

Traditional Home service

Sunday 17th July

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

*Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts. Open our lips, Lord: and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus)

READINGS - Amos 8.1-12

Colossians 1.15-28

Luke 10.38-42

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (Take My Life, and Let It Be Consecrated)

CONCLUSION

The Lord bless you and watch over you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

TALK

HYMNS TO USE

1 Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,
let them flow in endless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,
swift and beautiful for thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee,
filled with messages from thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose,
every power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

1 Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow
strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

2 Turn your eyes to the hillside
Where justice and mercy embraced
There the Son of God gave His life for
us
And our measureless debt was erased

*Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our prize
We adore You, behold You, our Savior
ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You*

3 Turn your eyes to the morning
And see Christ the Lion awake
What a glorious dawn, fear of death is
gone
For we carry His life in our veins

4 Turn your eyes to the heavens
Our King will return for His own
Every knee will bow, every tongue will
shout,
'All glory to Jesus alone!'

Sermon - Holly Horspole

Today's Gospel reading finds us in the home of two sisters, Martha and Mary. Jesus is visiting the village where they live, and so they have welcomed him into their home. But it's clear that there are some tense family dynamics going on in this scene. Mary, the younger sister, is sat at Jesus's feet listening to him while Martha, the older sister, is distracted by lots of tasks around the house, presumably trying to make sure that Jesus is well looked after.

I wonder for those of us who have brothers or sisters, whether this situation feels familiar at all? I am an oldest child, and I certainly can think of many times when I've felt hard done by because it has seemed as if I'm the only one who cares about getting jobs done, or making sure people are looked after, while my siblings seem to get away without feeling any sense of responsibility! So I can really sympathise with Martha here – she's working really hard, while it seems like her younger sister is not doing her part in extending hospitality to Jesus.

Clearly Martha has had enough of being left to do everything on her own, so she goes and tells Jesus how she feels. In verse 40 Martha says 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me' – from the way that Martha speaks to Jesus, it's obvious that she thinks that she is in the right and that Jesus will be on her side. So we can imagine that Martha was probably a bit shocked when Jesus does not side with her, but instead he brings a new perspective to the situation and reveals that it is actually Mary that has chosen the better thing by choosing to sit and listen at Jesus's feet.

Now I want to be really clear and say that I do not think this passage in Luke's gospel is saying that working hard and serving people is wrong. Because serving both God and others is a really important part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. And in verse 41 Jesus does not condemn Martha for everything she is doing or trying to do. Through the way that Jesus says her name twice, 'Martha, Martha...' we can sense the love that Jesus has for her. Rather than telling her off, Jesus gently but firmly points out that she is focused on the wrong thing. Doing and serving should not come before firstly sitting and being with Jesus. It is out of our sitting and being with Jesus that our doing and serving should flow. Last week we looked at the parable of the Good Samaritan that ended with the challenge to 'go and do likewise'. But in order to go and do what Jesus teaches, we need to first sit and listen to him.

I don't know about you, but I find it quite easy to be busy and do lots of things. But being busy, even with the best kind of intentions, doesn't necessarily mean I'm listening to God and being faithful to what he is asking me to do. And often, when things get busy the easiest way for me to squeeze a few more things into the day is to spend a bit less time praying or reading my Bible. When actually, spending time with God and learning from his word is what will feed me, helping me to serve and love both God and others well. But there can be a great temptation to be busy serving and doing at the expense of being fed spiritually.

I'm sure many of us have heard it said before that we can't give out if we ourselves are running on empty – or at least we can't do it very well. As followers of Jesus, we are to love God and others. But it is very difficult to truly share God's love with others if we are not ourselves experiencing the love of God in our own lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot serve God and others well if we neglect to spend time sitting and listening at Jesus's feet.

In a previous church that I was part of, we used to talk about the difference between 'good' ideas and 'God' ideas. Between us we could often come up with a lot of really good ideas of things we could do as a church, things like events and groups we could run, or ways that we could support and serve our local community. But actually, although a lot of those ideas were quite good ideas, they weren't necessarily 'God' ideas. This wasn't because they weren't about helping people or loving our neighbours. But it was because these 'good' ideas weren't the things that God was really asking us to pour our time and energy into at that particular point in time. And it is only through sitting and listening at Jesus's feet that we were able to try and discern what God's ideas for us were. Through this God helped us to grow in trusting in his timing and provision, and the ideas that we felt were from God were always so much better and more fruitful than any of our own 'good' ideas.

