**This manuscript is a Summary, for a full expression of this sermon, please download the audio file.**

The modern holiday of Mother's Day was first celebrated in 1908, when Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her mother at St Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia. St Andrew's Methodist Church now holds the International Mother's Day Shrine.[6] Her campaign to make "Mother's Day" a recognised holiday in the United States began in 1905, the year her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis, died. Ann Jarvis had been a peace activist who cared for wounded soldiers on both sides of the American Civil War, and created Mother's Day Work Clubs to address public health issues. Anna Jarvis wanted to honour her mother by continuing the work she started and to set aside a day to honour all mothers because she believed that they were "the person who has done more for you than anyone in the world”.

Mothering Sunday is a holiday celebrated by Catholic and Protestant Christians in some parts of Europe. It falls on the fourth Sunday in Lent, exactly three weeks before Easter Day. Once observed as a day on which people would visit their "mother" church, it has also become an occasion for honouring the mothers of children and giving them presents.[1] It is increasingly being called Mother's Day, although that has always been a secular event quite different from the original Mothering Sunday.[1] In the UK and Ireland, Mothering Sunday is celebrated in the same way as Mother's Day is celebrated elsewhere.

We can use this day to take the time to bring honour, but also to examine our attitudes to women and service.

According to the BBC- "Women still do more housework and childcare than men, especially between the ages of 26 and 35, figures show.

The Office for National Statistics said that, when it came to unpaid chores at home, women were doing almost 40% more than men on average.”- http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-37941191

It still seems that in general during a gathering, women are found preparing and providing food, while men, do less.

Today we look at Jesus interacting in this scenario. To do so, I want to talk about Martha, the woman who found herself in the kitchen.

Luke 10:38-42 As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, “Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.”

But the Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”

**Possible Backgrounds**

"We know little about the background of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. They may have been well-to-do orphans who had the management of their own lives since there is no mention of their parents. Moreover, the eldest of the three, Martha, appeared to be in control of the household.

They seemed to be affluent. They had a house large enough to accommodate many people, as their hospitality to Jesus and his group of friends shows. They appeared to have no occupation. Mary could afford to buy a very expensive perfume called nard. It was a special gift, not an everyday item, but it showed they were people of means.

None of the three appeared to be married. This was unusual in Jewish society, where people were usually married before the age of 20. It may mean that they were quite young, perhaps still in their teens, or that they were on the edge of society, and not acceptable in some way. In any case, they seem to have been young, comparatively well-off, independent, and intelligent."-( http://www.womeninthebible.net/women-bible-old-new-testaments/martha-mary/)

There are however other interpretations of the information given in the Bible, in one "Matthew, Mark and John all agree that our Lord was anointed in Bethany, and Matthew and Mark specify (presuming the same occasion is referred to) that it took place in the house of Simon, the leper. Since Jesus was received into Martha’s house in the Lucan record, and Martha served at the supper in Simon’s house at Bethany during which Mary anointed our Lord, it has been supposed that Martha was the wife (or even the widow) of Simon. The lead she takes on both occasions suggests that she was the elder sister.”- S. S. Smalley

**Preparations**

It is worth considering what preparations you perform for when guests come around to the house, do you clean, tidy, put away. What level of alteration to your normal routine are you prepared to handle to allow your guest comfort?

Ill- It is said the Queen thinks the world smells of paint, the quote was used to point out that everywhere she visits is cleaned up and often freshly painted.

Jesus ministry is not recorded like this. We find him interacting with people on all sorts of levels, and been willing to accept both good and poor hospitality.

We need to understand the act of hospitality is meant to confer protection and honour upon the ones being entertained but also brings honour to the one hosting.

I wonder where you would be in this situation, even given we have had years of been able to read this account and learn from it, how many of us would fall into the same trap as Martha?

"The problem with Martha is not that she is busy serving and providing hospitality. Certainly, Jesus commends this kind of service to the neighbour many times, notably in the parable of the Good Samaritan that immediately precedes the story of Mary and Martha. The problem with Martha is not her serving, but rather that she is worried and distracted. The word translated “distracted” in verse 40, periespato, has the connotation of being pulled or dragged in different directions."

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1723>

Have we been there?, Have we found ourselves doing some service, in the kitchen, in the background, maybe your always the first around and last to leave, and at times we find that we become, lets say, disillusioned wth others because of what we perceive as lack of commitment to helping the general good.

If only we could get someone to redress the balance to bring a bit of fairness to the order of things, and who better than the object of their focus, Jesus.

