

RULE THREE: Martha, Martha, Eat a Snickers (Don't Be Distracted)

Luke 10:38-42

Third in Four Week Series: Jesus Help Desk

Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV

6th Sunday after Pentecost (July 17) 2016

^{10:38} Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

1. REPRISE – We are on a journey; Christianity is not a spectator sport. This sermon series is about **Jesus Help Desk** along the way
Week ONE: Kingdom People do not live out of fear! If people can't accept that message, this is THEIR PROBLEM not yours. Their opinion does not determine your value. Shake it off!
Week TWO: Don't just live up in your head, arguing over doctrine and playing mental gymnastics. Get out there and practice the faith. "Go and DO LIKEWISE" Jesus told the lawyer and still tells us.
2. TODAY'S SCRIPTURE LESSON ON HOW WE NEED TO GET OUT THERE AND DO IT: It's illustrated by a simple little everyday occurrence in the life of Jesus and his friends Mary and Martha.
3. Martha is throwing a little hissie fit. And she calls upon Jesus the guest to intervene and make her sister Mary do it the right way – the way she is doing it.

4. Some sermons have been preached that this shows Jesus' preference for the CONTEMPLATIVE path over the ACTION path. I don't think so. And neither does one UMW Circle at this church: the MARY-MARTHA Circle. No, it's CONTEMPLATIVE **AND** ACTION that are good for walking the Way of the Kingdom. That's not what today's lesson is about.
5. Jesus is telling Martha that it is important to stay focused on the OBJECT OF WORSHIP.
6. Keep focused on ONE THING.
7. Martha was practicing good hospitality for the Lord coming to hers and Mary's house. In so doing, she was keeping with the bedrock of the Judeo-Christian heritage for good living. It goes back in the Bible as far as Genesis 18, when the first patriarch Abraham provided hospitality for his three guests traveling by (the Holy Trinity) and goes all the way through to near the end of the New Testament: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:2) and even all the way forward to the sign that is over the door when you enter Saint Marks from the back parking lot. Hospitality is good!
8. HOWEVER, the problem was that Martha turned the **means** of worship into the **object** of worship ... and it made her cranky and churlish.
9. The Worship Committee was reminded by today's scripture of the 2015 Super Bowl XLIX commercial for Snickers. Marsha of the Brady Bunch was shown in the form of a 250 pound shirtless leather vested long haired male biker dude swing an axe and yelling at his parents.

Mom tells him to eat a Snickers and she turns back into sweet Marsha, and little brother says, Marsha Marsha Marsha.

10. Jesus is here, with snitty Martha, throwing her hissie-fit and telling her **Martha, Martha, eat a Snickers**. And so we each have a Snickers candy bar today, to remind us, also, don't be distracted. Not to turn the minors into majors.
11. Martha called Jesus, "Lord," but in her complaint she doesn't treat him as Lord, but rather as a means to help her win HER contention. Three times she centers her little tirade on Me, Me, Me.
12. Although she calls him "Lord" she wants him to assist her in accomplishing her purpose. (We'll re-visit that same notion next week, when we talk about prayer.)
13. But notice how Jesus responds. He did NOT criticize BUSY Martha. He criticized WORRIED AND DISTRACTED Martha.
14. Busy is not the problem. I am reminded of Tom Friedman's column a few years ago, on the op-ed page of the New York Times called "The Taxi Driver."

He told of being driven by cab from Charles de Gaulle Airport to Paris. During the one-hour trip, he and the driver had done six things: the driver had (1) driven the cab, (2) talked on his cell phone, and 3) watched a video (which was a little nerve-racking!), while Tom, the passenger had (4) ridden in the cab, (5) worked on a column on his laptop, and (5) listened to his iPod. "There was only one thing we never did, Tom wrote. "We never talked to each other."

Friedman went on to quote Linda Stone, a technologist, who had written that the disease of the Internet age is **"continuous partial attention."** Perhaps this multi-tasking is not only the disease of the Internet age;

perhaps Martha's and Mary's story shows that it has always been with us. It's just the causes of our distraction that have changed.

15. This past week, we elected two new bishops in the Northeast Jurisdiction. And Bishops were assigned. I'm happy to report that our Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball was re-appointed to WV. All jurisdictions elected bishops during the same week. And in the Western Jurisdiction, an openly professing and practicing lesbian elder was elected bishop. Some have applauded the action. Others say that this is the final straw; schism in the denomination is unavoidable. In her first act, in coming back to WV, our Bishop sent out a pastoral letter to all WV UMs, that really fits in with the **Martha, Martha, eat a Snickers** message. She tells us that this is one action taken by one small part of UMC. We cannot allow ourselves to be distracted from the important work that we have to do as UMs here in WV.
16. Like last week, we have to quit arguing about doctrine and do the work of the kingdom.
17. We have to calm down and quit making this about Me, Me, Me. WE MUST KEEP OUR FOCUS.
18. Where is our head? Where are our actions? Even in local churches, (uh oh - here's where I might go to meddling) people get hung up on "the proper way" of doing the kingdom ...-- the proper way that
 - a. people should line up this way or that way in serving pizza at Friday Night movies.
 - b. We should or should not display messages of church activities on computer screens in narthex and gym
 - c. People should play handbells in the balcony or on the sanctuary floor.

- d. The choir should sit in the chancel area during the summer or not.
- e. The back doors should be open during worship or not.
- f. Whatever other issue you have seen people get into a snit about ... whatever other issue you have allowed yourself to get into a snit about.

19. Martha, Martha, Martha, eat a Snickers.

20. "It's not about YOU," Jesus said.

21. And here's the good news! (Gospel):

- a. We can disagree and not let it make us disagreeable
- b. We can have unity without uniformity
- c. We can (really!!) be released from the pressure and anxiety of not getting our own way
- d. **IF WE FOCUS ON THE ONE THING AND NOT BE DISTRACTED**

22. PLEASE, Eat a Snickers & snap out of it. It's not about me. It's not about you. It IS about the Kingdom of Heaven at hand.

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