

Sunday, July 20, 2025

Luke 10:38-42 *"Rooted in Christ, Sent to Serve: Mary, Martha, and the Gospel We Live"*

Deacon Aimee Elles

Let us pray.

Loving God, You meet us in every moment—in our sorrow and in our joy, in our work and in our rest.

As we gather today, center us in your presence. Open our hearts to your Word, and send us out to serve with love. In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.

This morning, we gather in a moment of **holy tension**—between grief and gratitude, between endings and beginnings. During transitions, we are also stepping into a new chapter:

- We've completed a successful capital campaign to begin work to renew our campus.
- We're establishing new relationships at our Memorial campus and here in the Rice Village.
- We're preparing to welcome an interim pastor who will walk with us into what's next.

In the midst of all this, we hear the story of **Martha and Mary**—two sisters, two disciples, two ways of being with Jesus. And with them comes the long-debated question: Who was right? Who was wrong? Was Jesus praising one and correcting the other?

Martha is the doer. She welcomes Jesus, prepares the meal, tends to the details. You can almost hear the busyness in her voice. But her service is not a distraction—it's **devotion**. And in her, we see the heart of the **diaconal call**: to serve the world in Christ's name.

This congregation lives that out beautifully—repairing buildings, strengthening ministries, forming new partnerships. These are not just projects. They are acts of gospel proclamation.

As St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words."

Martha's hands preach. **Your hands preach**. Every repaired wall, every shared meal, every act of welcome is a sermon.

Mary sits at Jesus' feet. She listens. She receives. In a time of transition, this is also our call—to pause, to be still, to remember that **Christ is here**.

Mary reminds us that our service must be **rooted in presence**. That before we go out, we must come in—to the Word, to prayer, to the quiet center where God speaks.

This is not a rejection of Martha's work. It's a reminder that **our doing must flow from our being**.

In verse 42, Jesus says, "Mary has chosen the better part." The Greek word here is **ἀγαθὴν** (agathēn)—meaning good. It's used over 100 times in the Gospels. But what's striking is that it doesn't just mean "better" in a comparative sense. It means **inherently good**—something that originates from God and is empowered by God through faith.

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So, this isn't about Mary being right and Martha being wrong. It's about recognizing that **both hospitality and attentiveness are sacred**. But in that moment, Mary chose to be fully present—to sit face to face with Jesus, to listen deeply, to be transformed.

This balance between doing and being isn't just a biblical idea—it plays out in our daily lives, too. Let me tell you about how it works in our house...

Some of you know that in our house, my husband Daryl is the primary chef. He plans the meals, buys the groceries, cooks the food, and *even* does the dishes. I like to remind people that I've done all those things too—but he enjoys them, and *quite frankly*, he does them better. Plus, he doesn't want to eat some version of cold cereal every night, which is what I'd be cooking these days.

Our agreement is that when the food is ready—or close—he calls me, and I come to the table. Not in ten minutes. **Then**. Because he's worked hard to prepare a meal, and we value that time to sit together, to talk about our day, our plans, our questions. To be fully present with one another. We're not perfect at it—sometimes it's more of an aspirational goal. But we try really hard to remember that being present matters.

Now, I'm not saying I'm Mary to Daryl's Martha. But I am saying that we all need to recognize that there is a time to do—and a time to be present with and for one another.

And sometimes, that call to presence shows up in even more unexpected places... like a cruise ship in the Gulf of Mexico.

My sister and I left last Saturday for a short birthday cruise for my mother's 75th birthday. It was a quick few days in and out of Mexico. Now, my mom doesn't travel much at all, has certainly never been on a cruise, and to add to that we haven't EVER been on a vacation with our mom especially as an adult and so this was a first on a lot of levels. I was nervous because I was worried about how this was going to go. Sometimes there can be a lot of opinions and a lot of right versus wrongs. Plus—we were sharing a cabin. One of my hopes on this trip was to have a little down time and do some reading. I started a book called *"Tattoos on the Heart"* by Father Gregory Boyle. It is a book centered on the Power of Compassion.

He describes this compassion as a relationship not between a healer and the wounded BUT as a covenant between equals. He quotes Al Sharpton: "We're all created equal, but we don't all end up equal." So, I wonder how we get from a place where Jesus was one with others. He chose to be in intimate relationship with lepers before he ever got around to curing them. He didn't just champion the cause of those who were outcast, but **he WAS the outcast**. He had boundless compassion for people. He realized that he couldn't just take the right stand on important issues, but he had to stand in the right place. **WITH THE OUTCAST**.

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What does that have to do with my mom and my sister and I floating on a cruise boat in the gulf, eating too much, and relaxing? Well, the three of us sit in very different places in our personal stances on issues and belief systems. We live in different spectrums in our world views and perceptions. We have layers of family systems and history on the line every time we gather that each of us must decide (*and I can say that I especially have to decide*) how far I am going to stand on the soap box or push my perception of truth or reality. How important is this relationship with my mother? How do I show boundless compassion for this woman who gave me life, and I have to believe ultimately does mean well? How do I get out of my own way to be present with my mother and sister and love them truly as equals? In our baptism, we are empowered to be both Mary and Martha—people of presence and people of action.

- In baptism, we are named and claimed.
- In baptism, we are called and sent.

This is the rhythm of the diaconal life:

- To sit at Jesus' feet in worship and wonder
- To rise and serve with compassion and courage.
- To preach the gospel with our lives—and sometimes, with our words.

As we welcome an interim pastor, as we deepen our partnership with others church, as we continue to care for our campus and our community, we do so not as people adrift, but as people anchored in Christ.

Christ the King is a congregation that knows how to listen and how to serve. You are a people who preach the gospel in breakfast after church, in construction and conversation, in prayer and proclamation.

**So go.** Go into this next chapter as Mary **and** Martha.

Go as people who remember your baptism.

Go as people who know that Christ is already ahead of you, preparing the way.

Christ is still here. Christ is still calling. And Christ is sending us out—together.

**Amen.**