

The One Thing Necessary: *spiritual rhythms of leadership*

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The “Problem” of Martha

*The Sons of Mary seldom bother, for they have inherited that good part;
But the Sons of Martha favour their mother of the careful soul and the troubled heart.
And because she lost her temper once, and because she was rude to the Lord her guest,
Her Sons must wait upon Mary’s Sons, world without end, reprieve, or rest.*

*It is their care in all the ages to take the buffet and cushion the shock.
It is their care that the gear engages; it is their care that the switches lock.
Raise a stone or cleave the wood to make a path more fair or flat;
Lo, it is black already with the blood some Son of Martha spilled for that!*

*And the Sons of Mary smile and are blessed-they know the angels are on their side.
They know in them is grace confessed and for them are the mercies multiplied.
They sit at the feet-they hear the Word-they see how truly the Promise runs.
They have cast their burden upon the Lord and-the Lord has laid it on Martha’s Sons!*
Rudyard Kipling

Lectio divina: *listening with the ear of our heart*

In our reading, we ponder the chosen text on the strength of the promise that it has something utterly personal to say to us for this day. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, they came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to them. She had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” Martha, Martha, the Lord answered. 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 from her. Luke 10:38-42

What Do We Notice? (5 senses)

Mary:

Martha:

What Makes Sense/Resonates in the Story?

What Questions, if any, Does the Story Raise for Us?

Some More “Chewing”

1.Oriented to “the one thing necessary”

Be still before the Lord, waiting patiently for him...Psalm 37:7

It is not enough to be moral people, well trained, eager to help our fellow humans and able to respond creatively to the burning issues of their time. If there is any focus that the Christian leader needs, it is the discipline of dwelling in the presence of the One who keeps asking us, “Do you love me?” Leadership must be rooted in permanent, intimate, relationship with God.

Henri Nouwen, from *In the Name of Jesus: reflections on Christian leadership*

2.Saved, not Judged

The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by life’s worries...and they do not mature..Luke18:14

3.Both/And

When Martha is only Martha, Mary has the best part. But when Martha is also Mary, she has the best part. Thomas Merton

4.Not Living by Bread Alone

Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God...Luke 4:4

Burning the Oil, not the Wick

Those who excel at the external elements of Christian leadership while neglecting their own spiritual journeys face an impending personal implosion. But those who practice spiritual self-care can anticipate a life of increasingly intimate relationship with the God they serve. Our lives can only be as spiritually fruitful as we are spiritually deep in relationship with God. Christian leaders need to be encouraged and guided to burn the oil, not the wick...

Richard Dunn in *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students*

Reflecting on Our Journey

Where do I see evidences of wick-burning in my life? _____, _____ you are worried about many things...

What exterior and interior circumstances might be contributing to this wick-burning?

What response to I have to the Mary-call to linger with God, to choose the one thing necessary for me?

Time is Precious, not Scarce: Mary Practices for a Martha World

Yearly retreat

Monthly Check-up with spiritual director or spiritual friend

Weekly Sabbath

Daily Quiet Time

Moment by Moment return to the “sacrament of the present moment”

A Closing Blessing

The blessing of Martha’s welcome, the blessing of Mary’s listening;

The blessing of action, the blessing of reflection,

The blessing of a God who is in each of these and in each of us...be with us all. AMEN