

Service of Healing and Holy Communion Luke 10:38-42 Monday, July 19, 2010 David Schlafer

- Martha is obviously the original multi-tasker, and she doesn't even have a computer!  
Martha is up to her earlobes in "many tasks," and so, reasonably enough, she hollers: *LORD, SEND HELP!*  
Suppose that Jesus does, in fact, just what Martha asks: *Mary, get on in there and help your sister, hear?*  
Or suppose that Jesus is a sensitive new age guy: *Hey, we'll all pitch in; many hands make light work!*  
Question: Would THAT help have BEEN a help? I think the jury is out.
- It's not just the "many tasks" that is the problem.  
The problem is that Martha is *distracted* by her many tasks.  
Distraction does not automatically disappear, if you bring in a bevy of willing worker bees.  
If you've ever tried to oversee a big operation you know that  
delegating, coordinating, supervising, team building, and performance reviewing  
are all tasks in their own right—sometimes much more demanding than the original tasks themselves.  
If Martha is already distracted by her many tasks, sending in reinforcements is not necessarily a kindness.
- Distraction doesn't have so much to do with all the items *out there* waiting to get done.  
Distraction has to do with disorientation going on *in here*. And that distraction can happen in lots of ways—  
some of them not unhealthy—others not at all healthy
  - 1) Steep learning curve—many separate tasks, *all* of which have to be integrated with each other  
in order for *any* of them to work (like learning to ride a bike).  
The "many task" distraction is not unhealthy, even though it can be frustrating. The distraction is inevitable  
(The complex skill sets of paramedic and social worker that "The Good Samaritan" exhibited  
did NOT develop spontaneously and on the spot.)
  - 2) Second guessing—worry about "getting it right"—  
or worry about whether one is worrying enough about getting it right—or worrying too much . . . .  
(This is not nearly as healthy a distraction—it often makes you lose sight of what you are doing)
  - 3) Looming storm cloud from someplace else—a physical illness, a personal wound, an abusive relationship  
(A distraction you can't see around—and there's nothing to do but stand in the face of the wind and rain;  
holding the sun in memory and hope—remaining as healthy as possible in an unhealthy situation.)
  - 4) Restless longing induced by a faraway vision  
(A haunting vision that pulls us to a whole new place, distracting attention from what's under our nose)  
Such a distraction can be maddening, but not necessarily unhealthy—in fact, the dawning of health.
- I'm just guessing it was the last of these for Martha: A restless longing at once very attractive and very scary.  
(She is, in other words, bugged by far more than a stack of dishes)  
Jesus response to her: *Distracted BY many things, FROM which I am trying deliberately to distract you  
TOWARD a fuller vision of life in community—I want to distract you from your distractions.*  
(The Lord's Prayer, which immediately follows the story of Jesus and Martha,  
is just such a rigorously re-visioning "distraction.")
- The opening petition in our healing litany is *God the creator, your will for all people is health and salvation*  
We hear that (appropriately) as plea for release from physical disease/psychological suffering  
But health and salvation involve so much more.  
What God may be gently trying to disengage, disorient, distract us away from what is in front of us  
in order to draw our attention toward that One Good Thing  
that will bring us a reorienting, reintegrating, and regenerating focus.