

## Wesley United Methodist Church

July 17, 2016

“Cleaning the Clutter of Our Souls.”

Luke 10:38-42

You’ve probably heard the joke about the man who asked his wife what she’d like for her birthday. “I’d love to be six again.” She replied. So, on the morning of her birthday, he got her up bright and early and off they went to a local theme park. What a day! He put her on every ride in the park. Five hours later she staggered out of the theme park, her head reeling, her stomach upside down. Right to a McDonald’s they went for a Big Kids Meal with extra fries and a refreshing chocolate shake. Then it was off to see the latest Star Wars epic, complete with hot dogs and popcorn. What a fabulous adventure. Finally, she wobbled home with her husband and collapsed into bed. He leaned over and lovingly asked, “Well, dear, what was it like to be six again?” One eye opened, “You idiot, I meant my dress size.”

Well, that poor guy got it wrong, didn’t he? But then, who among us hasn’t gotten something important wrong? Or misunderstood what was being said or done?

That’s what was happening in today’s passage of Scripture of Mary and Martha. What makes this story so interesting is that by all social standards, Martha was in the right. Martha was doing what was accepted and expected. She had guests and so she went about preparing food for them. She was being the perfect hostess. Not only were these folks guests, this was Jesus and his disciples, the one she thought was the Messiah. Of course, she was up and about trying to do everything possible to please him and make his stay comfortable.

It was Mary who wasn’t pulling her share. She just sat there. But I think Mary sensed something that Martha didn’t. Not that Martha was wrong, just that Martha was too busy preparing stuff FOR the guest to pay attention TO the guest.

It wasn’t the first time Jesus had been in their home. So, what was different? If you remember the context of this story, Jesus had set his mind and his mission on Jerusalem and the cross. He realized this may very well be the last visit in the home of their friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He didn’t care what they ate. He didn’t care what the house looked like. He didn’t care if the table was dusted or the windows were clean. He cared about them and he wanted to spend time with them.

I think that’s why he told Martha she was too distracted and that Mary had chosen the better part. Mary seemed to have sensed his need to simply be with them, even if she didn’t know why. Sometimes, we too, get too busy and distracted in our service to God. We don’t take time for that simple companionship. So today I want us to focus on this passage through: Cleansing the Clutter of Our Soul.

My homes are clean, but there is some clutter. When I attempt to clean it, I move it from one place to another. Well, that’s not going to cut it and I have to start throwing stuff away. Well, the piles are getting smaller already.

The same is true for our souls. That’s part of what Jesus was talking about to Martha. You see, sometimes there is emotional and spiritual baggage that we’ve carried around that should have been gotten rid of long ago.

There was a woman who had three jewelry boxes. Someone asked her why. She said, because one of them belonged to her mother, but sadly, she couldn’t remember which one, so she kept all three. She was told that she was carrying excess baggage. And the main reason was the guilt of not being able to remember. She needed to see that her memories didn’t need to be tied to a thing and that she needed to clean up her clutter not only of her house, but of her soul as well. That’s what spending time with Jesus helps us do. It helps us clean up the clutter of our souls.

Spending time with Jesus also helps us set priorities in life.

Martha had priorities in life and that was the livelihood of her guests. She was the perfect hostess. She, too, loved Jesus and thought of his physical well-being. Mary’s priority was listening to Jesus and his message. Her actions got her in trouble with Martha, but Jesus welcomed her priority which was the kingdom of God.

We need to realize that often our priorities are not where they should be. We work hard and play hard. And then we’re too tired to pay any attention to Jesus and the Word of God. When we realize that life is not attending to Jesus as Martha was doing, but serving Jesus as Mary was doing, then we discover the true meaning of life.

There’s an old saying, “Life is short—eat dessert first.” That’s sort of what Jesus is telling Mary and Martha in this passage. Savor the best first.

I’m not saying that we shouldn’t work hard. I’m not saying we should shirk our responsibilities. No, what I am saying is this. If you’ve cleaned the clutter of your soul and set the priorities of life, then you can take time to savor the best things first.

You see, I don’t think Jesus minded Martha doing and fixing and being the good hostess. But at that moment in his ministry, that wasn’t what was important. He would have settled for cheese and crackers. What he wanted was her

company. All Martha was doing was appreciated, but it kept her from enjoying Jesus' company and being with him, which at that point in time, was the most important thing.

And I think that's the main message. Jesus wasn't trying to set up an anti-work ethic. He wasn't calling us to be charter members of the procrastinators club. No, I think Jesus wants our spiritual lives cleaned of all the clutter in our souls. All that excess baggage we carry and don't need. I think he wants us to realize that our walk with him and God's will in our lives should be the number one priority. And that if we savor the best first, our relationship with him through simple things like worship, study, prayer and service, will make life and faith much more meaningful.