

Free:
July 17, 2022

Every time I preach...
On this particular gospel lesson...
You know... the story of Martha...
And her sister Mary...

Every time I talk about what happened...
And how Jesus reacted.
There is ALWAYS... at least one person...
Who comes up to me...
After worship...

And says...
You know... I'm Martha...
In this story.
I'm the one...
Who works...
To make sure...
Everything is done...
And done well.

And in telling me...
That they are a Martha...
I think it's a combination...
Of being slightly offended by the story...
And how Jesus responds...

And an internal need...
That the person has... to be ok.
To self justify.
To say... I'm like Martha.
And that's a good thing.
PASTOR...

I'm not like Mary.
She is L-A-Z-Y... lazy.
She never helps.
Never pulls her weight.
Just sits around...
Talking.

And guess who...
Has to do...
All the work.
Me.

So. Before we get into this real life bible story...
This interaction between Jesus...
And these two women...
Who have two very different approaches...
To life.

Before we get into all that... **[1 Which One?]**

I want to know...

Which one are you?

Let's start with Mary...

How many of you...

Believe that you are...

Like Mary?

Listen. This is not just a girl thing.

These personalities...

Are present in men too.

So I'll ask again...

Who are the people...

Of our church...

Who act think and work...

Like Mary?

And... not to be left out...

Where are my Marthas...

Out there in the congregation.

And... by the way...

At this point...

If you act think believe...

Like Martha...

Just voluntarily raise your hand...

Don't make me call you out.

I am going to call...

One person out today. Me.

Even though I fancy myself...

To be a well-adjusted...

Sit at the feet of Jesus...

Mary type person.

The truth is...

I am a Martha.

I like to be a worker bee.

I like to be really busy...

And when I have down time...

And there is quiet all around me...

And I have nothing to do.

Sometimes... I'm like...

Ok... what's wrong.

Why am I not busy...

At this particular moment.

Now what do I do?

What I'm trying to say is...
I get a lot of my identity...
My sense of my inner Rod-ness...
From the things that I do.

And there's nothing wrong with that...
There's nothing wrong...
With having your identity...
Well seeded in what you do.

As long as we doers...
Understand... what we're doing.

If we understand...
That not everyone holds...
The same set of values...
We have.

Not everyone...
Gets their meaning...
And their purpose in life...
From what they do.

They inform their lives...
In different ways.

But see... there's the problem. **[2 Like Me]**
This human problem...
This tendency...
To generalize...
From our beliefs and experience...
And to think everyone...
Thinks like us.

They do not.

Often... we take what we think...
And we look at other people...
And say... why don't they...
Do their part.

Why aren't they living up...
To my expectations.

Why aren't they more...
Like me.

And often... this inner Martha...
Leads to us...
Being critical...
And catty...
And negative...
And hurtful.

And all those feeling...
Swirling around inside of us...
And cause us to become...
RESENTFUL.

In preparation for the Women of Joy...
One day retreat... which will be held right here...
At Joy Lutheran Church...
On Saturday September 17th...
You can sign up on the board in the narthex.
Yes. That was an advertisement. **[3 Atlas]**

Anyway... in preparation for the retreat...
I have been reading the book...
Atlas of the Heart...
By Brene Brown.
She is a researcher, author, and borderline celebrity.

In the book...
She writes about where our emotions come from...
And where they lead us.

In one part... she focuses on Resentment... **[4 Resentment]**

Her definition of resentment is...
The feeling of frustration,
Judgement, anger,
"better than",
And hidden envy
Related to PERCEIVED unfairness or injustice.

Isn't it interesting... in her definition...
It's not actual unfairness or injustice...
That we react to...

It doesn't have to reflect...
The reality of the situation.

It's enough to have the perception...
That things are unfair...

We look at other people...
And say...
They're not doing their part.
Why doesn't my spouse...
Help out more...
Around the house...

Why is it always my job...
To take out the garbage...
it's not fair.

Or why do millennials spend so much time...
Hanging out... playing video games...
And drinking craft beer?

Why can't they see...
There is work to be done.

And it doesn't even matter...
If those thoughts are true.
The perceptions are enough...
To cause us to become...
Resentful.

Brene Brown also writes... that...

Resentment is an emotion...
We experience when WE fail to set boundaries...
Or ask for what we need,
Or when expectations let us down
Because they were based on things we can't control,
Like what other people think,
What they feel,
Or how they act.

And the truth is...
I resent you because I want what you have.
I want to be more like you...
But I don't think I can.

I want to rest.
I want to sit at Jesus feet.
I want to listen to him.

I don't want to be in the kitchen...
All the time.

I don't want to have to worry...
About getting all this work done.

I don't want to have the burden...
Of making sure everything is ok...
All the time...

I want to be free... too.

Our resentment...
Comes from unmet needs.
We need something...
But don't know...
How to ask for it.

Or how to say...
Or even how to acknowledge...
That I need help.

Most of you probably remember...
And if you're new to Joy...
You may not know.

