

Apart from ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING  
Mother's Day Message by Patrice Ruble

Today we honor our mothers along with all the women in our lives. What women have nurtured and guided you? Were there women in your life that stood by you, gave you support or influenced your decisions? Perhaps there are women in your life that bring laughter to your day, comfort when you cry or know the real you. My best friend lives in Canada. My husband and I met Jane and Collin on our mutual honeymoons almost 38 years ago. Our children are like brothers and sisters to each other. Their home is my home, in fact I helped build it. We laugh uncontrollably and have cried inconsolably as well. Her husband, led the memorial service when my husband passed away. They are the 2 people I share his memory with the most. They are also 2 of the few people in my life that have had a substantial impact throughout my life on my relationship with Jesus. Then there's my sister in law Mary. She's younger than me but she is the one I go to for advice and direction most of the time. Her daughters, Sosse and Lily, are like my daughters. I have always been a part of their lives, but during covid they were exceptional. I never felt alone because Mary told me their home was my home without hesitation. She is always there when I have needed someone and her wisdom and generosity mean the world to me. I also have 2 cousins that are particularly special to me. One on my mother's side, Claudia and one on my father's side, Annette. They keep me in the family loop so I know what's going on. They're better and more reliable than any news source. We share joy, sorrow, fears, concerns, laughter and memories. Annette listens to me scream when I can't hold it in anymore. We share life. They're like the older and younger sister I didn't have. What women have been an integral part of your life? Do you pray for them, ask God how you can serve them rather than always being served by them or maybe today you can just call them up or turn to them and say thank you for being a part of my life. I couldn't, wouldn't do it without you.

## **PRAYER**

From the gospel of Luke Chapter 10 Verses 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, do you not care? 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, “Martha, 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.”

This story of Jesus’ good friends in Bethany is **not** about admonishing Martha for serving. It is about where Martha’s priorities are especially since she is worried and upset and frankly losing it because her sister is doing nothing in her estimation. Martha, somewhat like Peter, is impulsive and short tempered but also very practical. Considering the time period and culture she lived in, she was a rare example of a woman. She ran her own household and was a generous and hospitable woman. There was a reason Jesus was comfortable in Bethany. Martha extended the invitation to Him to come into her home. She welcomed Him many times and He probably felt at home there.

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”

Martha is trying to make everything perfect for Jesus. In the midst of all there is to do she becomes frustrated and expresses herself to Jesus asking if He even cares and would He please do something to help. Another time Jesus was asked if he cared was in Mark 4:35-40. This comes after a long day of Jesus teaching to the crowds:

As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.” So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?” When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Peace! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them. “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Jesus more than cares, He unconditionally loves us. And He is in full control of every situation. Jesus is calling us to lean into Him. To not succumb to our emotions and fears but to lay them at His feet and trust He knows what He’s doing. He is telling us He is in control not the wind or the waves or the pilaf cooking on the stove. In our distress we need to be at His feet.

Like Martha my mother was a woman unique to her time and a servant to all those she loved. She was an outstanding cook. When my father's customers or growers came to Fresno he brought them home for a gourmet meal they never forgot. She made everyone feel welcome and went out of her way to also make them feel special and recognized as an individual. She was brilliant, too. Top of her class at Fresno High she could have easily attended a university but her father would have never supported such an idea. Instead she was a voracious learner of everything. She was well rounded by asking questions, reading and experiencing whenever she could. My love of traveling comes from her. Not just going to a place but learning about it before you go, seeking out what is local and unique and pushing yourself to take an adventure that might not be completely within your comfort zone.

These qualities are similar to Martha's. Again, Martha was not admonished by Jesus for serving and being a unique woman of her time. Similar to my mother that was her gift.

From the story of Ruth Chapter 1 Verses 14-18

But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi. "Look," Naomi said to her, "your sister in law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same." But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!" When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

My mother was a true peacemaker and took the brunt of a lot of family discourse. Not only in her own family but the Baloian family as well. She was always gentle and kind to everyone. She was someone anyone could and did confide in. And if you had a question, she had the answer. She always delivered wisdom in frankness with love. Although she did not leave her own family as Ruth did. My mother made the Baloian family her own because it was my father's family. She worked along side him whenever necessary or stepped in wherever there was need. While my father's attention was always at work our household was completely on her shoulders.

I was raised in a Christian home and always considered myself a Christian because I believed in God and Jesus. But I was a prodigal for a large portion of my life from my heavenly father. My mother was relentless to remind me of what

I should be doing, where my focus should be and why I was making poor choices. When I finally realized the error of my ways how she raised me, what she taught me and the examples she set were instrumental in putting my feet on Christ's path. Or as she would say choosing to go through the right door.

In remembrance of my mother and all the women in my life and yours Proverbs  
31 Verses 10-31

An excellent wife who can find?

She is far more precious than jewels.

