

Steph Grossano:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Steph Grossano:

And welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel.

Our speaker this morning will be Alta Mauro. She is the Associate Dean for Inclusion and Belonging.

Please rise, in body or spirit, as we read responsively Psalm 77.

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God that He may hear me.

Congregation:

In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted.

Steph Grossano:

I think of God and I moan. I meditate and my spirit faints.

Congregation:

Thou dost hold my eyelids from closing; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

Steph Grossano:

I consider the days of old. I remember the years long ago.

Congregation:

I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit.

Steph Grossano:

Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable?

Congregation:

Has His steadfast love forever ceased? Are His promises at an end for all time?

Steph Grossano:

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up his compassion?

Congregation:

And I say, "It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

Steph Grossano:

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord. Yea, I will remember Thy wonders of old.

Congregation:

I will meditate on all Thy works, and muse on Thy mighty deeds.

(singing)

Alta Mauro:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Alta Mauro:

Peace be upon you. May your being alive and present in this moment be a sign that your God shines upon you, around you, and through you. I'm reading from the Holy Bible, the book of Luke, chapter 10, verses 38 through 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 necessary. Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her.'" I ask that God had a blessing to the reading of His word.

Imagine knowing that Jesus was coming to your house, coming to the home where you laid your head every night and busied about each day. Imagine too, knowing as Martha must have, that you would be judged by how gracefully you welcome both strangers and your savior into your humble home. Side glances at the way the house is kept up or not. The quality and quantity of the food, the way it is served, how quickly the dishes are cleared and cleaned. This is indeed a Martha world.

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 of us with young children and/or aging parents to care for. There are dinners to make, diapers to change. 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. This time though, I invite you to imagine being married. Could you be bold enough, as this woman was, to assume yourself worthy of such a closeness to your Lord? Would you be wise enough to ignore all else, and just sit at Jesus's feet, knowing that this is a Martha world? Martha opened her house. Mary opened her heart. Martha, we imagine, tended to all of her guests. Mary focused on the only one who mattered. Martha prepared for the occasion of Jesus' visit. Mary prepared for the revelation of God's presence. Martha provided what we can only imagine was a beautiful, bountiful, 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 said tasks.

There is certainly some Marthaing to be done as we move through this semester, the end of the academic semester, indeed, in life. Not only is it more widely accepted to be Martha, it is, in fact, easier to be a busy frazzled, performative Martha than it is to be a centered, focused, principled Mary. Contemporary US American life breeds Marthas, facilitates and rewards Marthaness, and fails to identify badge of honor Marthaness as toxic. It is much less common to be a Mary. Prioritizing time with

yourself, time with your family, time with your friends, time with God, above time spent toiling away. I don't mean to suggest that Martha's hard work was not valuable. That is the way that many of us are in this room together. 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. A reminder that He has also given to us discernment, should we take it up, 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.

I close with the prayer adapted from the Beatitudes. Dear Lord, make me poor in spirit so I can receive the kingdom of heaven. When I mourn, help me find comfort. Make me meek so that I may inherit the land. Help me to hunger and thirst for righteousness so I may be satisfied. Make me merciful so I may obtain your mercy. Make me pure of heart so I may see you. Help me to make peace so I may be called your child. When I am pursued, persecuted, encircled without or occupied from within, Lord, for righteousness' sake, show me your kingdom. Amen and amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Steph Grossano:

Please rise, in body or spirit, as we pray the Lord's prayer.

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.

Steph Grossano:

And let us sing hymn 36 in your Crimson Harvard hymnal.

(singing)

As we go into this day, may we make more room for the Marys within ourselves. May we offer our presence. May we be open to the revelation of God among us. Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.