

**MOTHER'S DAY – May 14, 2006**

**GUILT-FREE!  
Luke 10:38-42**

**I. INTRO**

- A. Several weeks ago, Lori and I saw the film, *Walk The Line*—the story of Johnny Cash. I got the DVD for my birthday, so we recently watched it again. The one thing I was struck by was Johnny's Dad's comments when his brother was killed. The first one was, *Where were you?* The second was, *God took the wrong son!* If the story line was correct, Johnny's Dad's voice haunted him most of his life.

-I think I know what that's like. My best friend's uncle made an offhand comment when I was climbing on the tractor at their farm. "Boy, do you have big legs!" I thought about that comment every time I looked in the mirror. I'd be walking through the halls at High School—and I wasn't normal, it was *THUNDER-THIGHS!* Floors shaking, buildings losing pieces of brick, small children running for cover cause—*thunder-thighs was a comin'!*

1. But I don't even *think* about that any more. I've heard worse comments since. *I think you're lazy; You'd rather sit in your office than visit, wouldn't you? You don't preach from the Bible.* Voices!

-Anyone here have *voices* that haunt you? Comments people made; emails they sent? That stuff sticks like shrapnel in your soul, doesn't it. If voices were just annoying—it would be one thing. But the truth is, they can be very destructive. The voices in my life drove me to a kind of people-pleasing workaholism that almost destroyed my marriage and my health.

2. Now, why am I talking about this stuff on Mother's Day—you know, when it's *spa day* here? I'll tell you why. I think we *all* have voices that spoil our relaxing moments with guilt and all kinds of other junk. Sometimes, whatever good you receive in a great visit to a spa evaporates the moment you walk through the door at home. Sometimes it gets undone before you get home!

- B. A couple of weeks ago, I talked to Lori, Blaise and Nancy after a staff meeting about some of the suspicions I had. I suspected that, in a world like ours, women worry a lot—and feel guilty. I heard from them that women, particularly Moms, might be the worst Sabbath observers on the planet. That when they're at work, they feel guilty about not doing enough at home; and when they're at home, they feel guilty about something at work that's been left undone. And in trying to deal with both, they don't have time for themselves.

-They told me that in world of image-management experts, they sometimes feel like, unlike them, other women seem so together. Of course, that's the deal, isn't it—to be a *very together* person. And if you can't, *fake* it!

1. Voices! They disturb our peace. Mom's voice. Dad's voice—or lack there-of. The voices of TV ads. The voices of people you can't even identify—except for

the stupid thoughtless comments they made. Comments they don't even remember making—but you do.

2. My guess is that if we could give you a great gift today, it wouldn't be a life-time membership to a spa you'd want most. Mind you—you **wouldn't turn it down!** But I think the gift God always wants to give his over-worked, haunted children, is the gift of peace. The gift of guilt-free quiet. Rest. Acceptance. The sense that He cares more about who you **are** than what you **do**.  
-My prayer is that today you can find freedom from some of the loudest, most disturbing voices in your life and be at rest. Even without the pedicure, cucumbers, cold cream and mud packs!

## II. THE MARTHA COMPLEX

- A. There's a great story in Jesus' life about two sisters; one who needed a break to feed her soul, but settled for feeding her guests; and one who did spa time with Jesus. What's fascinating is to see how Jesus dealt with the conflict this created between them. Let's read the story.

***As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her (Luke 10:38-42 NIV)."***

1. Martha and Mary were two of Jesus' closest friends. So much so that Jesus apparently felt free to just show up at their home with his gang of disciples. It wasn't like they could phone ahead—so my guess is that this visit was a surprise. Martha's home, where this apparently took place, was in a little village called Bethany about 2 miles outside of Jerusalem. Surprise or not, Martha gladly opened her home to this gang--at least 13 men; maybe more.

-If you read between the lines, you get the feeling that Martha was really the Martha Stewart of the New Testament--and she **really** wants to do the entertainment thing well. ***It's a good thing!*** And in this story, she's a ball of energy, the queen of hospitality.

- a. Now, I think Martha's gotten a bum rap over the years. We **need** the Martha's of the world—these energetic, do-it-right, make-it-happen people. When the philosophical people get done waxing eloquent and the leaders get done pointing to the unreachable star, it's the **Martha** people who say, "Okay, how are we going to **pull this off!** I mean, don't leave me in dreamland--let's get some legs on this baby! Sign 'em up, plan 'em out, head 'em up, move 'em out. Don't just **talk** about it—**do** it!"

