

July 17, 2022 - Choose the Better Part

Based on Luke 10:38-42

I had an excellent time away last week on study leave at Naramata. I took in a week-long program called Sacred Earth, Holy Connection: A Wild Church Week at Naramata Centre. As the title implies, this was a week to take in the natural environment and bathe in creation. We focussed on listening to sounds of water, wind, birds, and other wildlife. We were asked to pay attention to the multitude of incredible colours of our natural world. We wandered amongst plants, trees, down to the lake and up to a magnificent water fall. We paused to gaze downwards at the earth, noticing small insects we might otherwise miss. We gazed upon wonderful blossoms and realized many of them were actually weeds we typically ignore. And we shared reflections of our time and wonderings while on the land. I would recommend the week highly to all of you.

I rented a small cottage on the grounds adjacent to Naramata Creek. It was blissful. With no television in the room that normal distraction was eliminated. Other than the wonderful and relaxing sound of the creek splashing along its way with that distinctive rush and echo sound, the only other audible noise was the toddler next door. But even he was silent by mid evening. Quiet, comfy and tired, I settled down the first evening with the window wide open and the creek singing out its calming, soothing song.

I had a great sleep and woke up refreshed, but I noticed something was not the same. I realized I wasn't hearing the creek like I was the night before. Why was that? Ah, I bet I know, where is my hearing aid? Of course, the creek came back in full symphony immediately when I was plugged back in. "There you are I said out loud," and celebrated the wonder around me once again.

It was natural for Martha to be kept busy with all the chores necessary to host her guests. Luke doesn't mention it, but Lazarus (Martha and Mary's brother) and the other disciples are there too. They have all been invited in. There would have been a lot to do for Martha and Mary because the men were certainly not going to help prepare, serve or clean. So, Martha's complaint is pretty understandable and justified. Martha is a little peeved and basically says to Jesus, "would you tell that lazy sister of mine to get up and give me some help!"

You can bet Martha didn't expect Jesus' response. ***"Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—indeed only one.^[c] Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."***

Mary has chosen to listen. Mary has made a conscious decision to let the ordinary things in her life, her duties and her normal responsibilities slide. Instead, she is listening to Jesus preach the good news to those that have gathered. She has her hearing aids in, the batteries fully changed. Mary has considered that Jesus has something profound to say and she wants to hear it. She is paying close attention to what Jesus is sharing.

Mary has made a decision to ditch the television and other normal comforts. She has consciously decided to let go of her obligations. It is a lesson Jesus is spreading and has been spreading throughout his ministry. "Let go of your worldly possessions, those things that you think you have to do and pay attention. Pay attention, there are many who need to be fed, not just me and the visitors you have here today. There are many who would feast on a kind deed, some generosity, some understanding. I'm preaching about spreading compassion and love. That is the banquet we are meant to share."

Jesus is saying, you can't be instruments of the good news unless you listen, listen to where you are in the world and hear how you might make a difference. Mary wanted to listen; Martha was preoccupied with what she thought was most important.

As I was sitting under a big Cedar Tree closing my eyes, feeling the earth beneath me, listening to the songs of the birds and the creek in the distance, I was reacquainted with how God is in the world in so many ways. The spirit of life is around us always.

In the outdoors there is wonder, beauty, mystery, and incredible diversity. There is even hope and healing as the earth, despite the pain we inflict on it, heals itself. That is all the Master Creator's work.

But don't forget that you are all part of that awesome and magnificent masterpiece as well.

This morning, here in this place and on-line, we witness limitless works of wonder. Our time together Sunday mornings takes us away from our business in all of our doing, all of our coming and going and offers us a time to be grounded in the Creator's love.

Take a moment to listen to your breath, feel your chest rise and fall. Feel your heart beating. Take a moment to look around you at all these wonderful living spirits, testimony to how great God is. For a time, leave the list of expectations and the concerns you have behind. Empty your mind of your to do list, your volunteer expectations. The grass can grow another day. Dusting can wait. The car doesn't really need to be washed today. Let the weeds grow a little taller, they're not going anywhere.

Breathe deeply and sit a while with Mary at Jesus' feet and listen. Jesus was not just telling those gathered to follow in discipleship, he was telling them to listen. Listen to a God that is always telling you that you are special, and that you are loved. This God always offers the sabbath, a time to be nurtured and cared about, a time to be in community, a time when we can just be.

Jesus says Mary chose the better part which will not be taken away from her. She chose "tune out," from distraction and "tune in" to God.

As I was offered that time during my Wild Church experience, we are all offered that here and now. Choose the better part and listen, the voice of Holy Love is calling you. And that voice says "welcome friend, welcome stranger, welcome family, welcome all." "Rest for a while in my company and know that you are blessed."

Thanks for listening to Jesus this morning. Amen