

Dear friends,

This week we look at the different ways in which Martha and Mary reacted to Jesus visiting their home. Silence and inaction can feel very uncomfortable, and we often justify ourselves by keeping busy! The rhythm of work and rest can become one of constant activity as then we don't have to think deeply about those awkward questions. When Jesus visited their home, Mary found the time to sit and listen to him, but Martha felt she needed to ensure that the chores were done. There are many ways of serving God – everyone has an important contribution to make – but how should we respond to Jesus? With every blessing always to you all – Margaret.

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**Call to worship:**

Listen to the words of Jesus Christ – seize the moment with both hands!

Let us come together now to listen and to learn, as we seek to become his servants.

Lord Jesus Chris, we come to you, burdened by our insecurities and responsibilities.

Sometimes we are not valued for what we are, but for what other people want to make us.

But we know that you love us for what and for who we are, and this sets us free to be our fullest selves – to be disciples, following your way, and learning from you.

May we learn and listen together now. Amen.

God of welcome, we are welcomed to be with you – as we always are.

In this moment, in this time be real to us, be known to us, let us hear your Word, know its truth and follow its meaning. Amen.

**The words to 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' written by David J. Evans [b. 1957]    StF 20**

1 Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
come bow before him now with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found – we stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The Holy One, is here.

2 Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:  
how awesome is the sight – our radiant King of Light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.

3 Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place;  
he comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace:  
no work too hard for him – in faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.

**Prayer including the Lord's Prayer:**

God Almighty, Father and Mother, Son and Spirit, you are the Word of life.

You are the Word of life – you are the Word of truth.  
You are the Word of love – you are the Word of hospitality.  
You are the one above and beyond all else – yours is the Word to be heard and listened to.  
Yours is the voice in eternity.  
You are the Alpha and Omega – the beginning and the end.  
You are our God. Amen.

In a moment of quiet we reflect on the past week.  
We think of the things of which we are ashamed – perhaps we did not speak the truth – or maybe when our hearts and our tongues were separated, when our hearts said ‘no’ but our tongues said ‘yes’.  
And we are sorry.

We think of the things of which we are ashamed – if others needed our love and we refused or we held others in contempt, putting them down by word or deed.  
And we are sorry.

We think of the things of which we are ashamed – when we did not challenge the greed of the world – if ever we went along with corruption and dishonesty – when we did not honour our Christian life.  
And we are sorry.

May your transforming face be ever at work in our lives – may your Spirit be ever more present in our hearts – may your grace run through our veins, that we might become more and more like you, every day. Amen.

The God of creation – the God of word and deed – the God of all that has been and all that will be:  
Calls us to confess and assures us that our sins, our failings, our falterings, our stammerings are forgiven.

If we listen, we will hear God’s promise: ‘My child. Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.’

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**Luke 10: 38-42: The New Testament Volume One: The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles – William Barclay. Copyright William Barclay 1968**

In the course of their journey Jesus went into a village. A woman called Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, and Mary sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his talk. Martha was so worried about getting a meal ready for them that she was quite distracted. ‘Master,’ she came up and said, ‘don’t you care that my sister has left me to attend to everything alone? Tell her to give me a hand.’

‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and harassed about putting a meal on the table with a whole lot of courses. One will do perfectly well. Mary has chosen the best dish, and it is not going to be taken away from her.’

**Meditation of Martha: A Most amazing Man – year C. Written by Nick Fawcett. Copyright 2009 Nick Fawcett.**

Don't feel sorry for me, as if I was harshly treated, for I wasn't, not in the slightest.

Yes, there were jobs to be done – the meal to prepare for a start – but Jesus was in no hurry, and neither should I have been.

The daft thing was, it was *me* who invited him round, not Mary; I the one initially who recognised a gap in our lives that Jesus alone could fill.

But I allowed myself to get distracted, led into a blind alley by tasks that, though worthy enough in themselves, finally counted for nothing.

