

Gospel lesson

We continue from where we left off last week, reading about Jesus on His countryside ministry.



picture reversed from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/dm-mary-martha/>; credit: Didier Martin

Luke 10:38-42

(NRSV)

³⁸Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.

⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me."

⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things;

⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Show mirror> What do you see when you look in a mirror? <Let them respond>

How would you describe yourself? <Let them respond>

How do you think other people would describe you?
<Let them respond>

Think of someone you love. How would you describe them? <Let them respond>

Are physical features the only way we describe someone? <Let them respond>

Apostle Paul described Jesus as “the image of the invisible God.” Do you think he meant Jesus’s physical body? <Let them respond>

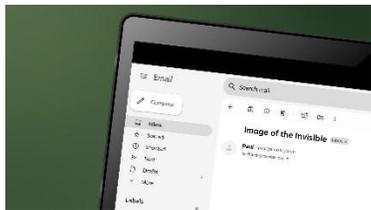
If our reflection in a mirror is an image of us, in what way are we a reflection of Jesus?
<Let them respond>

May we always share love and kindness, that everyone may know the grace of God when they see us.

<Hymn “Take My Life, and Let It Be”

UMH #399>

Message: Image of the Invisible



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/dear-children-of-god-part-2/sixth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/sixth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

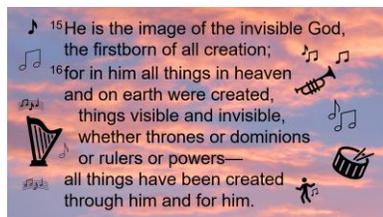
Invisible and all-powerful God,
as we take time now to further consider today’s
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may live into the image of Your glory
as You have made possible for us. Amen.

Our theme for today comes again from Paul's letter to the Colossians, "Image of the Invisible":

"In this week's text, Paul draws on the power of communal singing by quoting a hymn about Christ in the middle of his letter to the Colossians."



background picture from MMMS collection

We don't have any videos or audio recordings from biblical times, so we do not know what the hymns they sang sounded like. All those psalms, how they used them, where the instrument accompaniment actually fit in – we have no real knowledge of how any of it went together or was used in worship.

Due to differences in language structure, most scholars think Paul was quoting an early Christian hymn in Col 1:15-20. Unfortunately, the hymn itself was lost over time, and in translation we do not even get a sense of the rhythm or poetry of it.

It seems to me that reading words of a text compares with the uplifting experience of singing a beloved hymn about like looking at a still picture of a

person compares to spending time with them. The experience is much richer when we can engage more directly and on multiple levels.

How well do we engage with Jesus in our daily lives? Do we really let ourselves be consecrated to holy living, to sharing God's love in countercultural ways that gracefully invite everyone into the kingdom?

Are you, like the psalmist, as a green olive tree in the house of God, trusting in the steadfast love of God forever and ever, and producing useful fruit?



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/hands-holding-dollars-4968639/>;
credit: Kaboompics.com

I wish everyone was, because there are so many people doomed by trust in abundant riches, who seek refuge in the false security of physical wealth.

Not that it is anything new - not only does the psalmist warn that evildoers will be destroyed, we also read about Amos pronouncing God's judgment on the northern kingdom shortly before its fall. Why? Because of their focus on materialism and personal gain instead of on God and the good of all.

Like we see in shrinkflation today, in Amos's day, those trading in goods were shorting customers and price gauging consumers. The poor were bought "for silver," with no mercy or care to supply basic needs, only a drive to get as much out of them as possible.

We see that today with those working low-wage jobs,

usually multiple part-time gigs {because companies do not want to pay the benefits due full-time workers such as health care, and so they break up shifts into part-time work}. Yet in at least twenty states across this country, full-time minimum wage work leaves an individual below the federal poverty level – they cannot support themselves, let alone a family.



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/worried-young-woman-sitting-near-broken-automobile-at-roadside-in-countryside-4173090/>;
credit: Gustavo Fring

If they get sick, how are they to pay medical bills? They cannot afford even routine check ups of any kind – they cannot afford the time off work let alone the fees involved. And that assumes they have a reliable way to get to and from work – a minor vehicle problem becomes a catastrophic event.

Does that sound like the world full of abundant blessings that God created for humans to live in? *Who is reflecting the image of God in this situation?* I am pretty sure it is not the ones gouging workers and consumers to make greater corporate profits.

Society's focus has shifted away from God, away from holiness in our actions and caring for others (even if we do not know them), to a focus on getting as much as possible for ourselves and those who love us (typically those we call family or friend).

Even when we try to entertain Christ in new ways, we tend to be like Martha, trying to take care of all the material things society says are important instead of simply welcoming Jesus in and spending

time developing a deeper relationship with Him.



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-handled-key-on-key-hole-101808/>;
credit: AS Photography

I am guilty of that. I have locked myself out of my office on more than one occasion in trying to keep things secure. Perhaps it does prevent unauthorized use of the copier and other things at the church; it is also inconvenient for more people than just me who have a legitimate need to be in the office.

What about our church building? We keep it locked far more than unlocked. Are our reasons for locking it worth preventing people who may want to come in off hours for prayer/meditation? Are we reflecting materialism and/or fear, or are we reflecting the love of our Savior in what we do?

How about the way we treat others outside of this building?

- † That person who cuts you off while driving, do we give them room to get where they are going in such a hurry, or try to punish them for being rude on the road? Which is the safer thing to do, and thus better for all?
- † That person with the noisy child in a store, do we complain about their parenting, or do we help them calm/distract the child? Which is better for reducing everyone's stress?
- † That person who always has to one-up everyone else, do we take them down a peg or two when we get the chance, or do we compliment them on what they do

well so that they do not feel [a need to prove themselves] as much?



picture from MMMS collection

In what ways can we better reflect Jesus as we interact with others? I think we all would like for others to see the grace of God in us.

A mirror can only reflect the image of what it is facing. So if we want to reflect holiness, we need to turn our faces to our holy God. Then, we can adjust what we are doing to allow that holiness to be reflected through us to everyone we encounter. God will make sure it goes where it is needed most, with the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Christ.

And now let us proclaim the glory of our amazing God through recitation of: