**PT. CHEVALIER CO-OP PARISH**

**FACEBOOK LIVE STREAM SERVICE 10.30AM**

**“HAPPY MOTHERS’ DAY”**

**10th May 2020**

***Rev. Dr. Fei Taule’ale’ausumai Davis***

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**ARE YOU A MARY OR A MARTHA?**

*INTROIT: AS WE GATHER*

As we gather may your spirit dwell within us

As we gather may we glorify your name, knowing well that as our hearts begin to worship, we’ll be blessed because we came, we’ll be blessed because we came.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning, new every morning, great is thy faithfulness O Lord, great is thy faithfulness.

**Call to worship**

**One:** Come and know that God is good!

**All:** **We come seeking God’s shelter.**

**One:** Come and know God’s mercy.

**All:** **We come seeking wholeness and God’s peace.**

**One:** Come and abide in God’s steadfast love.

**All:** **Receive us as we are, as we come to worship you,**

**O God.**

**Opening prayer**

Loving God, we come this morning celebrating our mothers and all the women in our lives and in this world who brought this world into being. Thank you for our mothers, thank you for all the significant women in our lives who have made an impact on us individually as a person. Enfold them in your amazing love and continue to empower them to their fullest potential. Gracious God we yearn to know your presence in our daily lives; as we awaken and sleep, as we play and work, as we eat and pray, in moments mundane and profound. Receive us, shelter us, and nurture us as your beloved people, for your purposes and to your glory. Amen.

**OPENING HYMN: COME CELEBRATE THE WOMEN**

**by Shirley Murray.**

1. Come celebrate the women who brought the Church to birth! The gentle revolution that shall transform the earth:

Whose faith was salt and leaven, whose hearts and minds were free, and this was their direction to peace and unity.

2. The teachers, saints and mothers who lived and died unsung kept safe the gospel story and taught it to the young; The Christ child Mary cradled, the living Word to be was crucified for pleading this peace and unity

1. Daughters of the disciples, you weave the story still, the fabric of the future with warmth and love and skill

You make the bread of wholeness, the wine of harmony and all shall share your feasting in peace and unity.

**WELCOME AND NOTICES:**

**MINISTRY OF THE WORD: LUKE 10:38-42**

**At the Home of Martha and Mary**

**38**As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Marthaopened her home to him. **39**She had a sister called Mary,who sat at the Lord’s feetlistening to what he said. **40**But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you carethat my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

**41**“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, **42**but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

**FAMILY TIME: SEEDS NOT FRUIT**

**Prayer of confession**

God of mercy, we confess that we do not trust you with our lives. We hurt others with our words and with our silence, with our deeds and our inaction. We block out your still-speaking word with busyness and traditions. Forgive us. Open our hearts to know you and follow in your way, today and all the days of our lives. Amen.

Words of affirmation

Beloved of God – hear the good news. God forgives us. God calls us home to abide in the shelter and nurture of God’s faithful love, now and always. Praise be to God!

**SONG: FATHER I PLACE INTO YOUR HANDS**

Father, I place into Your hands

the things that I can’t do.

Father, I place into Your hands

the times that I’ve been through.

Father, I place into Your hands

the way that I should go,

for I know I always can trust You.

Father, I place into Your hands

my friends and family.

Father, I place into Your hands

the things that trouble me.

Father, I place into Your hands

the person I would be,

for I know I always can trust You.

Father, we love to

seek Your face,

we love to hear Your voice.

Father, we love to

sing Your praise

and in Your name rejoice.

Father, we love to walk with You

and in Your presence rest,

for we know we always can trust You.

Father, I want to be with You

and do the things You do.

Father, I want to

speak the words

that You are speaking too.

Father, I want to love the ones

that You will draw to You,

for I know that

I am one with You.

**Prayers of the people**

*Pause after each line for silence or for congregants to give voice to prayers for that prompt.*

Merciful God, who shelters us and guides us, we give you thanks for... God who comforts, receive those who are fearful and lonely... God whose love is steadfast, be refuge for the ill, the dying, and those who care about them... God of righteousness, we ask for your wisdom and ways of justice to prevail in our community, this nation, your world... God who seeks our trust, grow us and guide us in your ways that are life-giving in your world... And hear us as we pray as Jesus taught his disciples then and us now... (*the prayer that Jesus taught*)*.*

**REFLECTION**

**“ARE YOU A MARY OR MARTHA?”**

I’ve preached from this text many times over the last 29 years since my ordination. This week as I contemplated the text I was wanting to find something different something perhaps that I haven’t seen before in this common story. I guess the first parallel with my own life and the majority of the women in our congregation is the theme of hospitality and offering the best of what we have. I have to admit, I certainly don’t consider myself a very good host, I’m good and sitting and listening to the conversation like Mary and not very good at waiting on people and serving them food. But the reality is when I do have guests at my house, of course I have to host them, who else is going to do it for me if I live on my own?

