

In our lives we are worried about many things. For me they usually fall in about 4 categories: global, financial, family and everyday. My “global” category includes, but is not limited to: what are the long-term affects of the oil spill, global warming, famine and wars. Will there be a nuclear war and we kill all our enemies, including ourselves? Financial worries include: how is the economy doing? Will I keep my job; will I be able to keep my house; will I out-live my retirement savings; will my taxes increase; will the price of goods and services increase (or better, when will they increase); will I be able to afford gasoline; can I afford to cool the house when it is this hot; will I afford the warm the house when it is this cold; will I have enough money to afford....just fill in the blank? Family worries include: will Isaac and Robert every finish college and trade school; will my children and grandchild lead healthy and successful lives; will they stay out of trouble; will we have major health problems? In the everyday worry arena: how does my house and yard look; what’s for dinner; what shall I wear; will I be on time; will I get everything done on my to due list today; will people appreciate what I have done; will someone help me accomplish my tasks? My list goes on and on.....

Our scripture takes place in the context of Jesus’ busy ministry and moving toward Jerusalem. Jesus has begun to show his followers what is really important to Him. He had chosen his disciples and had taken them on ministry journeys – preaching and healing adventures. The faithful women were providing for their physical and financial needs as explained at the beginning of chapter 8 of Luke.

During this period Jesus has explained that the disciples are to share the message of the kingdom of God, but people will have different reactions to that message. Neither they, nor the message will have failed, but the person’s acceptance or rejection will make the difference.

It is during this time that Jesus' mother and brothers come to see about him, thinking that he might be trying to do too much or having mental health issues. Jesus has demonstrated power over nature, demons, sickness and death.

By now, Jesus has commissioned the 12 disciples to preach and heal; He has feed the 5,000; He has taught the disciples about servant hood and greatness (a lesson that they and we find hard to put into action). He has been rejected by those that knew he was on his way to Jerusalem; He has sent out the 72 disciples; and they have returned excited about what they have accomplished by His authority; He has explained through the story of the Good Samaritan what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself; and now Jesus seems to just want a loving and quiet time with friends.

As they approach Jerusalem they entered a village. A woman called Martha received him into her house. She may have been a widow that had been left well off. Apparently she owned a beautiful home and garden, the kind that was welcoming and comfortable. Her sister Mary lives with her. It does not seem strange that Jesus and his entourage stopped by as they have probably visited regularly in their coming and going to and from Jerusalem. On this occasion Mary sat at Jesus' feet and continuously listened to his word. Martha was worried about cooking and serving. She stood over them and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me alone to do the serving? Tell her to give me a hand." "Martha, Martha," Jesus answered her, "you are worried and troubled about many things. Only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part, and it is not going to be taken away from her."

These verses show us *the clash of temperaments*. Some people are naturally dynamos of activity; others are naturally quiet. It is hard for the active person to understand the person who sits and contemplates. And the person who is devoted

to quiet times and meditation is apt to look down on the person who would rather be active.

There is no right or wrong in this. God did not make everyone alike. One person may pray,

“Lord of all pots and pans and things,  
Since I’ve no time to be  
A saint by doing lovely things,  
Or watching late with thee,  
Or dreaming in the dawn light,  
Or storming heaven’s gates,  
Make me a saint by getting meals  
And washing up the plates.”

Another may sit with folded hands and mind intense to think and pray. Both are serving God. God needs his Marys and his Marthas, too.

(ii) These verses show us something more—they show us *the wrong type of kindness*. Think where Jesus was going when this happened. He was on his way to Jerusalem—eventually to die. His whole being was taken up with the intensity of the inner battle to bend his will to the will of God. When Jesus came to that home in Bethany it was a great day; and Martha was eager to celebrate it by laying on the best the house could give. So she rushed and fussed and cooked; *and that was precisely what Jesus did not want*. All he wanted was quiet. With the cross before him and with the inner tension in his heart, he had turned aside to Bethany to find an oasis of calm away from the demanding crowds if only for an hour or two; and that is what Mary gave him and what Martha, in her kindness, did her best to destroy. “One thing is necessary”—quite possibly this means, “I don’t want a big spread; one course, the simplest meal is all I want.” Jesus’ rebuke might be paraphrased, “Just a casserole, Martha, not a smorgasbord.” Love for God is

expressed best in listening and responding to Jesus' words, not in busily doing "for" Him.<sup>1</sup> It was simply that Mary understood and that Martha did not.

Here is one of the great difficulties in life. So often we want to be kind to people—but we want to be kind to them *in our way*; and if it happens that our way is not the necessary way, we sometimes take offence and think that we are not appreciated. If we are trying to be kind the first thing is to try to see into the heart of the person we desire to help—and then to forget all our own plans and to think only of what he or she needs. Jesus loved Martha and Martha loved him, but when Martha set out to be kind, it had to be her way of being kind which was really being unkind to him whose heart cried out for quiet. Jesus loved Mary and Mary loved him, and Mary understood.<sup>2</sup>

Martha was busy trying to be the "hostess with the mostess." In her defense, Jesus had dropped by with his 12 to 15 best friends at dinner time. Then her sister and brother and she also had to eat. Naturally there was extra work to do when she had to re-think dinner and how to stretch what she thought was a meal for 3 into a meal for almost 20 persons! How could Mary sit and listen when there was so much to be done?

But as Mary listened at his feet, the place of a disciple, she heard of the wonderful adventures of his healing of people with diseases; restoring of life to one who was dead; feeding of 5,000 with a little boy's small lunch; and so much more!

So Martha's outburst of frustration was a surprise – why would the One who feed 5,000 with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread be worried about what was for dinner and how it would be served? Jesus was concerned about dying for the sins of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Bible Readers Companion*. electronic ed. Wheaton : Victor Books, 1991; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996, S. 661

<sup>2</sup>Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Gospel of Luke*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 141

world and reconciling humankind to God. Dinner was not high on the priority list, at least not at that time.

We, member of Unity Christian Church are a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. What God wants from us is to surrender our lives to Him and make His priorities our priorities. Both of these women were Disciples of Christ...no one doubts that fact, but they showed their love in different ways on that day. Jesus taught Martha, as He teaches us, we don't have to worry about the little things! Learn of Jesus and His ways and follow His examples. Thanks be unto God.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:234