-The Martha's are the ones who are in cleaning up the dishes in the kitchen while others stand and talk. The Martha's are the ones on the phone asking their friends to bring cookies and fudge and stir sticks. The Martha's are *list* people. I'd say, **Let's hear it for the Martha's!!**

-The Martha's are the one's teachers like best, because they're hard at work while others are dreaming about life. They get their assignments in on time—all written neatly, with no grease spots or wrinkles. You can **count** on the Martha's to do what they say they're going to do when they say they're going to do it!

- b. All that to say that Jesus and his gang showed up—and Martha is making it happen. Martha's got a **PLAN!** And entertainment was more difficult then. It wasn't like you dig something out of the freezer and nuke it. Or offer someone a restroom to freshen up. Water had to be drawn; feet had to be washed; food had to be gotten from the market.

-You had to butcher meat, stoke a fire, cook it up, lay it out—all for a crowd of at **least** 15 people--maybe twice that many. This, friends, was **no small feat!**

- c. And Martha wanted to do it **right!** The key to understanding Martha's—if it's not done right, it's not worth doing. But I digress. In the middle of all this—there was a problem. That problem was in the shape of a woman—a **sister**. A sister that **should** have been helping!!!  
-But was her sister Mary helping? No-o-o! If Martha was the queen of hospitality, Mary was her hospitality-challenged sister.  
The passage says, **She (Martha) had a sister who SAT at the Lord's feet listening to what he said (Luke 10:39 NIV).**  
-Just a guess—how many of you think that Mary was the **younger** sisters? I have flashbacks of my older brother and I cleaning the basement. He's got a dust-storm going. I'd work diligently for at least 10 minutes, and then something else would catch my interest. "Oh, look, a bird!" Most first-borns are Martha's by nature. Bossy. Anal retentive. Obsessive compulsive.

2. The narrative injects a very interesting word. **But!** It's Martha's but! **But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that HAD to be made (Luke 10:40 NIV).** Just visualize that moment with me. Martha is getting more frustrated by the minute. She's up to her nostrils in work; she's sure this meal isn't going to get on the table until midnight--and Mary's **dawdling!** Just **sitting** there on the floor with her mouth open, looking adoringly at Jesus.

- a. Martha thinks, "She's in never-never land. I've **got** to get her attention." She tries all the tricks; marches by, trying not to be rude, puts her hands on her hips, clears her throat. Big heavy sigh. Drops a pan. Mary doesn't even look. Picture the foreground—Jesus and Mary—in slo-mo. And Martha in the background in fast-mo. Scurrying, carrying towels, basins of

water, cutting up the meat, stoking the oven, kneading the bread--runs back to the market for some fresh vegetables.

-When she comes back, Mary hasn't even **moved**. Martha marches by one more time, clears her throat. **Nothing!**

- b. Interesting, isn't it, the word used to sum up Martha? Distracted.

**Distracted**. This is clue time. When someone is **distracted**, it means that they're **missing something important**.

I have no idea what finally flipped Martha's switch. Maybe the potatoes boiled over; the pies burnt; the baby got into the flour; the goats ate the salad; one of the guys forgot to put the seat down on the commode. Whatever it was, Martha saw red.

-Martha barges into this scene where Jesus is speaking right into people's souls. I imagine her standing there, hands on hips, face flushed, a streak of wet hair dangling precariously over one eye, a smudge of flour on her nose--she's armed for battle.

- c. Then it turns nasty. She brings in the big gun--she sics Jesus on Mary. Martha appeals to Jesus' sense of justice and fairness. **Lord, don't you care that my SISTER (special emphasis) has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to HELP me (Luke 10:41 NIV)!**
- d. Personally, I think there was a little dig in there for Jesus, too--that He has just let her sit there while Martha busted her hump on entertainment. Maybe she was really saying, "Jesus, I'm doing all this stuff for **YOU**--to feed **you** and **your** friends. Can't you see how unfair this is? I'd like to be in here, too, but **somebody** has to do the meal!

-Scenes like this are always embarrassing, aren't they? Everyone was staring at the floor. Mary was humiliated in front of Jesus and all the guests. And from all appearances, Martha was absolutely right. It looked like Mary was just being really, **really** lazy.

