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July 2nd, 2023

Luke 10: 28-32

Sermon Title: Action and Contemplation

Prayer...

Introduction:

Reflection on the Historic way of interpreting the Mary and Martha

Story...

Today, we will explore the Martha and Mary Story. I want to especially show my appreciation for those of you who identify with Martha.

We had a wonderful vacation in Ireland, Norway, and England.

Many people felt like Martha types that helped us along the way.

- Heather and Darragh (Killian, Kaitlyn, Ciaran, and Rory) hosted us in Ireland.
- Karen and Peter (Viggo and Aletta) hosted us in Oslo, Norway.

- Many people served us meals and helped drive us around. I will remember our taxi drivers in England, Rachid and Adi and our train conductors on the train ride to Windsor, Usman and Philip.
- I especially remember my wife Karen who organized our trip and really led the trip for us as we navigated the itinerary and found transportation. We need Martha's in this world.

In our story, I hope we might affirm Martha for her hospitality and for her willingness to be a doer. I affirm all of you who identify with Martha. As we affirm Martha, it is also okay to affirm Jesus and Mary in the story.

I think Jesus is empowering of women by encouraging Mary to listen to his teaching. Jesus treats Mary and Martha like his other male disciples. Jesus affirms both women and men. It was unique that a woman was allowed to sit under a rabbi's teaching and given such a privilege.

We can affirm Jesus for empowering Mary. We can also affirm Mary for being willing to sit under the teaching of Jesus and for showing interest in being his student.

Rather than creating a conflict in this story between Martha, Mary, and Jesus. Maybe the best way to interpret this text is to affirm all three of them.

To me, it is valuable to consider whether we are all called to follow the example of Martha, Mary, and Jesus.

Like Martha, we are called to serve others and be active in this world.

Like Mary, we are called at times to reflect and learn and engage in relationship through conversation. Like Jesus we are called to sometimes be a teacher to others and we are invited in this story, to cultivate our own relationship with Jesus by serving and hosting him as Martha does and by listening to him and his teachings as Mary does.

We are called to be active and contemplative.

During my family's vacation/pilgrimage in Ireland, Norway, and England we had some amazing experiences. I want to share especially two encounters we had at holy sites. To me these experiences remind me of the balance of action and contemplation in our spiritual lives.

Show slides:

1. Norway- Tromso- far north in Norway where Karen is from.
2. Saint Brigid- Ireland
3. Saint Julian of Norwich (Norich) in Norwich, England.

These saints model in their lives this call to action and contemplation.

This certainly is also true of the life of Jesus.

Franciscan Priest Richard Rohr has a ministry called the Center of Action and Contemplation. He is fond of saying that in the title of his ministry, the most importance word is and. This is because and is a bridging word.

Maybe we are invited in the Martha and Mary story to focus less on whether Martha or Mary or even Jesus is the hero of the story, but instead value all three of them. We can affirm Martha and Mary and Jesus.

We can also choose to value lives of action and contemplation. We can be people of service and prayer. Praxis is a word I learned in college and seminary that highlights the importance of doing both reflection and action.

I give thanks for our church community. Every week in our community, we act together like Martha and Mary and we take time to serve and learn and follow Jesus together. As we continue our pilgrimage with Jesus this summer, let us embrace action and contemplation.

Let us pray...

Luke 10:38-42

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him.[a] 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus's[b] feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But 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." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, 42 but few things are needed—indeed only one.[c] Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."