Jesus was saying to Martha that Mary has chosen a good thing.

I know that you can all relate to this situation where one of your siblings doesn’t have to help out with the chores and is allowed to sit and talk to the guest whilst you slave away in the kitchen, many of us grow up being told and know that that is our place, the kitchen, to serve our parents, our guests it does not seem fair at all. But sometimes, we need to break with tradition and like Mary just sit and bask in the presence of wisdom and knowledge. We can be so busy like Martha that we fail to see the opportunities and pearls of wisdom right in front of us.

When I was young and the minister came around or special guests, the best china came out, the yummiest biscuits that we couldn’t often afford and the richest food you could think of appeared out of nowhere. Elaborate efforts to show how much we respected the people who had come to pay us a visit. The thought of not waiting on them and going into the lounge to join in the conversation was totally out of the question, not an option.

Now it is Jesus who is traveling and though not beaten by highway bandits he nevertheless finds himself in need of hospitality during his journey. Like the Samaritan who had taken the beaten man into a house, “a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house” Almost as if she had just heard Jesus relate the parable of the Good Samaritan she immediately sets herself to the task of meeting Jesus’ needs. She is determined to show herself as one who fulfills the commandments’ and Jesus’ own requirement to love her neighbor as herself.

Now on this particular visit, Martha, perhaps the older and certainly the accepted head of the house, was bustling about pre-paring an unusually good, company meal. But Mary, perhaps the younger and certainly the less domestic of the two women, sat with Jesus, listening to His conversation. Very soon Martha tired and flustered from her bustling activity, feeling a bit peeved with Mary for leaving her with all the work, and feeling somewhat sorry for herself that she was thus imposed on, said to Jesus: “Don’t you care at all that Mary has deserted me in the kitchen, leaving everything for me to do? Speak to my sister and tell her to lend me a hand.” Sound familiar? “Martha, Martha,” said Jesus. “You are all upset only a few things are really needed. Just one good dish would do. We don’t really need a banquet. Mary has chosen the better part, and it shall not be taken away from her.”

It would appear at first glance that Martha is doing the good work reflective of being a good neighbor. She has recognised Jesus’ need and she has responded with hospitality for Jesus. Meanwhile, Mary sits doing nothing. Her sister, Mary, chooses to do nothing to help in meeting Jesus’ needs, and indeed she in a sense places her own need ahead of that of the guest. She sat at Jesus’ feet, listening “to what he was saying”.

This particular posture of positioning oneself at the feet of another clearly marks this exchange as not one of idle conversation and small talk, but rather of a disciple receiving formal instruction from the teacher. It is a remarkable scene, then, in two regards. First, against the traditional requirements of hospitality, the itinerant teacher guest is being expected to meet the needs of the household for instruction even before his own physical needs have been met. And second, the one who has apparently laid this requirement on him is a woman who has thus takes over a role that in that culture properly belonged to men. There can be little surprise then that Martha reacts as she does. Mary has violated not only cultural expectations (assuming the role of a disciple, neglecting her responsibilities as a woman in providing hospitality) but also the commandments of Jewish religious tradition and Jesus’ own previous instruction (setting her own needs ahead of the neighbor toward whom she should be acting with love). Might it be, then, that in asking Jesus to direct Mary to assist in the preparations she anticipates nothing more than that he will reiterate what he had already taught?

Martha reflects what can happen when a host becomes so preoccupied with preparing the meal, serving the meal, and cleaning up afterward that he or she is never really present to his or her guests. He or she never lows down to simply be with the guests. Instead of creating an atmosphere in which guests feel welcomed, and in which time is spent together in sharing conversation, the host’s focus is on his or her work. An atmosphere is created in which the guests are made to feel that they have created a great deal of work for the host. Second, Martha complains about the work she is doing, and she even asks Jesus to command Mary to help. From this it is clear that Martha is not offering hospitality out of any sense of graciousness or generosity. Rather she sees it as an obligation that has been laid upon her, and an obligation with which she wants Mary to also be burdened. She may even be further upset because she has apparently been stuck once again with the “women’s work” of serving guests and she resents that Mary has acted as if she is free of that obligation by entering into the more traditional male role of learning with the rabbi. In summary, Martha sees her offering of hospitality as an onerous task, and one from which Mary has somehow been freed.

