

Mary Duck Martha Bunny — Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 10:38-42

Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV –

21 July 2013 – 9th Sunday after Pentecost

The letter to the Church at Colossae, from which came our epistle lesson puts the life and ministry of Jesus in VERY LARGE perspective. This whole section reads like the creation story, in how expansive is its language.

Indeed, we are being told that Jesus offers to the world its third chance for creation. The first creation was in the first two chapters of Genesis. The second came in the “do over” after Noah and the flood.

I have a very close friend, who almost died this past week. After finishing teaching School of Christian Mission in Buckhannon this week, I was able to visit him, just out of ICU. He told me about the harrowing experience. His blood pressure was skyrocketing and his blood pressure was plummeting. He was in A-Fib AND V-Tac at the same time. Although his internal pacemaker defibrillator had fired 16 times, they were getting ready to use the paddles to shock his heart again to try to revive him. Then a new doctor came walking in, countermanded the paddles order, and ordered instead a massive dose of a certain drug to be injected.

My friend told me that his doctor explained that this drug had, in essence stopped his heart, re-booted it, and started it working again.

That’s what the Jesus – THE COSMIC CHRIST – did. In modern day computer parlance, Jesus re-booted creation to begin again.

It is explained to us that this mortal man was one in whom the fullness of God dwelt. And when He re-booted creation to begin again, the unifying principle was RECONCILIATION OF ALL THINGS.

What does it mean to reconcile all things?

Thinking of planning a project and everyone is working together, except for one person who doesn't quite fit in. However, it is that one person whose gifts are needed, and Jesus brings that person into the class project to make it work.

Reconciliation is being able to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. When I pour all 500 pieces of the puzzle out on the table, at the beginning of vacation, it doesn't seem like they go together – at all, at all. But when I reconcile it, over two weeks, indeed they do each fit!

But, if along the way, I decide that I just really don't like the looks of one or two of the pieces, and throw them away, then the puzzle is never complete.

That is Jesus, the Cosmic Christ, reconciling creation.

Indeed, Paul (or whoever wrote this letter) was simply following the lead that Jesus had announced himself. He said, in John 12:32, that his purpose was to draw all things unto himself.

Sometimes, I get a little miffed when I hear people (particularly when it's people in the Church) refer to something as “just being p.c. [politically correct]” because someone used inclusive language. It's not just some secular humanist political correctness to include all parts of creation ... all humans ... on an even footing. It's the mission of Jesus!

Let me turn to the Gospel lesson:

Bible professors in graduate school take a variety of approaches as to how to interpret the Mary Martha story. Some -- perhaps most – see it as a pitting of the contemplative life against the active life. Some feminist theologians say that this story is about Jesus championing a woman's right to theological education and doing ministry, equal to men's. Noted biblical theologian Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenz reads into this Gospel lesson a prescription of women's roles in Eucharistic table service.

If you were here last Sunday – or even if you weren't, you might still remember the well-known story of the Good Samaritan, and the context in which it arose. Jesus was being questioned by a legal scholar of the Jewish law. Twice in the Gospel lesson last week, the lawyer exercises great cognitive skills and Jesus – like a first century Nike commercial – keeps telling him “Just do it!” Now here Martha is “just doing it” while Mary is sitting at Jesus feet trying to get Jesus into her heart and mind.

Is Jesus telling the lawyer, “Just do it” and then in the very next verses saying to Martha, “Just stop doing it”?

Let me share with you the insight with which I was enlightened by the Worship Committee:

Jesus does not tell Martha to quit doing what she is doing. He says there is “ONE THING” but He does NOT say that there is only one way to do things. One thing, but different parts.

One puzzle, but different parts.

Mary has her part and Martha has her part. THE PROBLEM WAS that Martha was making her part "lesser" by trying to make Mary be like her, instead of accepting that they each had different roles.

In other words, Jesus is not trying to make Martha into Mary. He is merely telling Martha not to try to make Mary into a Martha.