3. Since it's Mother's Day--this is a legal question. Has anyone here every being going crazy, trying to get a meal together--and you have a spouse who's sitting there, comatose, watching **golf**--drooling? **Go ahead! It's your day! Give him the elbow!**

-Now, what would you think if, like Jesus, you'd been dragged into a sibling argument like this? "Wow, I guess I'm partly responsible for this. I've caused all this extra work, Martha's all stressed out--and here I've created tension between two otherwise loving sisters! What devotion Martha has! I wish **all** my disciples had her work ethic. It's true--20% of the people do 80% of the work. If you want something done, ask a **busy** person to do it!"

- a. But Jesus almost **never** says what you think he's going to say. In the middle of all this tension, Jesus addresses Martha—not Mary. And he speaks tenderly to the chaos, the worry, the anxiety, the overwork--this edgy, stressed out part of her heart.

***"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her (Luke 10: 42 NIV)."***

-I want to ask, particularly the women here, how would you have felt if Jesus had said that to you?

\*How many of you would've said, "You know, Jesus, you're right! Why, I'm just going to shut down the whole dinner thing—half-cooked—we'll send out for Chinese food and eat from paper plates!"

\*How many of you would've said, "Yeah, Jesus, well that's easy for **you** to say. You can make a banquet for thousands with a bag lunch. But regular people can't do that, you know! We have to **work** to get it done!"

- b. There's a clue in the story as to what Jesus was getting at, and it's quite profound. And it's in the words that seem to describe Mary's inactivity, "**...Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.** I'll tell you what's extremely unusual about that. It's the phrase **sat at his feet**. A technical phrase to describe the little schools that went on under the influence of great teachers in that culture. The problem was that they didn't just take **anybody**. You had to be a cream of the crop kind of kid. Super-kid. Oh, and you had to be **male**. If you were a girl—EEHH! Disqualified—'We're so sorry!'" And then you had the chance to sit at the feet of a great teacher and use his name for a reference.

-Do you understand what I'm saying? Jesus threw away the rule book—and Mary was being included in his group of disciples. That was the **one thing** that Mary had chosen that Jesus wasn't going to take away. Martha **may** have been saying, "Mary, the role of women in our world is not being disciples; it's being in the kitchen. And besides, I **need** you here!"

- c. That's why Jesus spoke to the **chaos** that all of this activity was creating in Martha's life. Anyone here who would have to say that words "worried" and "upset" pretty much reflect the interior of your heart? Things are wound so tight on the inside that when you raise your eyebrows, you pull up your socks? Seems like you're either stirring up or living in a tornado of

confusion and hurry on the outside. You need to know that spas don't solve that, they just postpone it.

-Jesus doesn't let Martha intimidate Mary with her schedule. It's like He says, "Whoa, Martha. Don't drag everyone else into this extravaganza you've prepared. **Own it!** You chose to serve prime rib instead of hot dogs. You chose to bake the gingerbread nameplates. You chose to use crystal and china instead of styrofoam.

You chose to fold little points onto the ends of the toilet paper rolls and put little umbrellas in the punch glasses.

- d. Martha had **many** things to do. She was the very first multi-tasker. Jesus said, "Martha, you have **many** things happening--too many. Mary has **one**. One thing. The most important thing. **God is in your living room! Do you see Him?**" Martha forgot that **who you are** is more important than **what you do**.

-She forgot that Jesus didn't **stop** there to be scheduled into one of her famous gourmet meals--He stopped to be with his friends. She never realized that her hours with Jesus were limited--too limited to be distracted with--**STUFF**.

### III. THE ONE THING

- A. Let me tell you what I see as I look at Martha in this snapshot. I think of the **demands** a lot of women, a lot of Moms in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Canada feel. I think of the Enjoli perfume ad that ran in the 1970s: "I can bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and never never never let you forget that you're a man...cause I'm a wo-o-o-oman!" A female business leader recently commented on this ad and said that the underlying message to women was "that they should be able to pull off a perfect balancing act of marriage, career and kids."

-I don't think there has ever been a time in history when the pressure has been higher. No wonder women are looking for spa time!

As I thought about what women expect of themselves—and each other--I thought the **Mad Hatter** from Alice-in-Wonderland. I listed some of the hats Mom's try to wear:

\*Most valuable employee

\*Cleaning and stain specialist

\*Psychologist and early childhood dev. Specialist

\*Deep thinker and wide reader

\*Good neighbor, good daughter, good sister, **excellent** mother, good leader, good friend, good mother-in-law—I mean, the person who **never** disappoints the people she loves.

