

1. Martha (pulpit side; wearing ivory shawl)

I, Martha, was so honored to welcome Jesus into my home.
Everyone knew he was on his way to Jerusalem
where something big was going to happen.
We weren't quite sure what, but we did know that
he was teaching and healing with great urgency,
and reaching out in love to everyone along his path.
And I do mean *everyone*.
Jesus was causing quite a stir.

Now here he was in my humble home.
Oh, but wait – just look at this place, I thought,
it doesn't look like a home but a disaster!
As thrilled as I was that Jesus chose to visit my house,
I wish he would've come at a more convenient time.
But I managed to clear a path and find him a seat of honor.

So there I was rustling up something to serve as I tried to listen to Jesus.
But how could I possibly find something impressive enough
for him to eat and drink?

It was interesting, what I did manage to hear.
Well, not even so much what he said,
but just being in his presence was unlike anything I'd ever experienced.
There was something about Jesus –
like he knew me better than I know myself.
It was an amazing feeling, but a little unsettling too...

I really do want to get to know Jesus.
It's just that he picked such a bad time to show up.

If only he'd come back later when the house is clean,
and we've got more to offer;
when my hair is brushed. When I'm ready.

Ah, wait – what's that my sister Mary is up to over there?

2. Mary (lectern side; wearing peach shawl)

That sister of mine, Martha.

Did she really think that I, Mary, didn't understand
what a big deal it was having Jesus in our house?

Of course I wish we'd been better prepared.

Do you think I'd have worn this if I knew someone that important
was coming?

But then Jesus himself wasn't very fancy.

He was a come-as-you-are guy.

I was surprised how comfortable I felt in his presence,
more like myself than I'd ever felt before.

He wasn't there to inspect or judge,
just take us where we are –
messy house, messy lives, and all.

Of course we wanted to offer him proper hospitality.
Our culture, our Jewish faith, teaches
that we are to welcome strangers as if messengers of God.
We know that story from Genesis you just heard
about those three "men" who visited Abraham and Sarah
to promise that they would finally have a son of their own.
How it turned out that that they were actually
"entertaining angels unawares".
So naturally we'd want to provide the food and drink
indicating the respect that Jesus – or any visitor – deserved.

But Jesus appreciated whatever we offered.

With him, it wasn't just about serving food and drink,
but sharing what we had. *Sharing ourselves.*

Do you think I wasn't tempted to jump up like Martha
to try to make things perfect for our guest?

Funny, that's kinda' what Jesus was talking about.

He said that none of us are perfect and that's perfectly ok.

He said that God loves each of us, no exceptions.

That we might not feel ready, we'll never be ready,
but God can take whatever we have

and make something good and useful and even beautiful of it.

Look, this is news to me too.

That's why I had to sit there at Jesus' feet hanging on his every word.

Jesus said that it's not only *what* we do

but how we do it, that matters.

He said we don't have to do anything to earn God's love.

Just soak it in,

and then we'll be so thankful, so energized,

that we'll want to get up and do everything we can

to share it with others.

I can't wait to get started.

3. Conclusion (from the crossing; wearing one shawl over each shoulder):

Martha and Mary: It's not either/or but *both/and*.

Each of us need both Martha and Mary.

Each of us *are* both Martha and Mary.

We can't run a marathon every day any more than we can

sit quietly and meditate all day every day.

Even God took Sabbath – a time of rest and renewal --

as part of the act of Creation.

We're made in the image of God to both sit at the feet of Jesus

and act for the good of creation in his name.

Male and female alike,

God made each of us to be both Mary and Martha,

our inner and outer lives an integrated whole.

Our thoughts and prayers, our hopes and dreams,

reflected in our words and deeds.

Do you really think that Jesus would pit sister against sister?

Think of most everything you know about Jesus,

every story you've heard in the gospels.

Jesus is all about reaching out in healing love,

breaking down the walls between us,

going out of his way (literally) to bring all different people together,

making sure there is *no outcast*.

Now think about the world we live in.
Racial violence, sectarian strife, terrorism across continents;
deep political divisions –
Brexit, the attempted coup in Turkey,
and our own presidential campaign more vitriolic by the minute.
And that's just within the last couple weeks, God help us.

This broken world that God so loves is crying out
for each of us to be people of *integrity* --
Martha and Mary integrated in us --
working hard for justice, mercy, reconciliation,
and grounded in the life and love of Jesus.

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