Sitting and listening instead of rushing into action can sometimes feel costly or challenging, especially if we're passionate about sharing the gospel, or if we're the sorts of people who like to just get on and 'do'. And yet, as was Martha's case, too much focus on doing can cause us to lose sight of what ultimately matters – our relationship with Jesus. In working hard and doing lots of tasks, I think Martha's intentions were probably really good – she probably wanted to serve Jesus, her houseguest, well. But as verses 41-42 tell us, Martha was distracted by her many tasks causing her to miss out on the one thing that really mattered in that moment –

spending time sitting at Jesus's feet and listening to him.

Not only was Martha distracted by the different tasks in front of her, but she was also distracted by concerning herself with what others were or were not doing. Martha judges her sister and wants her to behave in the same way that she does. Perhaps she thinks that what she is doing is more important than sitting and being with Jesus. In this way, Martha reminds me a bit of the older brother in the story of the Prodigal Son who thinks it's unfair when the younger brother is welcomed back with joyous celebration, while he has always remained loyal to his father. This kind of comparison can be a distraction for us in taking time to sit and listen to Jesus – it can sometimes be easier to focus on what other people are doing, rather than to focus on how we're really doing. And despite Martha's expectation that Jesus would side with her and ask Mary to help her work, Jesus tells her not to be distracted by her many tasks, or by what her sister is doing. Jesus tells Martha that only one thing is needed – spending time sitting and listening to Jesus.

When I was a teenager, I was very involved in church youth groups, and there was a big emphasis on living your life FOR Jesus. This is not a bad thing to be taught at all, but it was all about doing things FOR God, and not so much about being WITH God. Doing things for God is important, and our faith should absolutely influence our actions and the way that we live. But if this is not rooted in spending time with Jesus, then it can all become a bit empty. We need to sit and be and receive from God before we then go and do. Several years ago, I felt God really challenge me about this. I've already mentioned that I can be quite a do-er, and the heart of my life as a Christian had become about making sure I was involved as many things as possible, helping lots of people, and not really taking much care of myself or my relationship with Jesus – but all of this was OK because I was telling myself that it was all 'for God'. In some way, I felt that I needed to 'do' lots of things in order to be useful to God. But one day I was praying and I felt the Holy Spirit say, 'I want you to live your life WITH me, not just FOR me'.

A bit like Martha, I was focused on many things when I should have ultimately been focused on one thing – spending time with Jesus. This encounter completely transformed my relationship with Jesus and the way that I try to live out my faith every day. The centre of my relationship with Jesus is now the time I spend talking and listening to him, rather than the number of activities or the amount of work that I do. I'm still learning how to do it, but I am

convinced that living life WITH God is the very best way to live.

As we come into land, I realise that we've focused a lot on Martha and not mentioned much about Mary, so we'll end by thinking a little bit about the younger sister in the story. In our reading, Mary doesn't say anything, but her silent act of sitting and listening at Jesus's feet makes a very loud impression, particularly as Jesus uses Mary's example to show that she has chosen the better thing to do. At the beginning, we acknowledged some of the tense family dynamics at play between the two sisters, particularly because Martha is so unhappy about having to do the work on her own. But there is also another tension present in this story. While some people may be shocked that Mary leaves her sister to do all the work on her own, in Jesus's time the shocking element within this story would have been the fact that Mary was sat at the feet of Jesus absorbing all that he was saying. This is simply because Mary was a woman. In Jesus's time, houses were divided into male and female spaces. Men and women did not usually mix, even in the home, unless the women were serving the men. For Mary, a woman, to sit amongst the men would have been pretty outrageous. It was particularly shocking because to sit at the feet of a rabbi or teacher was to express that you wanted to be their follower and learn from them. At this time, women were not allowed to do this. And yet, Jesus breaks down these cultural boundaries. And in his response to Martha about Mary having chosen the better way by choosing to sit at his feet, Jesus demonstrates that there is absolutely a place for Mary at his feet, despite what the rest of society might have been saying. And, of course, that place was also open to Martha as well.

Just as Jesus broke down cultural barriers by welcoming Mary to sit at his feet and learn from him, through his death and resurrection Jesus broke down the ultimate barrier between us and God – sin. In doing so, Jesus made it possible for all of us to have a relationship with God, no matter who we are, if we choose to listen to and follow him.

There is a space for all of us at Jesus's feet, but we must choose to lay aside our busyness, distractions, and comparisons to make space to spend time with Jesus and listen for his voice. Doing and serving are not wrong, but we must first sit and listen to Jesus before we act.

So I wonder today if you can relate to Martha at all? Are you distracted by a few or many things?

Do you need to hear Jesus's gentle but firm challenge to lift your eyes from 'doing' and spend some time 'being' with him?

Can you be like Mary this week and choose to spend time with Jesus and listen for his voice?

Let's pray...