**9 Pentecost, July 21, 2013, Amos 8: 1-12; Ps 52; Col 1: 15-28; Luke 10:38-42; The Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

I was waiting and waiting in line at the BP station. We had no milk or eggs at home, so while Jim was at the gas pump I was waiting to pay at the check stand. In front of me was a middle aged man and two teen agers with their arms full of yummy junk food. Then a middle aged woman joined in the levity, and brought a few other items to add to the pile. I overheard them all talking in an animated way with the clerk about what they were going out to do on the lake today. After an eternity, they completed their purchase, and instead of moving out of the way so I could put down and pay for my items -- the clerk came out from behind the counter and one-by-one hugged each of them. They called the clerk ma or grandma as they left! It was finally my turn. The clerk looked at me nervously saying sincerely, "**I am so sorry you had to wait so long!"** What was I to say and do after this long wait? I had a choice. Why did the clerk feel she had to apologize? She apologized because we live in a culture of people in a hurry, of people who don't treat clerks as real people of value. She apologized because she wanted to keep her job. The choice of how I reacted had to do with what I value in life, with my priorities.

In our Gospel today, we see two people with a choice of how to react in a situation. The Gospel is a true story about when Jesus came to Mary and Martha's home for a meal. Mary and Martha were the sisters of Jesus' friend Lazarus. They knew Jesus, the great healer and teacher and miracle worker: the long awaited Messiah. It was a huge honor for them to host Him for a meal in their home. Meal preparation back then was a huge deal; it took much longer compared to now with our modern conveniences. There is nothing wrong with spending time preparing to host an exceptional friend! Both Martha and Mary were good, faithful, devout Christian women, and on this day Martha's focus was on hospitality. Jesus uses this situation as a teaching moment. He is not discounting the importance of service or good hospitality, or pitting two sisters against each other, but rather He is helping us set our priorities. Jesus knows we have a choice about how to spend our time, and how our decisions about time reflect our values. Jesus sits down and shares His teachings, His wisdom, His prayer, His friendship, His caring. We see Mary accept the invitation to sit and listen, and Martha resists the invitation. He says, ***"Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by any things; there is need of only one thing."*** We, like Martha, can get so swept up in doing things that we miss out on "***the better part***." The better part is Jesus: choosing to take the time to connect to Jesus' pipeline of love, the benefits of which will come out everywhere in our lives. As St. Paul stated it in our reading from Galatians this morning, "***He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together."*** Jesus helped us see our priorities in the GREAT Commandment: "***Love the Lord your Go with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.. and...love your neighbor as yourself***."

A busy young father, Trent, had worked hard to earn enough to buy a house and provide well for his family. In fact he had two jobs. Care of his home and yard was really important to Trent -- he wanted his friends and neighbors to look at their place and be impressed by how well kept it was. Because of Trent's jobs, there was little extra time in his week -- but in the summer, much of that extra time was taken up in yard work. That lawn needed to be mowed, those weeds pulled. Trent always made time to mow the grass. His wife was real good with the kids, but she and the kids were frustrated about how little time Trent had for them. One day, Trent's wife came and stood in front of the roaring lawn mower with her arms crossed; he had to shut it off, and was not happy about this. She said seven simple words to him that day, words that stuck to him for many years afterwards: **"What are we raising: grass or kids?"** If Trent had spent a few minutes each day with Jesus, he would have made other choices about his time, he would have allowed the grass to grow longer now and then so he could spend more time with his kids. Yes, Jesus divine love flows to us, in us when we spend time with Him. You have choices of how to spend your time every day. Whether we are young or old, we are busy people. Do we set aside the time for the One who is in our midst who loves us so: the King of Kings, our Savior?

Recently I read an article in Christian Century magazine entitled *Solitude*, by a person who went on a silent retreat at a monastery. She wrote after her retreat about how difficult it was to remain still and be with God, even in this context where the whole purpose of the retreat was quiet time with God! She said she was constantly tempted to "do" things, she was out of practice "being" with Jesus.

Ok, back to the BP station. I had a choice of how to react to the clerk, who was apologizing to me. I, and another woman behind me, told her to stop apologizing and appreciate all that love her family had for her. We told her that it was well worth the wait, in light of all that love flowing around. Having the patience to make the choice to react in the way Jesus would have us do is not easy, for left to our own devices we don't react Jesus' way. Time spent with Jesus gives us the strength to let divine love flow, and puts our choices and our schedule into perspective. Jesus is here, waiting patiently for us -- like he waited for Martha that day. All those other things press upon us, have deadlines or are fixed in our schedules--Jesus is not in our schedule, is not pressing upon us for our attention.

Each day, claim a time for Jesus -- some call it "quiet time." It doesn't have to be at the same time each day, although some people remember better if they keep it at the same time. Even ten minutes is enough; you can be sitting or standing or walking. Begin by taking a deep breath, and say a quick prayer letting the Lord you are listening. Then, be with God. You can read the Bible in this time, or write a prayer to God in your journal. As stated in our Amos reading this morning, ***"seek the word of the Lord."***

Claim a window of time to be still with Jesus. Listening is the pipe through which divine love flows, a centering on Jesus who said, "***you are worried and distracted by many things; there*** is ***need of only one thing...chose the better part, which will not be taken away from you.*** Amen.