

**Sunday 17 July 2022**  
**Holy Trinity – Holy Communion (8.00am)**  
**Trinity 5**

Genesis 18:1-10a  
Colossians 1:15-28  
Luke 10:38-42

**Too busy for God?**

Poor Martha; she seems to be lost in our New Testament story this morning. Of all people, you might think Jesus should have recognised and congratulated Martha for her servant heart. We can all put ourselves in Martha's shoes. Company has turned up at the last minute, details haven't been worked out; nothing is ready, the table must be laid, food prepared. One wonders if Jesus had also brought along the twelve disciples. How many tasks did Martha need to perform? She needed Mary's help.

Generally, our sympathies are not with Mary, but with Martha. Why? Because I suppose, we've all had those moments when there was too much to do, too little time, and not enough help. We've all been captured by the "tyranny of the urgent." We've been caught with lists too long and so many things that need to be dealt with yesterday. The overwhelming sense of our day is that we must keep running at a frenzied pace or the whole mess will eventually catch up with us. We work longer hours than we should or need to work; we miss the most important moments of life. The watchword has become not quantity, but quality. Not quantity time with children, just quality. Not much time with friends, just make it quality. Not much time for God, just enough to make it count.

Quality relationships, quality parenting, a high quality of personal prayer life; all require time. We can't rush the important things of life and expect to gain real meaning or real quality. Why do we rush the important things of life? Because we have got so many ordinary things to do that we just run short of time. One of the tragedies of the modern technological and information age is that we have created so many electronic devices to "save us time" and allow us to do more and be more efficient that we must give incredible amounts of time responding to these means of communication.

What is it then that's truly important?

The speed of modern computers and mobile phones etc has led us to believe that people should respond, if not instantly, then at least quickly to our many queries of them online. It's a common burden of modern life. The urgent often keeps us from putting first things first. It's good advice to "Protect your think time." What a concept. Time to think and perhaps write. Time to think about my response to all those emails. Time to think about what my family really

needs. Time to think about ways to care for my neighbours and people close to me.

Jesus understood that Mary was alert to the most important things. So, just what was it that Mary was doing? We can only conclude that Mary gave her full attention to Jesus. We can imagine that Jesus talked to her about his travels and his teaching. Mary must have hung on every word that Jesus offered. Mary's life was ordinary enough, but when Jesus came to town something extraordinary was taking place. Mary just wasn't going to miss the opportunity.

I think it is important though for us this morning to put this short story of Martha and Mary into its proper context, and that is that of Jesus having set his face to go to Jerusalem. Soon he will be up before a kangaroo court followed by the cruellest of executions. So, you can see that there's an urgency behind the text that isn't immediately obvious when you isolate the story from its setting.

I wonder what would happen to the church if we placed as much importance on spending time with Jesus as Mary did? I wonder what would happen to committees and home groups and teams and ministry generally if we looked to spend as much time in listening prayer and hearing the words of Christ as we do in getting the job done?

Earlier in this Gospel we hear Jesus say that we all must "take up our cross daily" and, perhaps this is the bit that troubled Martha. And, I imagine, she wouldn't be on her own in this. Pretty much all of us balk at this particular challenge.

One of the problems here is that Luke's story leaves us in suspense. We don't know what happened next — whether Mary and Martha were reconciled, whether they were all able to enjoy the meal that Martha had prepared, whether Martha was finally able to sit and give her full attention to Jesus. What we do know is that Jesus invites all of us who are worried and distracted by many things to sit and rest in his presence, to hear his words of grace and truth, to know that we are loved and valued as children of God, to be renewed in faith and strengthened for service.

So, perhaps the real answer we are looking for the morning is simply that we should try to cultivate, a Mary heart, in a Martha world.

Amen.