Luke 10: 38-42
Jesus entered a village
where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him.
She had a sister named Mary
who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak.
Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said,
"Lord, do you not care
that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?
Tell her to help me."
The Lord said to her in reply,
"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things.
There is need of only one thing.
Mary has chosen the better part
and it will not be taken from her."

Our Scripture Reflection
Why did Jesus say, “Mary has chosen the better part”? The answer can be found in Luke 9:51 where we read that the day came when Jesus “Resolutely determined” to begin His journey to Jerusalem. There, He would earn our salvation for us. That was His mission and nothing would distract or deter Him. As He begins His Journey we see a sense of urgency in His words and actions. Jesus approves of Mary’s posture because His time with the sisters
is short. He will not pass their way again. Mary, therefore, knows she must pay attention so as not to miss one precious word of His teaching. Everything else, even the demands of hospitality must take a back seat at this moment.

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**Food for your Journey**

In Eugene H. Peterson’s The Message, Jesus says: “Martha, dear Martha, you’re fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it — it’s the main course, and won’t be taken from her.”

Perhaps Peterson’s words “main course” for “better part” (NRSV) can help this well-worn story be heard in fresh ways. A woman in the parish I serve commented that she never likes hearing this text preached because she always comes away with the sense that it’s never possible to get things right. If, like Martha, she works hard, she will be labeled “overfunctioning.” If, like Mary, she sits and listens too long, nothing gets done. Giuseppe Belli’s 19th-century sonnet “Martha and Magdalene” ends with Martha’s snapping back at Jesus when he tells her that Mary’s choice is more important: “So says you, but I know better. Listen, if I sat around on my salvation the way she does, who’d keep this house together?” (Divine Inspiration: The Life of Jesus in World Poetry).

Thinking of God’s word as the “main course” in the feast of life, however, doesn’t give that immediate sense that listening is better than doing. Rather, it places these activities in balance. Whereas the corporate world reminds us to keep the “main thing the main thing,” Christians are urged to remember that the main course is just that, the main course. Jesus is the host, not Martha or Mary or any one of us, and he spreads the word like a banquet to nourish and strengthen us. The word has within it commands both to sit and listen, and to go and do. We “sit on our salvation,” as the sonnet has it, but then scatter into the world and work of daily life.


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**A Prayer from the Heart**

Dear God, Please keep me free from all the distractions that I experience in the day to day living of life. May I focus on Your desires for me and make Your way a priority for me beginning with each morning. Amen