



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend we hear about Martha and Mary, two sisters who were friends with Jesus. Of course, you know the story, Martha is serving Jesus and she gets upset at her sister Mary for “just sitting there,” listening to Jesus. Martha then proceeds to tell Jesus what to do, **“Tell her to help me”** (Luke 10:40). Jesus then rebukes Martha.

I’ve heard plenty of people get upset at Jesus because of this: Poor Martha, trying her best to be a good hostess, working to take care of her honored guest, and she gets rebuked for wanting help. But there are a couple of key lines to which we need to pay attention. First is the critique of Martha, that she is **“anxious and worried about many things”** (Lk 10:41). Martha is not rebuked because she is serving. Far be it from Jesus – who came not to be served, but to serve (see Matthew 20:28) – to rebuke someone for serving! God shows us His humility that He would deign to serve us, mere mortals!

Martha, rather, is rebuked for being *anxious* and *worried* about many things. You know when this happens in your life. It is when we take our eyes off of the most important things. It’s often seen in movies or TV when parents decide that they will go over and above for their children on some project, hoping to make it so incredible, so memorable, it will be a lasting joy for their kids. In the midst of everything, they lose sight of the children and focus only on the project... and the kids are left looking at each other as if to say, “What’s the big deal? We just wanted to have fun!” We can lose our focus – as Martha did – on *why* we serve (the person), and focus on all of the *whats* that have to get done.

The second very important line goes with this: **“There is need of only one thing”** (Luke 10:42). And what is that “one thing”? Relationship with Jesus.

That’s it.

Everything else is about how we grow in relationship with Him (or, conversely, how we fall away from that relationship). Mary had that. She was focused on the one thing necessary... Jesus. Had she been up serving like Martha, I bet she would have been focused on Him, not being worried and anxious about many things. It is not a matter of serving (being in the active life) or sitting at Jesus’s feet (the contemplative life) ... whether active or contemplative, all that we do is meant to be focused on Jesus. St. Paul says, **“whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God”** (I Corinthians 10:31). So, whether we are a “Martha” (busy about the many tasks) or a “Mary” (taking time to sit and pray), we are called to do it all for the Lord.

I will go out on a limb and say that we are *all* called, in some way, to be Martha AND Mary (or Joseph AND John), doing the work of the Lord and spending time in contemplative prayer, but always looking to do it for our God. The key is that in all we do we keep the one needful thing in our hearts and minds.

May we ask the Lord to help us keep focused on the one thing necessary – relationship with Him – and to allow that to guide and direct all that we do. May we regroup ourselves whenever we find ourselves becoming anxious and worried about many things, and turn back to the Lord to find our peace.