

**July 17, 2016 at Advent Lutheran Church in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. 9<sup>th</sup>. Sunday after Pentecost. Luke 10:38-42. Mary and Martha, “Both/And, instead of Either/Or!” Finding the balance and organizing your time and priorities.**

***QUESTION: Think about this for a moment, are you more like Mary or Martha? And a second question would be, “What are you distracted by?”***

**Black against white. Poor against rich. Republicans against Democrats. Liberals against Conservatives.** To think in these terms is always a very bad idea ending once again in **tribalism. Them against us.** There is no resolution possible for this ongoing conflicted way of thinking unless we find a way to come together united by our common **needs** and most especially our common **purpose**.

There’s a lot of discussion in the media about the **“Black Lives Matter,”** movement and the demonstrations and even violence that has resulted from it. On the one hand, the movement was born out of the **undeniable** fact that there have been many **even recorded** incidents of police brutality against minorities especially African Americans.

But that does not **exclude** the very really fact that at times blacks have attacked police officers who were actually protecting the very same people who claim **Black Lives Matter** which is exactly what happened in **Dallas**. The white police officers who were protecting the peaceful marchers were murdered because they are **white**.

**I believe the answer lies in Both/and, not Either/or.**

What’s being lost in this conversation is that the marchers were **not exclusively black**, were many white friends and concerned citizens among them just as in the days of the Civil Rights movement led by **Dr. King**. You may remember a number of white women and men were murdered because they dared stand up against the horrific conditions that blacks lived in especially in the South.

What’s also being lost at least to some who can’t seem to get beyond **black/white** thinking is that the Police Chief and many of the officers are black, and they are outraged at the killings that took place, not because the officers who died are white, but because of the outright **venomous hatred** that boils over when we distil everything to simplistic **black/white, right/wrong, either/or rather than**

**both/and thinking.** It seems so simple, so profound, yet as I have learned in my life regarding all things of deep importance so very hard to achieve.

Most if not all of the societal and cultural violence around the world is caused by our inability to understand this. As I have been saying recently in other messages there is no better way, at least for me, to understand it except in the context of **tribalism.**

Remember, every single human **“grouping”** that begins with the basic family unit of parents and offspring clusters for mutual benefit, safety and nurture. Then this basic grouping naturally grows into **extended family, community, society,** and eventually **nationhood.**

**Scientifically speaking** we are all of us family members of the **same family** having branched out from what anthropologists believe began in **Africa.** According to the Recent **African Ancestry theory,** modern humans evolved in **Africa** and migrated out of the continent some **50,000 to 100,000** years ago.

**"Race is a social concept, not a scientific one,"** said **Dr. J. Craig Venter,** head of the **Celera Genomics Corporation** in Rockville, Md. **"We all evolved in the last 100,000 years from the same small number of tribes that migrated out of Africa and colonized the world."**

While it may seem easy to tell at a glance whether a person is **Caucasian, African or Asian,** the ease dissolves when one probes beneath surface characteristics and scans the **genome** for **DNA** hallmarks of **"race."**

This **artificial separation** by social concepts of race is a **dangerous** and unjust cataloging of people who would otherwise be essentially the same. I still remember from my childhood in a very segregated city in the 50's how my contemporaries who resisted getting involved in the black community and struggle;

**“Why should I help; they don’t even help their own kind!”**

Even as a child I recognized the fallacy of such thinking. What does **“kind, as in color or race”** have to do with anything? It was apparent enough that within our own **homogenous** working-class white community there was plenty of **inequality** and **disregard** for those who were in need.

**Indeed, when it comes to how we treat one another both compassion and callousness know no color!**

You may have seen on the news that when violence erupted in many cities as a result of the two police shootings in Baton Rouge, LA and a suburb of Minneapolis, MN, **Diamond Reynolds**, girlfriend of **Philando Castille** one of the victims of the police shooting said:

**"Violence is never the key. It's not acceptable. We have to be able to come together and lead by example," she said. "If we're not able to stand together and control our emotions, then how can we ever expect anyone else in the world to do so?"**

And I believe therein lies our hope as well.

We as a well-meaning, believing people, like **Martha** are distracted by many things. Today many of us are distracted by an **Internet** that however incredible and marvelous ultimately has no **truth filter** to let us know what to believe and what is patently false.

We have a **news media** now that has grown in to an **entertainment contest** for ratings who when confronted with inaccuracies gives answers like:

**"We have the highest ratings in journalistic media news history!"**

And not **one word** about **factual reporting** of information or the need to be **objective**.

When Jesus tells **Martha** she is worried and distracted by many things, this is what I think of. I think of how we as a people allow ourselves to be led by the nose like sheep without a shepherd to places we would never otherwise go, and certainly we are no better for having followed the crowd. These are all distractions!

Mary has chosen the **better part**, the part that was and continues to be part the very heart of the Gospel message if only we could set aside the many distractions and live that way:

Last Sunday our Advent quartet Armonia sang a most beautifully moving arrangement by Marty Gross of the hymn **"We are Travelers on a Journey."** We

have included the words in the bulletin because they capture so beautifully what Jesus' message to us is all about.

I don't think I have ever read a more appropriate and beautiful expression of why Christ came to humankind or what it means to be a follower of His. I believe that's exactly what Jesus wanted Martha to understand. He is not being critical of her for being organized and wanting to get things done. That's a good thing, nothing happens unless we work at it.

Nor do I believe he was criticizing her for wanting **Mary** to help with the chores of hosting Jesus. I believe he was expressing a truth that we would do well to remember when we confront the many mundane daily and especially bigger important choices of our lives.

**Let's read the words of that wonderful song together:**

**(We are Travelers on a Journey)**

**AMEN.**