

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And welcome to morning prayers. Please stand as you are able for our responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book. Today, we'll be reading Psalm 24 found on page 12. The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.

Congregation:

For he has founded it on the seas, and established it upon the rivers.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?

Congregation:

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

Laurie Sedgwick:

They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation.

Congregation:

Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Lift up your heads, oh gates, and be lifted up oh ancient doors, the king of glory may come in.

Congregation:

Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Lift up your heads, oh gates, and be lifted up, oh ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in.

Congregation:

Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Choir:

(singing).

Alta Mauro:

Good morning, and peace be upon you. May your being alive and present in this moment be a sign that your God shines upon you, and through you, and around you. I'm reading from the holy Bible, the book of Luke, 10:38-42. "As they traveled along, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary who sat at the Lord's feet, listening to his message. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations to be made. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me." "Martha, Martha," the Lord replied, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is required. Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her." May God add a blessing to the reading, and the hearing, and the contemplating, and the doing of his word.

Imagine knowing that Jesus was coming to visit, coming to the very home where you laid your head at night, busied about each day. Imagine too, knowing as Martha must have, that you would be judged by how gratefully you welcomed both strangers and your savior into your humble home. Side glances at the way the food is prepared, the quality and quantity of the food. The way the house is kept up. How quickly the dishes are cleared and cleaned. This is indeed a Martha world. For us, there are classes to take and teach, friendships to make and maintain, families and communities to make proud. Martha burdens may feel particularly familiar to those with young children and/or parents to care for. There are dinners to make, diapers to change, the administrative tasks of life.

Pick up and drop off, pick up and drop off, pick up and drop off. The days are long, but the years are short. This is indeed a Martha world. Imagine knowing that Jesus was coming, but this time I invite you to imagine being married. Could you be bold enough, as this woman was to assume your self worthy of such a closeness with Jesus? Would you be wise enough to ignore all else and sit at Jesus's feet? Martha opened her house. Mary opened her heart. Martha, we imagine, tended to all the guests with care. Mary focused in on the only one who mattered. Martha prepared for the occasion of Jesus's visit; Mary prepared for the revelation of God's presence. Martha provided what we can only imagine was a beautiful, nutritious meal, but it was Mary who was nourished. This is indeed a Martha world.

There will always be tasks on a list. There will always be others judging the ways that you approach those tasks. There is certainly some Martha-ing to be done as we move through this semester, this academic year, indeed this life. Not only is it more widely acceptable to be Martha, I think it may also be easier to be frazzled, a frazzled, performative Martha, than it is to be a relaxed, focused, principled Mary. Contemporary American life breeds Marthas, facilitates and rewards Martha-ness, and fails to identify the badge of honor, busyness, as toxic. It is much less common to be a Mary, prioritizing time with God above time spent toiling for naught. I don't mean to suggest that Martha's hard work was not valuable. Only that as Jesus himself admonished, Mary chose the better part. God has granted us Martha's strength and stamina to approach the hard work required to fulfill our destinies.

My prayer is that he will also give us discernment to recognize those moments of divine presence when he is in the midst of his people, which is always, when he is speaking, which is always, and the boldness and the wisdom to choose the better part. And finally, I pray God's word back to him when he promised that the better part would not be taken away from us. I close with a Bahai prayer. Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the

cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God had been made and his praise glorified. Amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Won't you please stand and let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Let us sing the hymn, In Christ There Is No East Or West, found on page 348 in your Harvard Crimson Hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing).

Laurie Sedgwick:

May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given you. May you be confident knowing you are a child of God, let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love. It is there for each and every one of us. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.