

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

July 21, 2019

Proper 11C / Ordinary 16C / Pentecost +6

The readings this week:

◦ Amos 8:1-12 ◦ Psalm 52

◦ Colossians 1:15-28 ◦ Luke 10:38-42

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Summer Time, Is the Livin' Easy?

Whenever I preach/teach about this story, I invariably receive negative feedback from at least one Martha in the crowd. The negativity isn't usually expressed toward me, but toward Jesus.

"You know," they say in a whisper so he won't hear us, "I've never really liked this story. I mean, did he think the food would just appear out of thin air? Who was going to do the dishes? You don't see him and the guys lifting a finger to help her. Without the Marthas, no one would eat or have clean clothes or get anywhere on time. Marthas make the world go 'round.'"

They have a point. As a card-carrying Martha, I also bristle a little at Jesus' reproach of the one who's provided the very banquet, home, meal and opportunity for his rebuke. It honestly seems a little rude.

It's summertime in Kentucky. And as I drive around town, or speak with friends, it seems to be a good time for both Marthas and Marys. I observe that most of us have a little of both—a worker side and a contemplative side. I see people laboring in their yards, hear about them planning restoration or painting a bedroom, cleaning out closets, participating in service projects. Then the same people are later seen hanging out on their porches with neighbors until late in the evening, watching the kids catch lightning bugs, eating leisurely meals cooked outside, reading novels, taking vacations, reconnecting with old friends or distant family members.

Summer is a time for the Marys to connect to their Martha side. Summer is a time for the Marthas to engage their Mary side. My Martha-ness doesn't want to admit it, but Jesus is right. I don't think he was concerned about the work (I'd like to think he deeply appreciated it). I think he didn't like to see her "worried and distracted" by it. We Marthas have a tendency for overkill in the worry and distraction departments.

So, Martha, put down the paint roller or laundry detergent. Roll the lawnmower into the garage. Unplug the vacuum cleaner. Pour yourself a glass of sweet tea and watch the sunset. It'll make you a better person.

~ Melissa Bane Sevier, [Contemplative Viewfinder](#)

One Thing is Needed

Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.

~ Luke 10.41-42

There will be the clutter and clatter of pans, the rumble and jumble of traffic and trains, the brambles of papers and lists and calls, the beaten paths, the errands, the chores.

You don't have to rattle and run with them. You can do one thing at a time.

You can stop and sit at the feet of the moment, pay reverent attention to whatever it is, and listen to the silence beneath the hum, and simply be in the the presence of the presence.

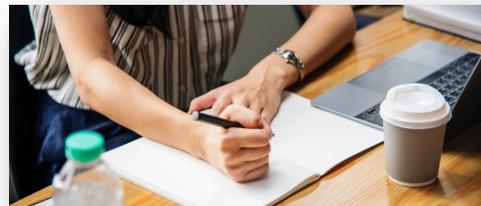
In all your doing that you surely must do, you still can just be. And your being will become what you do.

In the stillness within the action sits the Beloved who is not distracted with many things, but only wants to sit awhile with you.

~ Steve Garnaas-Holmes [Unfolding Light](#)



Reflecting on the Word



1st Reading: [Amos 8:1-12](#)

When have you had fruit that went bad? How can it happen so quickly and unexpectedly? What is God saying, through this image, about the time of prosperity that Israel is experiencing? Why might this image be so compelling to those who heard it? The people are worshipping God “properly” in terms of ritual... but what is missing? When have you found yourself in this frame of mind or spirit, and how did you get there? What is God foretelling through Amos in the later parts of this passage? Why is a time when people don’t hear from God a frightening thought, even for us? By what means does a society get to this point? Looking at our passage of scripture, what do you think are the dangers of not taking the needs of others into account? If we can borrow Amos’ metaphor, what do we need to do in order to keep our fruit from rotting? [Faith Element](#)

Psalm Reading: [Psalm 52](#)

Is it your desire to be ‘flourishing in the house of God’? What changes would help that happen? How did the psalm writer describe the wicked? How were David’s enemies a “disgrace in the eyes of God?” What did David repeat three times to emphasize his point? What is the final destiny of the wicked? What are the consequences of deceit? How will the righteous react to the downfall of the wicked? What causes the downfall of the wicked? Why did David compare himself to an olive tree? Where did David get his sense of security? What vow did David make to the Lord in the conclusion of the psalm? Where did David promise to praise the Lord? [My Computer Ministry](#)

Today, the great enemies of any such universal hospitality are busyness, fear, and professionalism. If I don't have time to talk to the person calling for help, hospitality is out of the question. The advent of a guest, like the unanticipated needs of fellow monks, is a guage of our use of time. If we have no time for the guest, our day is too full. However, busyness can be an independent sin against the stranger, or it can be an excuse concocted because we don't want to say we are afraid or prefer to remain uninvolved.

~ Hugh Feiss OSB, *Essential Monastic Wisdom: Writings on the Contemplative Life* via Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)



3rd Reading: [Colossians 1:15-28](#)

How would you answer someone who genuinely asked “who is Jesus?” How should Jesus’ headship of The Church work out practically in the context of a local church? What is the result in our thoughts, priorities, behaviors and relationships when we follow Christ as the pre-eminent very image of God? What forms of false teaching does Colossians 1:15-20 safeguard against? How do you understand what Paul is teaching when he writes that we will be presented without blemish and free from accusation ‘if’ we continue in our faith? What practical steps can we take to encourage one another to continue in our faith, established and firm, not moving from the hope found in the Gospel? [Springwood Baptist Church](#)

4th Reading: [Luke 10:38-42](#)

Who are the "behind-the-scenes" people in your church, who make much of its ministry, including its hospitality, possible? What would these stories sound like if they were told by those who are mostly silent but whose quiet action often drives the ministry of our churches? How does the Gospel reading, paired with last week's passage about the deeds of the "good" Samaritan, reconcile the disagreement between two sisters over household chores? What would need to change to bring a sharing of "hearing" and "doing" across lines that have often been drawn when assigning "roles" in the life of the faith community? Why do you think Jesus chose such unlikely teachers for the lessons about loving neighbor and loving God? [Weekly Seeds](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

“Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.” Colossians 1:16b-17

This is your garden, Creator God
a thing of beauty
beyond understanding,
a poem that is being written
not in words,
but in colours,
wind’s whisper,
soaring bird,
snowdrop’s petal,
gentle rain,
sunlight’s warmth.
This is your garden, Creator God,
a thing of beauty
beyond understanding



~ [Third Space](#)