But quite a while ago...
I went through a divorce.
It was the hardest thing...
I have ever done.

It broke my heart.
It broke my spirit.
It even broke my idea...
Of myself.

I thought I was...
Better.
Stronger.

I thought I could overcome...
But I could not.

One of the really difficult things... **[5 Judge]**
About going through a divorce...
Is all the judgement...
You have to face.

And resentment.
It's so strange.
How angry people became with me.

A few people... did not hesitate...
To lash out...
To tell me exactly what they thought.
And it was hurtful.

Now based on what I know...
About some of those people...
Who were most vocal and venomous...
Toward me...

Is that their relationships...
With their spouses...
Weren't great.

They were struggling.
To hold things together.

And in a way...
I think my "giving up"...
From their estimation...
Led to a sense of resentment.

Because they didn't know...
What to do in their own lives.

They didn't know...
How to fix things.

They didn't know...
How to ask for help.

So listen.
There are a variety of ways...
We get our sense of personal identity.

Sometimes...
We get our meaning...
From what we do.

Other times...
We get our meaning...
From who we are.

In terms of church life...
And being the people of God...
Gathered in this place... **[6 Grace vs. Works]**

We talk about WORKS vs. GRACE.

Works are those things that we do.
Grace is the unconditional love of God...
That informs who we are.

And there is a bit of a debate in the Bible...
As to which is better.
Which is the base...
Of our faith.

The apostle Paul writes...
We maintain that a person is...
Made right with God...
Through faith...
And not by works of the Law.

But the apostles James writes...
Show me your faith...
And I'll show you my works.
Faith without works is dead.

And really... there's not a conflict...
As long as we get it in the right order...

And keep a clear head about...
Why we do what we do...
There's not a problem.

If we start with Grace...
If we find our core...
And our basic identity...
In what Christ has said...
About who we are.

That we are precious children of God.

I mean... let that soak in for a minute.

You are precious.
That means rare... valuable... holy... and worthy...
In God's sight.

And you are a child.
In your relationship with God.
You are not the adult...
No matter how old you are...
You are a child...
And you are dependent on God.

I hope it makes you uncomfortable...
To hear... that you are a precious child... of God.

Because God has gone to great lengths...
To establish that relationship.
To build the opportunity...
For us to have good and holy lives.

If we start... **[6b Freedom]**
With the idea...
That in Christ...
We have been set free.
And whoever the Son sets free...
Is free indeed.

Then we begin to understand...
That no matter what we do...
It can be done... out of that identity...
It can be done... centered in God's love...
All things can be done...
To the glory of God.

But if we choose...
To define ourselves...
Only in terms of how much we can get done...
Or how significant our lives are...
Or how important we are...
compared to everyone else.

Then in the comparison...
And in the ongoing burden...
To prove ourselves...

We tend to miss...
The freedom... that Christ intends for us.

So be who Christ says you are. Be free...

You don't have to impress me...
Or anyone else.

The God of Everything...
Has given you...
Life. Love. Hope.

The God of Everything...
Has given you everything...
So that you and I...
Can be free.

So Martha. **[7 M&M]**
Are you still out there?
Cause I'm talking to you...

Martha...
Try to believe...
Try to believe...
That you don't have to work so hard...
To prove that you are a good person.

You don't have to work so hard...
To get Jesus' attention.

You don't have to earn your way...
Into God's good grace.

You don't have to do...
A darn thing...
To make this right.

God loves you right now.
In this moment.
And God has given you that love...
As a gift.

Try to believe...
You are loved beyond the curse.

Try to embrace it.
Try to live it.
Try to incorporate that truth...
Into your heart and mind.

So that you can be free.

And Mary. You there?

You know who you are.
Maybe you feel centered.
And you think you have your life all together.
Maybe you are at peace.

Well... good for you.

However...
The invitation for you today...
Is to stop being so oblivious....
To the world around you.

See... what needs to be done.
So Martha doesn't feel alone... and overburdened.

See... who is hurting around you...
See... those who trying to so hard to be free...
But don't know how.

Help them.
Help bring peace.
Help bring love.
Help bring hope.

Share the load.
So that Martha can be free too. Yes?

[9 Read This]

Well... in the gospel lesson...
Jesus said...
Only one thing is needful.

He was talking about himself.
He is the one thing...
That we really need.

Everything else...
That we say...
Or do...
Or believe...
During the course of this life...

Can come from.... Him...
That one thing.

Can come from...
That relationship...

Can come from...
That love of God...
That we have received from Christ.

It's the core of our identity.
That's why we need that one thing.
We need Jesus...

So that...
We can live a new life.

So that...
Everything we do...
Flows from...
And is an expression of...
The freedom we have in Christ.

Then all the words that we speak...
Can be words of love and encouragement...

Then all the things we do...
Can be holy loving good works.

If we keep the right order...
If we let go of our need...
To prove ourselves.

If we see the others around us...
Longing for peace.

Then life can be a really good thing.
And we can all... be free.

Thanks be to God.
Amen.