**Jesus is demonstrating here what the writer of the letter to the Church in Colossae was describing: Jesus was reconciling all things.**

Mary's task, as was Martha's, as is yours and as is mine: **Just do the ONE THING that you need to be doing in this moment, to which you have been called, for which you have been gifted.**

As I danced with the Mary/Martha story, I remembered old **WALTER FRISBEE**. I confess that I told you about Mr. Frisbee before – but it was over ten years ago, so I

thought I might tell it again. Many of you weren't here that day, and some of you may have forgotten.

Mr. Frisbee was the only member of my grandmother's church, who was older than she was. He was the male counterpart of the role my grandmother lived – together they were the two respected and saintly matriarch and patriarch of the church.

One particular Sunday, a short while before Walter Frisbee moved on to live with Jesus, leaving my grandmother as the oldest member of the church – Mr. Frisbee was called upon to give a little talk in the church. I didn't hear it – I wasn't visiting that Sunday. My grandmother told me about it later that day. He had told the congregation that they couldn't all be Frisbees. His message was that God had used his life in a particular way, but that was not the same way that God would use each other person's life. Each person had to pay attention to God's direction for their own individual life.

**WE CAN'T ALL BE FRISBEES.**

That little phrase was oft repeated in our household – whenever someone did something in a different way than the way another person did, then old Walter Frisbee would be quoted as authority.

**I believe that Walter Frisbee knew what he was talking about.**

Throughout my life, I have seen over and over again that God keeps fooling us – and using us – all according to God's Plan even when we don't understand it.

The story is told of **OLD RABBI ZUSYA**, who, just before his death, told his students and followers: "In the world to come, I shall not be asked, '**Why were you not Moses?**' I shall be asked, '**Why were you not Zusya?**'" God calls each of us to realize our own unique potential – to live out who God created us to be. We are not to be like our older/younger brother/sister. We are not to be photocopies of anyone else. God loves diversity, and although we were each made in the Image of God, we were each made differently, and for different journeys with Jesus. **WE CAN'T ALL BE FRISBEES.**

We can see it even in whom Jesus chose – look at this diversity of those apostles! They weren't all Frisbees.

Mary had her part. Martha had her part. Martha made the mistake of trying to make Mary to be like herself. That didn't make Martha bad. It just allowed Jesus to use Martha as a lesson for us as she proceeded along the learning curve.

Later on, in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, it says that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus. (Hmmm, Martha gets top billing.) Lazarus had died and Jesus came to visit after the fact. Martha is the one who went to greet Jesus on the way there; Mary remained in the house. In the discussion between Jesus and Martha, Martha declares – for the first time by anyone identified in all of John's Gospel, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." (John 11:27) Hmmm, she must have been doing something while she was fixing those dinners, Yes?

Turn, please, to the back of your bulletin and look at the picture there. What do you see? [pause. Ask for answers. Some will see a duck. Some will see the bunny.]

I was given this test with a bunch of other people. All I could see was the duck. Try as I might, I could not see the Bunny. It took the woman sitting next to me to explain that the bunny's nose was to the right of the white spot, and the duck's beak was the bunny's ears. If you turn the picture 90 degrees clockwise, it might help.

Some people are "duck people." Some people are "bunny people." Is one right and the other wrong? Some duck people can't even see the bunny, unless someone else helps them. Vice versa for some bunny people.

In the reconciled world that Jesus came to create, all folks – be they duck people" or "bunny people" have their place – for one particular reason: Jesus, who is the complete embodiment of God, our Creator, loves every single one of them ... and every single one of us.

Some people might not seem loveable to some people. Some “duck people” might want to make the “bunny people” into being “duck people,” saying that they see things right.

But Jesus doesn’t do that.

All the pieces are necessary to make the Creation puzzle complete.

One of our jobs as Christians is to realize this.

Our other job is to help others to see it, as well.

Those who don’t accept other people haven’t learned to accept God’s reconciling love. We can help.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.