



## Grain

"I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe." Dr. Martin Luther

## Field

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42 there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

## Thoughts

What is the better part? Prayer and contemplation? Avoidance of serving others? "The better part" in last week's Gospel lesson about the Good Samaritan was in action. Both stories, however, take us on a journey of following how we are moved by God and our conscience in ways that we and our cultures don't always expect.

For the story of Mary and Martha, I recall some history from the 1800's that a Quaker friend, Rosalie Wahl, God rest her wonderful soul, taught me. She shared the story of when Susan B Anthony's grandfather first heard her talk about women's right to vote to a crowd inside a Methodist church. Her grandfather walked up to her afterwards, and what do you think this elderly 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century fellow had to say? "That was a mighty fine speech, Susan." I thought Rosalie was going to say he grunted, "Sit down and act like a lady?"

Haven't all of us, of whatever gender, been told to pipe down for uttering words far less radical than Susan B did for her time? Even with supportive family, what gave Susan B the confidence to speak up during her period in history? Rosalie pointed out that Susan B was raised Quaker at a time when men and women were separated during their prayer meetings because it was believed that women would be too shy about speaking out in the presence of men, and it was a sin to not follow the spirit when moved to speak or act or not to. In most of our religious traditions, we value following our conscience but I think Quakers focus on acting from their conscience as adamantly as Lutherans preach about grace. We can be reminded of aspects of our own faith learning of the spiritual emphases in other traditions.

In the Gospel lesson, Mary was not fulfilling her role. Instead she responded to being moved to remain still at Jesus' feet the way a male student would sit with his rabbi mentor. "Mary has chosen the better part." Jesus didn't say this to diminish Martha, but to open her mind. Such grace. Before, Martha had no idea she had the choice to sit at Jesus' feet as his disciple or how she or Mary were being moved on a deeper level. What would be next for Martha? What's next for you? Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Cindy