

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST July 20, 2025

Prayer of the Day

Eternal God, you draw near to us in Christ, and you make yourself our guest. Amid the cares of our lives, make us attentive to your presence, that we may treasure your word above all else, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Gospel Reading:

Luke 10:38-42

38Now 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."

Reflections on the Gospel Text:

It's now passé, but long ago the journalistic credo was "don't bury the lede". Jesus tells Martha it's possible that doing what's good and right can sometimes distract you from some of the most important things in life. Martha isn't experiencing FOMO (fear of missing out) she doesn't know what she's missing because she's fixated on what Mary is not doing—serving their guests.

The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Wyant from the Candler School in Atlanta Georgia wrote the book (OK one book) on Mary and Martha. Dr. Wyant says that following Jesus is both doing and quiet contemplation. She recounts a legend popular in churches during the Middle Ages in which Martha goes out to slay dragons and Mary founds monasteries. Beyond Mary or Martha: Reclaiming Ancient Models of Discipleship (Emory Studies in Early Christianity):2019. Dr. Wyant reminds Working Preachers that Martha isn't wrong; she's distracted by either or she doesn't see how learning and serving go together. It's noteworthy that many Christian denominations have

deacons and in our own denomination we phrase their ministry as a call to Word and Service while pastors are called to a ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Let's rotate the interpretive lens a little so we can appreciate how distraction causes us to miss out. Sir Kenneth Robinson interviewed Paul McCartney about his years in music school when he was a youth in Liverpool. Sir Kenneth asked Paul whether the music teacher thought he had any talent. Paul answered 'no', he wasn't considered especially talented or expected to show much promise. "What about George Harrison?", Sir Kenneth asked. The music teacher didn't think George was particularly talented and didn't expect him to have much of a career in music. Sir Kenneth concludes, "Imagine...having two of the four Beatles in your music school and you miss their talent!" The teachers weren't bad. They just missed what was in front of them. We all fall prey to being oblivious to what's right in front of us.

Now let's reflect on what churches miss when they get distracted. Tons of trees have been felled to produce the paper on which critiques of churches becoming fixated on budgets, buildings and church attendance. Meanwhile such fixation blinds us to our neighbours in need. We stop listening for what God might want to teach us because we are so keen on issues of sustaining our church buildings and programs.

Someone once likened the cycle of the church's gathering to worship and learn and its scattering to serve to breathing. Imaging inhaling and never exhaling or only exhaling and never taking in a breath! The trick in following Jesus isn't choosing between Mary's way and Martha's (though its just such a choice Martha asks Jesus to make) it is in integrating doing and being—learning and serving—action and contemplation.

