

Good morning, and happy New Year to you all....

When it comes to the New Year, it's traditionally a time to take stock of where we're at, and to assess what things might need to change in our lives... And already this year, the Word of God has revealed something to me about **myself**...

... I'm going to come out: I think I might be Martha.

No, not like, "He doesn't know if he's Arthur or Martha" – I'm pretty sure I'm Arthur (in that regard)... But the comparison today, is "Martha and Mary", and to an extent, "I suspect I could be Martha."

And so, I'm Martha, and I hope she doesn't mind me saying so, but I suspect I might be married to Martha. And some of **you** might be Martha as well...

And let me tell you: It's a tough gig, being Martha... There's so much that needs to be done... What's wrong with the Mary's of the world? – Can they not see that???

And then to top it all off, Jesus takes Mary's side.... **Grrr!!!**

Hmm... It's not so good, to be a Martha....

So, as we read that Bible reading, who did **you** identify with? Do you identify with Martha – Do you feel that you've been

left to carry the can? Or do you identify with Mary? And what's that mean for you?

I'll be up-front with you, and I'll tell you what the problem with Martha is: Martha had an incorrect perspective. And because of her incorrect perspective, she's all messed up.

She's obviously "house-proud", and loves to be a good hostess (there's nothing wrong with that). That's probably why she invited Jesus into her home... And Martha understands that having such an esteemed guest, would require the very highest level of service...

We're not told **exactly** what she was doing, other than "serving"... Maybe she was cooking up a fresh batch of biscuits/scones; or perhaps a tea-cake. Maybe a cheese-platter; Or perhaps she's cooking up a sheep-on-a-spit.... , because it's not only Jesus – it's most likely His whole entourage there as well.

We don't know what she was doing... What we do know, is she is so busy serving, Martha got cranky because her sister (sounds like a little sister to me BTW – because that's just the sort of thing a little sister would do – you bigger sisters, you're hearing me, aren't you) – her sister wasn't lifting a finger to help... And I get that – I understand why she's a bit cranky. Why? Because I could be Martha...

You see, from Martha's perspective, it **had** to be done. All of this serving, had to be done. Why? So that Jesus could have the most hospitable stay He's ever had....

But the thing is, from Jesus' perspective, Martha was **distracted**. And she was distracted from the only thing that was truly important...

Let's put this into the true perspective (alright, Jesus' perspective is the right perspective – If you see things different to how Jesus sees them, guess who's in the wrong – Not Jesus!!!)

So, here's the truth of the matter:

Martha had **the Son of God** in her lounge-room. We don't know how long Jesus was going to stay – it might only be for the one day,, She's got Jesus for one day, and Martha's distracted, to the kitchen...

And what's going through Martha's head, is: “If only somebody could help me with all of this stuff, then I could get a bit of a chance to spend some time with Jesus too... Stinking Mary...” (That's not in the Bible BTW – that's the Michael extrapolation)

And just to highlight how messed-up Martha is, she goes to her special guest, “Jesus, I'm run off my feet here. Don't you even care? Tell that lazy so-&-so sister of mine, to come and do something to help...”

Who does that??? Who goes to their guest of honour and has a gripe that no one's helping them? I'll tell you who does that – That's just the sort of thing a Martha does... All of you Martha's, how many times have you prayed to God, "Lord, there's so much to be done, and I'm the one left carrying the can, and nobody else seems to be helping..... Lord, you need to raise up some more servants, to take a bit of the load off...

Who does that? Martha does that...  
So, I might be a bit like Martha.

**But**, hang on a minute: don't you Mary's go getting too smug about this.

You see, the message that some folk want to take home with them, is that their lack of service, is a good thing... That's not what this is about.

Martha was not in the wrong because she was serving. In fact, Jesus has told us that **He** came as a servant, and He made it very clear that to be great in the Kingdom of God, one must be a servant of all.

Lack of service is never a good thing, and if you are not serving Your Lord, and not serving your Brother and Sister in Christ, now is the time to start. **SERVE!**

Martha was in the wrong, because she was:

- Distracted from what was truly important;

- Anxious about a whole bunch of stuff;
- Troubled by many things...

That's the 3 words that are used: Distracted; Anxious; Troubled...

Jesus said to Martha “**one thing is necessary**”. And that one thing, is what Mary had chosen to do at that time:

What was Mary doing? Well, she:

- didn't have her feet up, catching up on her favourite soaps;
- wasn't working on her fitness regime;
- wasn't concentrating on her needle-point; or
- consumed by social media.

She sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

What is more important than serving? To sit at the Lord's feet, and take in His teaching...

I guess what we learn, is there's a time for everything. The trick is, knowing the time. During the week (in my daily Bible Readings), I from:

Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (ESV)

I know most of you know it, and it's also a song made famous by The Byrds.

### 3 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

- <sup>2</sup> a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
- <sup>3</sup> a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- <sup>4</sup> a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- <sup>5</sup> a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- <sup>6</sup> a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
- <sup>7</sup> a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- <sup>8</sup> a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Alright, there's a time for everything...  
And what we're learning today, is there's a time to serve, and there's a time where "service" should take a back-seat.

As we've been studying the Gospel of Luke, we've already seen:

- Jesus sending His 12 disciples out on mission; and

- Him send 70 Disciples out on mission; and
- He’s just finished telling the story of the Good Samaritan, where the lesson was, “To be a neighbour, we serve those (even those who are very different to ourselves) – we serve those who are in need”...

There **is** a time to serve. So, do not take home the message today, that we can all put up our feet, and take it easy... The time is way too short for that, and the need for the Good News of Salvation in the Name of Jesus to be proclaimed – the need, is way too **great** for slacking off....

What I hope we take home from today, is that for a Disciple of Jesus, there is no place for anxieties and troubles that distract us, and take us away from sitting at the feet of Jesus, and learning **from** Jesus. – that’s what it’s about...

Ahhh.... Maybe it’s less about “serving”, and more about being distracted from Jesus.

Maybe it’s less about being busy, and more about being troubled, and about being anxious; and how troubles and anxiety, sometimes distance us from God...

And that’s often the way it is, isn’t it. I know that I’ve observed, over and over again,, And it’s something I don’t understand, because in this regard, I’m not a Martha...

Often, when a person suffers Anxiety, and they feel troubled, the one place they should turn, is Jesus, but they don't – they distance themselves from the one person they need the most.

Why is that? I don't understand it. But you've seen it too, haven't you? And some of you have lived it.... Where the troubles of the world come down upon you; and stuff that **shouldn't** be causing anxiety, does cause anxiety.... Why? Because the perspective is all wrong...

And often, when that happens, rather than drawing close to God, and being strengthened by Him, we step away. We withdraw from Jesus; and withdraw from fellowshiping with other Christians; ....

What would Jesus say???

**"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary. Come to Me, and listen to Me...."**

You see, Jesus said: **Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.**

And **there's** the truth of the matter, right there. In faith, we come to our Lord. That's the good portion in life. And it cannot be taken away from us. When anxieties and troubles threaten to overwhelm, faith holds us fast in Him.



I'm reminded of what Paul wrote in Romans 8 (ESV)

<sup>31</sup> ... If God is for us, who can be against us?

Why would we have anxieties and troubles, that distance us from God???

And he said:

<sup>37</sup> ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Choosing Jesus, and to commune with Jesus, is the good portion, and it cannot be taken away....

No troubles; No anxieties, should ever distract us from sitting at the feet of Jesus, and learning from Him... That's the good portion.

But, did you notice, the highlight of what Mary **did**, at the feet of Jesus???

She listened to his teaching.

Martha wasn't doing that. No wonder she got distracted; No wonder, she got anxious and troubled... , because the teaching of Jesus – God's word, gives us the true perspective...

We live in an era, where many like to construct a god in their own image. They choose what they think God should be like, and so they end up worshipping a false god.

It's a very simple thing really. God reveals Himself. And we encounter the living God, through the word of God. Listen to His teaching.

So, happy New Year, everyone.

And my prayer for us today,  
is that this year:

our knowledge of the Lord would grow; and  
that as we delve deeper into His word,  
we would gain a **true** perspective of God,.

I pray that our faith would become strong and sure;

And that our service would never become the main thing

- That we would **not** be distracted from the time we need, to sit at the feet of Jesus;
- That we would not get so caught up in doing stuff for Jesus, that our very relationship **with** Jesus, would suffer.

And I pray that this year,

- We would serve together;
- Pray together;
- Study His Word together; and
- Love, and be loved, together.

And may we not be distracted;  
Or troubled;  
Or anxious,  
Because we draw near to God,  
And He will never be taken away from us.

That's my prayer for us in this New Year.  
Amen.