\*Culinary goddess

\*Toy safety expert

\*Universal answerer of questions

\*Kinda the Energizer Bunny who never needs batteries

Know what I want to say to you women and Moms? **You're GOOD! But you're not THAT good.** If you try to wear all those hats—or even most of them, you will literally be the **MAD** hatter. And the good news is that God doesn't expect you to.

-I can positively guarantee you one thing this morning: He is more concerned with **who you are** than **what you do!** And He wants **your** concerns to flow in the same direction. As good and as wonderful as spas are—they can't build anything into **who you are.** Only God can. And He can only do that if He has your permission. And if you're distracted and worried about **many** things, you may miss His voice. The only time God shouts is when we're in so much pain we **have** to listen.

1. First let me tell you what I think you're going to have to fight—if you want to **be** the all of the person you were created to be. I think you will have to fight the pressure to measure your worth by your **list.** By how many plates you can keep spinning at one time. And that will be tough because, see, in our world, that's what we **brag** about. What **we** do, what we drive our **kids** to do, how **well** we do, how **together** we are despite all we do.

And it's this insane lifestyle--perform, perform, perform; measuring how successful we are by how many trophies we collect. But we won't admit our own insanity. We wink our puffy little red eyes—with grocery bags under them—and talk about how **wonderful** our kids are...**DOING.** Let's just be honest, okay? This stuff is not about our kid's welfare, and it's **certainly** not about ours. It's the product of image and worry.

-And this is the deal. The same irritations and impatience builds up in our hearts that fried Martha. Irritation at slow drivers and slo-o-ow shoppers. Kids who seem unappreciative of all the sacrifices we make for them. Even getting to the church is like the old theme song, "Head 'em up, move 'em out, Get going! Hurry up! **Rawhi-i-i-de!**"

And sometimes, the storm on the outside is directly related to the storm going on **inside."**

3. And I need to ask—is God the One asking you to carry the back-breaking load that's stressing your life? The pressure you will have to resist with all your heart is to **measure who you are by what you do.** Who gets rewarded and celebrated in our culture? It's not people who say "no"—or "enough, already!"  
-I mean, let's just be honest--it's not usually sane women who have a quiet center to their lives—who have a **spa** in the interior of their hearts where they are rebuilt

and renewed and find peace. It tends to be the MARTHA Stewarts who do it all—or at least **pretend** they can?

-Women, my hat is off to you. Really. I find women—and what they can accomplish in any given day—absolutely amazing. I've watched the sacrifices **my** woman, Lori, has made over the years—having two little ones, 16 months apart, with sticky fingers always grabbing for her, needing love, comfort attention and time; I've watched her, on top of that, build a choir, work at Nursery school, counsel, sing on worship teams, lead Bible studies—and find time to garden and refinish antiques—and I'm blown away.

-But if you measure who you are by what you accomplish and accumulate—and how many miles you drive, and by getting the better homes and gardens white glove test award every day—you **may** end up with just this empty, tired, sad interior that a lifetime spa membership can't heal.

4. Now, am I putting down the Martha's of this world? The incredible doers? I, for one, wouldn't want to live in a world without them! The point is to not get so distracted by doing that you miss **being**; to understand that Jesus will **never** make you feel guilty for taking time for yourself; time to be quiet and listen; time to not be on call or on duty. He will say, "No, I think you've chosen the **ONE**—the thing you need most."

B. How do you find spa time for the interior of your life? I think you're probably competent enough to exterior spa time for Mother's Day. Just make 'em all feel guilty! But only you can give yourself permission for spa-time inside.

1. Maybe the way to start is to ask, "What is the **one thing** for me?" If you were to narrow life down to the **one thing** you would want your life to be about; if you're a Mom, the **one thing** you'd like your children to remember you for—take away from being with you. If you were to have one thing chiseled into the block of marble sitting on your grave that best represents the dash between the dates—what would it be? The second question is—"What is keeping me from the inner spa time--the quiet, restorative space I need inside to **become** a person like that?"

-I doubt if it's more hydro-plane time—or one more skill your kids need, or gourmet meal, or award at word, or a germ-free home. My guess is that the **one thing** is something that comes from a good solid whole interior. From peace, not chaos. In this story, it looks more like sitting at the Lord's feet than it does distracted and worried about **many** things. And it has precisely to do with where you get your marching orders—and whether you're being transformed, or crammed into a mold that someone else created. Someone who doesn't know you or care about you like Jesus does.