The issue becomes two-fold. First, Martha is by passing the social order, instead of discussing things with her sister, she goes straight to Jesus. This may be because she was unable to get the attention of Mary, so instead, she addresses Jesus directly. She now places her guest in a tricky situation. "Consider Martha’s situation. She received Jesus into her home and then neglected Him as she prepared an elaborate meal that He did not need! Certainly, a meal was in order, but what we do with Christ is far more important than what we do for Christ. Again, it is not an either/or situation; it is a matter of balance.”- Warren W. Wiersbe

Martha was out of balance, she finds herself in the kitchen, and is not happy with the situation, like may others around the world, the unfairness of the situation over dominates the spiritual wisdom, which would say God takes priority.

Ill- Have you hosted a party and ended up spending most of the time in the kitchen? It’s why the best parties have food prepared and easily served. For this allows the host and those being hosted to interact.

**Status Quo**

Jesus’ answer now well known was radical and unexpected. Luke records it as part of his steps of discipleship. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus tells the tale of the “Good Samaritan”, if nothing else we can gather practical serving is a noble expression of faith in God. Jesus now challenges the status quo.

For a variety of reason, Jewish culture had separated the sexes. Men learnt in one manner, women another, and like many cultures today, spending time with members of the opposite sex who were not direct family, often caused controversy. Jesus doesn’t care; he opts to bring to the household of two women a group of travelling men. This is not the end. Once again, in this culture, the idea of “sitting at the feet” of a teacher carries with it, the implicit idea that the one sitting desires to become like the teacher. It is a place of discipleship. One reserved for the men.Mary has chosen to break with custom, she has chosen not to prepare food, but instead to cross the cultural barrier and to learn with the men. This may be more easily accepted today in many parts of the world, but at the time of it’s action was a great statement of Jesus ministry reaching all people’s equally.

Jesus now responds to Martha. He has many options available to him, yet his gentle rebuke of Martha is two-fold. First, he repeats her name, a way of gently correcting her. Then he goes to point out the Mary has chosen the better way.

**Good, Better, and Best**.- Jesus confirms Mary’s choice is better than Martha’s, and that he won’t stop her having the best.

Jesus comes that we should live life and have it to the full, he wants us to have the best, and he knows what the best if for us.

So what is it, what did Mary have the Martha did not, are we all to drop everything and merely sit, should we contemplate ourselves into starvation?

You see the actions, sitting and listening is not better than serving in the kitchen, but the attitude behind it is?

Martha is being rebuked because she has found herself in the kitchen and yet is unhappy in the fact; she is not settled, and therefore her service fails to bring God the honour it could!

Mary is commended, not for listening to Jesus per se, but for finding the right attitude of heart to her choice of actions. She is willing to suffer social taboo and censure so she can follow God’s heart for her. Mary has “found" herself

**Finding the Lost**

Jesus tells us that he comes to find the lost, in many ways what is needed is for the lost to understand what being “found" looks like

It’s a matter of heart and peace, what does Jesus have you do, who are you in the Kingdom of God?

Have you “found" yourself?

This is not an issue of Gender, or is it an issue of peace within calling?

"Few things are as damaging to the Christian life as trying to work for Christ without taking the time to commune with Christ”- Warren W. Wiersbe,

Examine our lives, what did the early church fathers perform, "The Examen "a devotional exercise involving reflection on and moral evaluation of one's thoughts and conduct, typically performed on a daily basis.”

Martha is lost in the busyness of life, thankfully Jesus helps her to be found.

To discover this answer we need to look at our next passage.

John 12:1-3

Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. A dinner was prepared in Jesus’ honour. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.

**Sacred**

We now find a very different Martha, she is still in the kitchen, but no word of complaint. Mary still crosses social boundaries, performing an intimate act, that of anointing Jesus' feet and cleaning him with her hair.

In this scene, we step into the sacred. It is, post the resurrection of Lazarus, the household has been through much emotional time, and yet through it, they now have an understanding of who Jesus is, what he is capable of, and one could argue, the foresight of what he is about to do to make all this possible.

Before and After- Found in the resurrection. Martha has been found in the process of the resurrection of her brother.

In this sacredness, Martha serves as a deacon and Mary as a priest!

**Harmony**

We find that they now have a harmony between the family and Christ, Harmony between the two sisters ( and Lazarus), both are happy with what the other is doing.

"It seems evident that the Lord wants each of us to imitate Mary in our worship and Martha in our work. Blessed are the balanced!" Warren W. Wiersbe

"Then what is God’s alternative? If we aren’t to grow by self-effort, how do we grow? Jesus’ answer comes as we see Him help the disciples develop an attitude, not of activism, but of dependence.” -Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards

**Satisfaction**

So finally Martha is at peace, she has found satisfaction, she has "found herself”, in the kitchen.

So we need to put questions to our lives

What is it that Jesus asks us, what are his requests for us on our lives, how much are we “doing” in his name which has little to connect with his leading?

Discipleship-moving from Busyness (activity for active's sake) towards the Sacred (understanding Christ in our lives, and ours in His), Harmony (being in agreement with the different calling of others by Jesus), Satisfaction( being comfortable with our calling in Christ, whatever it might be)