<sup>11</sup> The heart of her husband trusts in her,  
and he will have no lack of gain.

<sup>12</sup> She does him good, and not harm,  
all the days of her life.

<sup>13</sup> She seeks wool and flax,  
and works with willing hands.

<sup>14</sup> She is like the ships of the merchant;  
she brings her food from afar.

<sup>15</sup> She rises while it is yet night  
and provides food for her household  
and portions for her maidens.

<sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it;  
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

<sup>17</sup> She dresses herself<sup>g</sup> with strength  
and makes her arms strong.

<sup>18</sup> She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.  
Her lamp does not go out at night.

<sup>19</sup> She puts her hands to the distaff, (DIS STAFF)  
and her hands hold the spindle.

<sup>20</sup> She opens her hand to the poor  
and reaches out her hands to the needy.

<sup>21</sup> She is not afraid of snow for her household,  
for all her household are clothed in scarlet  
She makes bed coverings for herself;  
her clothing is fine linen and purple.

<sup>23</sup> Her husband is known in the gates  
when he sits among the elders of the land.

<sup>24</sup> She makes linen garments and sells them;

- she delivers sashes to the merchant.
- <sup>25</sup> Strength and dignity are her clothing,  
and she laughs at the time to come.
- <sup>26</sup> She opens her mouth with wisdom,  
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
- <sup>27</sup> She looks well to the ways of her household  
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- <sup>28</sup> Her children rise up and call her blessed;  
her husband also, and he praises her:
- <sup>29</sup> "Many women have done excellently,  
but you surpass them all."
- <sup>30</sup> Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,  
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
- <sup>31</sup> Give her of the fruit of her hands,  
and let her works praise her in the gates.

My mother was Martha, Ruth and far more precious than jewels.

"There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

The message is about getting our priorities straight which we find at the feet of Jesus. And WE means women and men. Remember, with Jesus we all count and His message is for everyone. Without spending time with Jesus, without being fed and taught by Jesus, without the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives any service we are performing, would not be centered on Him. And when it is not centered on Him it is most likely centered on ourselves which then is not serving Jesus

In John 12 Verses 1-3 we again find Mary at the feet of Jesus.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

At the feet of Jesus, what a beautiful image. Mary, like Martha, was unique for her time as well. Sitting at the feet of Jesus was the posture a disciple would take. One being taught. A woman in a man's world, this was scandalous. Even more scandalous was when she let down her hair to wipe Jesus' feet. She was expressing her devotion to Him by treating Him as a valued treasure even though it was improper for a woman to let their hair down in public. But Mary had no boundaries when it came to showing devotion and worshipping Jesus. Just as she had no boundaries sitting at His feet to be taught and fed.

One of few people in my life that demonstrate this lack of boundaries with Jesus is my daughter Megan. Instead of the parent being the teacher the child is in this case. She accepted Jesus right here at the Pilgrim Sunday School over 20 years ago. Since then I have watched her follow Christ in every aspect of her life. Being in the entertainment industry is usually a far cry from a bible study but she prays before every performance she is in and invites everyone and anyone in the cast and crew to join. Sometimes there are many and sometimes there are few but she is consistent and faithful. Her faith is not hidden or only brought out at church or with her Christian friends. When I realized the prodigal in me needed to find truth, peace and a purpose she was there to help. She did not proselytize, she knew I believed she just knew I wasn't following. She didn't gently take me by the hand either which is better for me to get the point across. As she is with everyone she was honest and forthright and always showed me it's all about Jesus.

The ONE THING that is important is to abide with Jesus as a disciple does. To be attentive to Him and to glory in His presence. This is serving Him and in this way we can bear fruit by then serving others as we are called to. Yet apart from Him we can do nothing. Our service is empty if we have not taken the time to hear from Him and recognize His will for us. Apart from Him we are anxious, troubled, worried and distracted. This world calls us to being the hamster on the spinning wheel. I can't be the only one that feels this way. But His world, the world Jesus died for to give to us is purposeful, gentle, kind and loving because we have received clarity, wisdom, strength and love from Him.

From John 15 verses 4-5

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them will produce much fruit. For apart from me YOU CAN DO NOTHING.

My husband and his brothers grafted grapes and tree fruit. When I was trying to impress him in the first few years I went along and helped. I have always been fascinated by science. What a wondrous and artistic God we have who created this world. When you graft it is important that you have the best root stock as the base for your plant, the vine. Then whatever you graft onto it, the branch, will flourish and produce good fruit while the stock, the vine, remains strong and healthy. The branches draw upon that root stock and are fed. When you graft you carefully cut the branch to expose all the inside parts of the branch so it can be matched up exactly with the inside parts of the vine. They are sealed together, similar to a tongue in groove board construction. That way the seal is strong and the branch will become part of the vine.

Without Jesus we can do nothing.