THE SAKE OF THE KINGDOM. IF, DEEP INSIDE YOU'RE FRUSTRATED AND MAD AT GOD, YOU FIND YOURSELF IRRATABLE WITH OTHER PEOPLE, AND YOU'RE EMPTY INSIDE, THEN YOUR FOCUS IS OFF.

MARY DOESN'T SIMPLY LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD. SHE PUTS HERSELF AT THE FOOT OF JESUS. IN OTHER WORDS, UNDER HIS AUTHORITY. SHE HAS FOUND FOCUSED TIME TO SUBMIT HERSELF TO THE WORD OF GOD.

I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS A NEWLY ENTRANCED POSTULANT IN THE CONVENT. THE FORMATION DIRECTOR WAS TEACHING US ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE AND SHE SENT US ALL TO THE CHAPEL TO SIT QUIETLY FOR A HALF-HOUR. SHE SAID I WANT YOU TO FOCUS ON THIS ONE VERSE. PSALM 46:10, "BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD."

SHE SAID I WANT YOU TO STUDY THAT VERSE AND THAT VERSE ALONE. AND I WANT YOU TO SIT WITH IT FOR 30 MINUTES. I WANT YOU TO WRITE DOWN 30 THINGS YOU SEE IN THAT VERSE. DON'T STOP UNTIL YOU HAVE 30.

WELL, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, AT THE END OF 10 MINUTES I FELT RESTLESS. THERE'S NOT MUCH TO SEE HERE, LET ALONE 30 THINGS. AFTER 15 MINUTES, I SAW ONE OR TWO THINGS, AND AS THE TIME WAS DRAWING TO A CLOSE, IT ALL CAME TO ME FAST AND FURIOUS.

WHEN SHE GOT US ALL TOGETHER, SHE SAID, EVERYONE SHARE THE GREATEST THING YOU GOT FROM THAT VERSE, AND WE DID – WE SHARED OUR GREAT THINGS. WE WERE VERY EXCITED. SHE ASKED, "HOW MANY OF YOU GOT THOSE THINGS IN THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES"? NO ONE RAISE DTHEIR HAND. HOW MANY GOT IT IN 10 MINUTES? AGAIN, NO HANDS WERE RAISED. 15 MINUTES? A FEW HANDS WENT UP.

SHE SAID, "FINALLY, YOU GOT STILL ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO LISTEN." YOU CAN'T JUST RUN BY YOUR BIBLE FOR FIVE MINUTES IN THE MORNING FOR INSPIRATION. THAT'S NOT SITTING AT HIS FEET AND LISTENING.

MARY, NOT ONLY SAT AT JESUS FEET, SHE LISTENED TO HIS WORD AND SUBMITTED HER LIFE TO IT. AND BECAUSE SHE WAS AT HIS FEET, SHE WAS ONE DAY ABLE TO KISS HIS FEET AND ANOINT THEM. BECAUSE SHE LISTENED TO HIM, SHE BECAME ONE OF HIS CLOSEST CONFIDANTS. THERE IS NEED OF ONLY ONE THING – THIS. THIS VERY THING SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS. SUBMITTING TO HIS WORD. READ HIS WORD. STUDY IT. BE STILL WITH IT. SERVING JESUS IS A GREAT AND WONDERFUL THING. FINDING HIM IN THE MIDST OF THAT SERVING IS EVEN BETTER.

MARY TAKES HER PLACE AS ONE WORTHY TO SIT AND LISTEN AND LEARN. MAY YOU REMEMBER ALWAYS, TO KEEP CHRIST AT YOUR CENTER, TO CONTINUE TO STUDY HIS WORD, TO PRAY WITH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER AS A REMINDER OF WHO YOU ARE AND TO WHOM YOU BELONG, AND FINALLY TO GO AND BE JOY-FILLED DISCIPLES IN THE NAME OF JESUS – AMEN.