-Jesus once said to a group of people who were under pressure to perform,  
**"...Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will**

***give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light (Matt. 11:28-30 NLT).***

-Are you tired? Exhausted? Frazzled? Frustrated? Jesus says, “You know that pressure you’re feeling to perform, to do, to be super-woman, super-Mom, super-employee? ***That’s not from me!*** I give responsibilities—lives—that are doable. That give rest to people’s souls.

2. If you’re going to be able to respond to his call for rest, there are two things you need to figure out. First of all, you need to deal with the “voices.” Like the guy who told me I had big legs. He was actually not a body proportion specialist--just an ignorant farmer who blurted stuff out. And if ***you*** stare at my legs, I’ll come out there and punch your lights out. Really, I’m ***over*** it.

-If you’re trying to please the voices that haunt you—you need to understand; ***you never will!*** Jesus was perfect, and there were voices in his life that said, “Drunkard! Glutton! Demon-possessed! Crazy! Liar!” What kept him going was His ***Heavenly Father’s*** assessment. “That’s ***my*** Son! And he brings delight to my heart!”

-You know, you could leave your cape here with the big “S” on it? Super-Mom of Super-Kids. Superwoman, or Super wife, or super model or super-cook. You could be just an ordinary person with an extraordinary soul and heart.

-But you won’t get that at Mach III, hair on fire, through the sliding window at McDonalds. You get that by ***at His feet*** time.

3. Steven Covey wrote an excellent book a few years ago entitled, ***The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.***

-A lot of you are probably very familiar with this—so bear with me. He talked about 4 quadrants—ranging from ***Urgent and Important*** to ***Non-Urgent and Unimportant.***

-The Q1 urgent and important things scream at you. You get them done—or you lose your job, or starve a child, or run out of gas—stuff like that.

-The Q3 stuff, urgent and unimportant, range from your spouses demand that you cook his favorite dish to your tween’s desire to go to the Mall—to the supper dishes.

-The Q4 stuff—is stuff like filing the bills, dusting, golf—you know, ***totally*** unimportant and non-urgent!

- a. Anyone know which quadrant I haven't mentioned so far? It's Q2. Important, but non-urgent. This is the quadrant I think Moms, in particular, tend to put their own needs in. The need to be healthy. The need to rest, be quiet, care for their souls, and replenish their emotional energy. Covey calls it **sharpening the saw**. His point is that you can burn down a lot of unnecessary energy chopping down trees if you never take time to sharpen the saw.

-I.e.? **Spa time!** But more importantly, taking the time to listen to Jesus! Remembering that **God is in your living room!**

- b. Will this happen effortlessly. Like, will Q2 time magically appear? No. Know what I think? I think that there are some things that **seem** urgent and important because they scream at you—but they aren't. And I think that's where secret you're Your kids might think it is; the voice inside may say it is—but it's not.

-I think it gets right down to how often toilets need cleaned, furniture needs dusted, and whether every meal comes out of a dietician's handbook. The question is—are you living to please your potential visitors—or Betty Crocker—or Martha Stewart. Or is your primary plan to live to please God. And then live out your calling at Jesus' feet. That's where the peace is. That's where the spa is.

#### IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. Bill Hybels, a well-known pastor and leader tells the story of how, in some of the sailboat races he's in, he and his crew kind of assess the competition as they're bringing their boats out of the harbor. Some of them clearly are in it for the fun. They've got a Weber grill on the back of the boat, a bunch of people laughing and talking. They realize they forgot the mustard or the beer and go back. Bill says, they assess them as, NF. Not a factor. No competition.

-He describes other sailing competitors as "dangerous." To lighten the boat and go faster, they'll sand their hull too thin, or use sails that are too light. And many times, right in the middle of a race, a wave will split the hull right down the middle, or rip a sail in two. If that happens, they get a DNF. **Did Not Finish.**

-And he would openly admit that the DNF almost applied to him. He was trying to go too fast, and didn't take the need for quietness; space; spa time seriously. And then his life hit the wall. And it took him a few years to recover. He said that the leaders at the church showed him on the charts of the church's health how his hitting the wall affected everyone. There were a lot of people on his boat. Then they said, "Bill, the best gift you can give this church is a healthy, fully devoted to God self."

- B. Moms, women, men—the best gift you can give to the people around you is not all the work you can produce before you keel over or self-implode—but a healthy fully-devoted-to-God self. So. Take the time to do that! Figure out what the **One Thing** is.