

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
October 24, 2021
Scripture: Luke 10: 38-42

Sermon: Feeling Overwhelmed?

Over-worked. Over-stressed. Over-needed. Over-scheduled. Overwhelmed. Our world expects so much from us these days, and especially in the midst of a pandemic, we can continually feel like life is too demanding each day, and there is just too much to keep up with. Anyone feel that way? Just listening to the news each day can make you feel overwhelmed. Health issues can overwhelm us, financial issues, the challenges of taking care of children or aging family members, the increasing cost of living, unemployment, violence in our cities and world. There are a lot of things that overwhelm us, and they do not produce joy in us.

Today's story is about Mary and Martha. I love these two sisters and this story. They are so different. They both love having Jesus at their house and they both love their Savior. I think most of us can relate to one of the sisters or even both of them at some point in our life.

Martha and Mary had Jesus and his disciples over for dinner. Can you image cooking dinner for Jesus? What pressure to have everything perfect? Martha was excited to have them for dinner but with all the preparations she had to do, Martha was feeling overwhelmed that day.

In Middle-eastern, culture all the women were, and still are, expected to help in the kitchen to prepare the meal. It is a lot of work to prepare a meal and all hands were needed.

When we lived in Central Asia a few years ago it was the same way as in Jesus' time. Women would prepare the meal and the men would sit and talk with the guest. All the women would eat later, after all had been served the meal, making sure the guests had enough food.

Martha probably expected her sister Mary to follow her into the kitchen. But Mary stopped and sat at the feet of Jesus. When Martha peeks out from the kitchen, wondering where Mary is and why she wasn't

helping, she got so angry at her. There was Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet, which was a spot of learning reserved for male students like the disciples.

Can you understand Martha's reaction and why she was feeling overwhelmed and angry? Mary, in contrast, is sitting there at the feet of Jesus, feeling overwhelmed with his love and peace. Instead of being about busyness with Martha to prepare for the dinner, Mary was about her Father's business being taught by her Savior.

Have you ever felt alone in the kitchen doing all the work yourself and no one offering to help? I think every woman, or every cook, has felt that feeling of being abandoned to do the work and having to do the work as a lone ranger.

So, Martha boldly approaches Jesus and states her case: "Lord, don't you care that I'm doing all the work by myself? Tell Mary to help me!" I'm sure this is said after several attempts to get Mary to come help her, and now she is appealing to Jesus for help.

Martha is the patron saint of multitasking. She is like the Martha Stewart of the Bible. The Marthas of this world get the job done and we need the Marthas in this world. The world would come to a grinding halt without responsible people like Martha, and many would grow hungry without them. Can you feel the pressure Martha is under? It was probably like the pressure we have cooking our Thanksgiving dinners. Food to cook, a house to clean, people to take care of, shopping to do. The list of things needing to be done is endless. Who has time to sit still? Right?

Jesus said to Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Jesus is not criticizing Martha for being busy. He's not saying to her that such work isn't important and doesn't need to be done; obviously it does, and it is important work. Martha was working hard at her hospitality toward Jesus and that is important as well. But this visit with Jesus was different and Mary understood that.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to die on the cross. He may never be with Martha and Mary again. Mary recognized the significance of

Jesus' visit to her house, and she put her own agendas aside to make sure she spent time with him. The dishes would still be there, but Jesus would soon be gone.

Are you a Martha or a Mary?

Martha was focused on serving. The Greek word for serving used here is "Diakonia" and that is where the word "Deacon" comes from. Martha was feeling overwhelmed with serving and preparing. What a tragedy it was for Martha to have the Lord at your house, and she was too busy to hear what he had to say.

Mary was feeling overwhelmed with love for Jesus. She wanted to know everything he could teach her. She didn't want to miss a word Jesus was saying. Jesus desires for you to be close to Him, just like Mary. Mary made time for Jesus that day, and he was a priority in her life. Isn't it nice when someone makes you a priority and wants to spend time with you?

Martha was letting the busyness distract her away from spending time with Jesus. Martha was the one who received Jesus into her home, and she let other things become more important and is drawn away from the One she needs to hear the most and spend time with.

How many times do we receive Jesus into our heart, we welcome him, and then allow other things to consume us and draw our attention away from him?

Matthew 13: 20-21 reminds us about this in the parable Jesus taught. "The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the one who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the world, he quickly falls away."

If we aren't careful, we can be like this parable if we don't take the time to be in fellowship with God. If we are feeling overwhelmed, this is the time to step back and take time to rest and be refreshed with God. If not, the rocks and stones of our lives won't allow the seed to grow and take root. We will begin to feel overwhelmed with our troubles and cares of the world and we will slowly die spiritually.

Hebrews 2:1 says, "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."

The currents of life, the cares of life, the temptations of life, the busyness of life can cause us to drift away from God. We can drift away from God during this pandemic when we are feeling overwhelmed with the demands on us and when we continue to stay at home and not coming to church to worship together. It isn't good to not be in fellowship. Everything can seem more overwhelming when we are not in fellowship together, seeing that we are all wanting to sit at the feet of Jesus during these difficult days and months.

There is a story of a man who had just bought a boat and kept it in the harbor on the coast of Florida. A hurricane warning went into effect, the storm was brewing just off the coast and was about to hit land. He didn't know what to do with his boat. He didn't want it to be ruined during the storm, so he asked advice from a friend. His friend said, "Don't attempt to tie the boat to the dock or anything on land. It will be torn into pieces. Your only hope is to anchor deep. Take four anchors and drop them deep and the boat will ride out the storm.

That is advice we can take about our spiritual life as well and our relationship with Jesus. We need to anchor deep in our fellowship with Christ. If we don't center our lives upon Christ, we too will drift away when life is feeling overwhelming.

When we are feeling overwhelmed with life, that is exactly the time we sit at the feet of Jesus and feel his overwhelming love and forgiveness for us.

In verse 42 Jesus says to Martha, "But only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Jesus said there is one thing that is needed, one thing that is necessary. That one thing is your relationship with God. Mary was making plans for eternity. Mary was spending time with Jesus when culturally she should have been in the kitchen helping Martha.

Our society tells us to do many things, but one thing society won't tell us to do is spend time with our Savior. The message heard these days is go do anything else but go to church. Do anything else but sit at your Savior's feet. Even people that were raised going to church every Sunday grew up and stopped going because they were too busy, because they

didn't need God? So many in our society don't even think about having God in their life or their children's lives.

There is a time to be a Martha and get things done, but there is a time to remember that "ONE THING THAT IS NECESSARY," to be a Mary and sit at the feet of your Savior.

Everyone needs the love of Jesus.

Life can be too overwhelming without him.

Find time for God in this busy life of ours.

Find time to sit and listen to Jesus.

When you are feeling overwhelmed with the duties, cares and burdens of your day, if we are tempted to measure our worth by how busy we are, or by how much we accomplish, remember that "ONE THING THAT IS NECESSARY." Sit with Jesus and feel overwhelmed with his love for you.