

Mary and Martha

I don't know about you but I can relate to Martha's thought process because I too worry about many things. I can also relate to her frustration, because I too get upset when no one else seems to care or to commit or work. I can even relate to her being offended, because, truth be told, there's a part of me that is offended with how Jesus responds to her real-world concerns. I'm Scotch-Irish by birth and so the old Calvinist work ethic is embedded in my DNA: work, work hard, work often. In fact, woven into the fabric of old guard America is that Manifest Destiny approach to life: God helps those who help themselves. We all take pride in how hard we work; in how many hours we clock in from week to week. Like Martha, we slave day after day trying to create that illusion of perfection—a perfectly manicured home and yard, wherein resides a perfect family, perfect children, perfect marriage, where we all wear perfectly new clothes, drink perfectly brewed coffee before setting off in a perfectly new cars to perfectly good jobs and schools to rub shoulders with perfectly good people, which in turn rounds off our perfectly good lives. We work so very hard to make sure everything is perfect so no matter who peeks into our little corner of the universe, each will say, "Now there is a perfectly good family—How lovely their home, how sweet their children, how perfect their marriage, how beautiful their roses." It's all a bit too much, though, too plastic, too dishonest, and it's really hard to maintain so it takes its toll on us. We might have killer lives, but they're killing us. We are anxious and troubled by many things. We lose sleep, we lose sanity, but above all, we lose the most precious of all commodities: Time. So, Jesus' words, while in one sense are offensive at the same time they are also comforting. They speak to me, in the place where I am at in my life, so I can only assume they speak to you wherever you find yourselves. Because what Jesus is really saying to Martha and to us is summed up in one word: *Relax*. Relax, that's what Jesus is saying to us today and every day. Relax, for after all whose world is this? To whom does everything belong? Who is in control here- Martha, you, me? Who sets the stars in the heavens; who bids the sun to rise each morning and set each evening? Who calls forth life and who alone holds all things, keeps all things; moves all things? Is not the food we eat or the clothing we wear, the house and home we inhabit or the family we cherish all gifts from our Heavenly Father? The troubles and suffering of this world certainly get us down, but doesn't God teach us to do what we can, when we can, for as long as we can, and then entrust the outcome to His good care? Isn't that the meaning of the old saying, "You

can either pray or worry, but you can't do both"? The suffering we see all around us and the pain we feel within us serve only as reminders that something is not right with this world, that something is not right with us. Who amongst us can add a single day to his life by means of worrying? Who amongst us by worrying can bring about anything that God has not already decreed and foreknown?

Relax, for Jesus has something to say to all of us Marthas here today. He invites us to sit at His feet and hear His Word; to lay down our self-imposed mantle of responsibility. Relax and listen to how God addresses the troubles of this world, which we worry about and which in our arrogance we really think we can solve. Hear O' Marthas of this world what our Lord has done, is doing, and will continue to do for each of us until He comes again in glory. Hear His proclamation of forgiveness whereby the darkness of sin and death and suffering and anxiety are conquered and removed in the life and death of Jesus. Hear O' Marthas of this world how the work is complete, finished in Christ. Upon His shoulders He has exalted the world, and the nail marks on His hands bear witness to how this world has been crucified to all of its troubles and cares. Hear O' Marthas, how Jesus comes to serve you and not the other way around; stop trying to impress and humble yourselves before the Lord. For God is certainly not impressed with the tidiness of our lives or how well we entertain or even how godly we act. Impressive to the Lord is a heart that is contrite and repentant; a faith that desires to grow and be fed with the very bread of life; a soul that truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

By our sin we are all Marthas. But by grace, we are all Marys. For faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So, sit, relax, and hear the mighty things that God has done for you. What are you worried about? The sufferings of this world are but for a little while, they will end. Find the joys that God provides each and every day even in the midst of all the troubles, which surround us. And besides that, the world's suffering can never be solved from below. No man can or ever will be able to solve the weighty problems we face in this sinful world. Relax and be of good cheer, God Himself has solved man's eternal dilemma in the death and resurrection of Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the good portion has already been given to us, it's ours today. All that remains, then, is to sit and enjoy the bounty. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Jeremy H. Mills