Not that Jesus minded, even then. He knew I meant well and that I would listen eventually.

It was my complaints that stirred a response: my seeking to land Mary in it, as though she were at fault and I was virtuous, when the true error was mine.

He rebuked me for that, if you can call it a rebuke, but his words were patient, gentle, explaining rather than condemning, inviting me to pause and think again.

I'm learning to do that, slowly, making time to stop and stare, to relax and reflect – and I've found true rest in doing so not just for my body but for the soul.

It doesn't come easy to me, for I'm the fussing sort, always on tenterhooks – but Jesus taught me a vital lesson that day: there's a difference between what *seems* to matter and what *really* does.

**Comment:**

In the story of Martha, Luke introduces someone who has lost a sense of proportion. The contrast between the two sisters is not between service and listening but between the attentiveness of the disciple and the anxious uproar of someone who is missing the opportunity of the moment. What was so necessary that Martha's desire to offer hospitality missed that opportunity? This must be about more than the actual event. Jesus wasn't simply saying he was not that hungry. He was certainly offering support for Mary who was giving him single-minded, attentive, unqualified discipleship. Martha, by contrast, was ignoring all that he was offering her – the opportunity to step out of her role as a woman, dictated by culture and religion, and become a disciple.

Jesus came as the one whose kingdom broke through convention and inherited piety. In last week's Gospel reading, a Samaritan – an apostate Jew – practised the love of neighbour. In this encounter, a woman listened as though she were a rabbi's disciple and was praised, not chastised, for going beyond her station in life.

**Prayers:**

God of the field and the river – of the desert and oasis – of the plain and the steppe – of the town and of the city: Lord of all, we ask your blessing

For people who are waiting for food – for people who are waiting for water – for people who are waiting for shelter – for people working to relieve want and need – wherever they are, whoever they are: Lord of all, we ask your blessing.

For children and young people – for their families and friends – for the old and infirm – for the childless and for the bereaved – for those working to bring communities together: God of all, we ask your blessing.

For each Christian community meeting today – for our Worship at Home community as we share in this offering – for our leaders and all committed to their care – for missionaries, teachers and

worshippers – for worship leaders and worshippers – for all those working to forward your kingdom in their various ways: God of all, we ask your blessing on this world.

Teach us, Lord, that, however busy we are – however frenetic our lifestyle, we need time to ponder, time for you.

Forgive us for relegating you to the margins of our lives, believing we have more important things to do, more pressing concerns to see to. Remind us that you hold the words of eternal life, the answer to our inner hunger and true needs – and so, in our list of daily priorities, help us to put you *first*, not *last*. Amen.

We pray for those with tasks to do.

Those in positions of national leadership – politicians, rulers, dictators and plutocrats.....

Those whose decisions govern our lives – local councillors, managers, medical professionals.....

Those whose presence impacts on our lives – our family and friends, teachers, colleagues.....

Those who feel moved to serve others – fighting causes, campaigning, caring.....

Those who give of themselves by their achievements – in the fields of study, art and sport.....

And we pray for ourselves, and the tasks we have to do.....

Amen.

**The words to ‘Take this moment, sign and space’ written by John L. Bell [b.1949] and Graham Maule [b.1958]                      Singing the Faith 513**

1 Take this moment, sign and space; take this world around;  
here among us make the place where your love is found.

2 Take the time to call my name, take the time to mend  
who I am and what I’ve been, all I’ve failed to tend.

3 Take the tiredness of my days, take my past regret,  
letting your forgiveness touch all I can’t forget.

4 Take the little child in me, scared of growing old;  
help me here to find my worth made in Christ’s own mould.

5 Take my talents, take my skills, take what’s yet to be;  
let my life be yours, and yet, let it still be me.

**Close:**

Persevere in your faith, set it on a firm foundation, and never give up.

For in the gospel is all the hope we need to act and think and speak and be. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

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