

Luke 10:38-42(NIV)

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" ⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her."

There are many things I like about this time of year. One thing I do not like is all the "things" one must do to get ready for Christmas. The hustle and bustle of the season can be front and center. I remember how especially crazy it got when our kids were home, and our parents were alive.

The pressure from stores to buy seems to always be in front of us. When I was reading the newspaper the other day, I couldn't get over how much of it were full page ads trying to entice to buy their merchandise for that "perfect" gift. Sometimes for me the gift giving suggestions get to be a little much. I have been especially amused by a luxury car company intimating that their vehicle would be the ultimate Christmas gift.

Christmas gatherings need to be put into the schedule; cards need to be sent out, decorations put up, and if you bake, there's another thing to do. I'm sure there are some of us who want to exclaim (using a variation of an old expression); "Stop the Holiday Season; I want to get off.....". Now to be sure, most of us have the best of intentions in our activities. Stress and even frayed emotions just happen because there seems to be so much.

So it seemed good to revisit the story of Martha and Mary from Luke's gospel to help us get the right perspective on the season. Jesus had come for a visit, and Martha, who is only making sure hospitality is extended to Jesus, is doing all she can since hospitality was a top priority in their culture. However Mary seems to be taking the visit by Jesus from a different perspective. She somehow senses that Jesus' visit is a once in a lifetime opportunity, so she sits at Jesus' feet to listen to him. Martha watches all this going on and finally snaps, even trying to get Jesus' side with her. But to no avail. Jesus tries to get her to see the big picture. He is not your everyday visitor. Mary is in the right, and in this instance attention must be paid.

So we need to ask ourselves the question, is Jesus the reason for the season? In the midst of all around us, may we take time to ask ourselves that question? When we do that, we will choose the better part.

*"O dearest Jesus, holy child
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled
A holy shrine within my heart
That you and I need never part"* -Martin Luther from the hymn "From Heaven Above"

Pr. John Van Haneghan