

Time to Change
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First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha
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Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Pray with me: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, Our Rock and Our Redeemer. Amen.

I'll be honest with you – every single time I thought about the title of this conversation starter, I got the song from the Brady Bunch stuck in my head, thus the image you see up on the screen. I've referenced the song before up here so I'll spare you that again but for a mention that Sherwood Schwartz was a master at taking universal themes and resolving them in a tidy half hour, with a laugh track. The only thing we have in common with that today is the universal theme: time to change. Definitely not the half hour resolution.

You know this if you watch or listen to any news: this nation needs to change, this world needs to change, the church needs to change. Our awareness about this is heightened because of the constancy of violence and fear and hatred in our nation, and in this world, these days but the truth is that everything **must** change, whether we welcome it or not. We are made in a way that means we are always taking in new information and affected by new experiences which force changes in our thinking and our very being, down to the very cell level. You have heard truths about change in many forms: change is inevitable; you can only change yourself; be the change you wish to see in the world.¹

¹ Mahatma Ghandi.

We watch the changes in Martha in our reading today. Let me be clear about something which I've come to realize: today's reading isn't pitting Martha's actions against Mary's. Jesus is not condoning listening over hospitality – after all, think of all the ways in which he stresses how important hospitality is. When he says to Martha, whose impatience and frustration you can almost hear growing, “you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing,” that “one thing” is being attentive to him, *per se*. Professor Matthew L. Skinner explains, “this [one thing] does not mean one form of devotion, but one object of devotion. To be genuine, acts of discipleship – whether contemplative, active, or anything else – need to maintain such a focus.”² Martha shifted from focusing on whom she was serving to all **she** was doing and who was definitely **not** helping her. “There is need of only one thing.”

Our world is crying out for good change, our nation, and maybe even your family. And often we behave like Martha – we know the change we would like to see happen and we become focused on who it is that is not helping that change happen and how they could be doing more. “You” aren't doing enough, or the right thing, or the thing the way I think you should. And this pulls us away from the one thing. Try to imagine an election cycle that didn't focus on how someone wasn't doing enough, or the right thing, or the thing the way I think you should. I actually can't. I have no idea what that would look like. We have a *de facto* way of viewing the issues at hand. The problem is that such a focus takes away energy we could be spending on the real task. “You are worried and distracted by many things,” Jesus says.

I am not going to take down ISIS or racism or any of the ills of this world single-handedly. I **do** need the help of others, but my lambasting them certainly won't encourage them. And, really, nor will my gentle pleading or thoughtful “convincing” arguments. Remember what I said about who we can change? Only ourselves. I can't give you **my** passion through an impassioned speech. What I can do is live a life where I do not succumb to fear of otherness. Jesus demonstrated what that could look like by the women to whom he spoke in today's readings. By the lepers he healed. By the Roman centurion's servant he

² *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 3*, p. 267.

healed. By the tax collectors with whom he ate. By the Samaritan he praised for his caring. By speaking with the woman who had had many husbands. He consistently built bridges to the ones considered “other.”

That is the change I wish to see in the world. I wish for the world to no longer fear people who are not like them. To be that change, it’s going to take all my energy to speak **and** demonstrate this conviction, and even more importantly, to face my own fears of people who are not like me. I must be honest about my own fears about otherness. If I am not, how can I begin to be that change? You know how the song goes: “Let there be peace on earth / and let it begin with me.”³ As the younger generation has been heard to say, “Yeah, that.”

Let us pray: Again we pray, let peace begin with each of us, O Lord. Amen.

³ <http://www.jan-leemusic.com/Site/History.html>