Jesus seems to imply that Martha is simply guilty of over-kill in the preparations she is making: “There is need of only a few things or even one.” Relax, Martha, you have done enough. “There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part.”

So, the gospel story spotlights this typical scenario of home life, a mixture of love and irritation, of hospitality and rudeness, and of Jesus ministering spiritually in that chaos and confusion to human need. But how is Jesus helping? Well first of all, Jesus is accepting the fact of individual differences and showing how in God’s economy each is needed. He accepts and is grateful for both Mary’s and Martha’s service. Martha is the symbol of strenuous energy, and Mary, the pattern of sweet contemplation. In the reign of God, both are needed. There is here no choice of one as right and condemnation of the other as wrong. This reading has almost universally been taken as a rebuke of Martha who is understood to have given physical needs (exclusive?) priority over spiritual needs. A balance is required that recognises both “physical” and “spiritual” needs.

The connection of Martha with a works-centred spirituality can thus be drawn in the absence of the life giving and unifying purpose of faithful response to God’s graciousness in our lives. We become distracted we lose any sense of what is central in our lives, namely God’s love, and sharing that love with each other instead, we busy ourselves with any number of tasks to hide our emptiness. We seek to “justify ourselves” by working hard to create and maintain the appearance that we are good and righteous. There is little joy in our lives of being righteous because we fear that at any moment our emptiness will be revealed. In our relationship with God we keep careful accounts, noting all that we do for God, and therefore how much God owes to us. In our relationships with other people, we become hard, cold, and disdainful of those who do not work as hard as us. We regard ourselves as self-made individuals. We are the good people, and those who are poor or not as well off as us are simply lazy and shiftless; someone needs to tell them to “get a job.”

Jesus’ words to Martha seek to invite her away from her distraction and worry, away from her frantic efforts to maintain a façade of righteousness and toward a more grace-filled and gracious life. “There is need of only one thing” he says, and he indicates that Mary has chosen this “better part” namely, accepting the gracious presence of the Lord in her life. Grounded in this faith our lives will not be “choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life” (Luke 8:14) because we know that from God we have all that we truly need. We will not be consumed by worries about our lives, what we will eat, or about our bodies, what we will wear” (Luke 12:22). We will not busy ourselves with the illusion of being self-made. We will accept the graciousness of life as it comes from God, and this in turn will enable us to be gracious with others. We will learn to be generous as God is generous with us (2 Cor 8:9, 9:8), to forgive as we have been forgiven (Col 3:13) and to welcome others as we ourselves have been welcomed (Rom 15:7). In this grace we will be able to truly pray that prayer Jesus later teaches his disciples, to rely upon God for our daily bread and to forgive as we have experienced God’s forgiveness.

*Let us pray: God of all wisdom, grant us courage and clarity of purpose as we seek to follow your way. We live in thankfulness for Christ, who holds all things together. Amen.*

**CLOSING HYMN: GOD WHO SETS US ON A JOURNEY**

**BY JOY DINE**

1. God who sets us on a journey

to discover, dream and grow,

lead us as you led your people

in the desert long ago;

journey inward, journey outward,

stir the spirit, stretch the mind,

love for God and self and neighbour

marks the way that Christ defined.

2. Exploration brings new insights,

changes, choices we must face;

give us wisdom in deciding,

mindful always of your grace;

should we stumble, lose our bearings

find it hard to know what’s right,

we regain our true direction

focused on the Jesus light.

3. End our longing for the old days,

grant the vision that we lack

once we’ve started on this journey

there can be no turning back;

let us travel light, discarding

excess baggage from our past,

cherish only what’s essential,

choosing treasure that will last.

4. When we set up camp and settle

to avoid love’s risk and pain,

you disturb complacent comfort,

pull the tent pegs up again;

keep us travelling in the knowledge

you are always at our side;

give us courage for the journey,

Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

**BLESS:** Whatever this earthly life bestows on us, remember that God remains faithfully present. For as Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God.” So, as we scatter from this time of worship, go forth committing your life into God’s hands. Go forth knowing that you are God’s people. Go forth knowing that God’s mercy abounds and that you are precious in God’s sight. Go, knowing God’s face shines upon us and that God’s love for us is ever true. Amen.

**Sung blessing:** May the Lord Mighty God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes to seek his face and his grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God, bless and keep you forever.

BENEDICTION: Let us say the grace to one another. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen.