

# THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



1874 - 2014

Published by **The First Baptist Church of Los Angeles**

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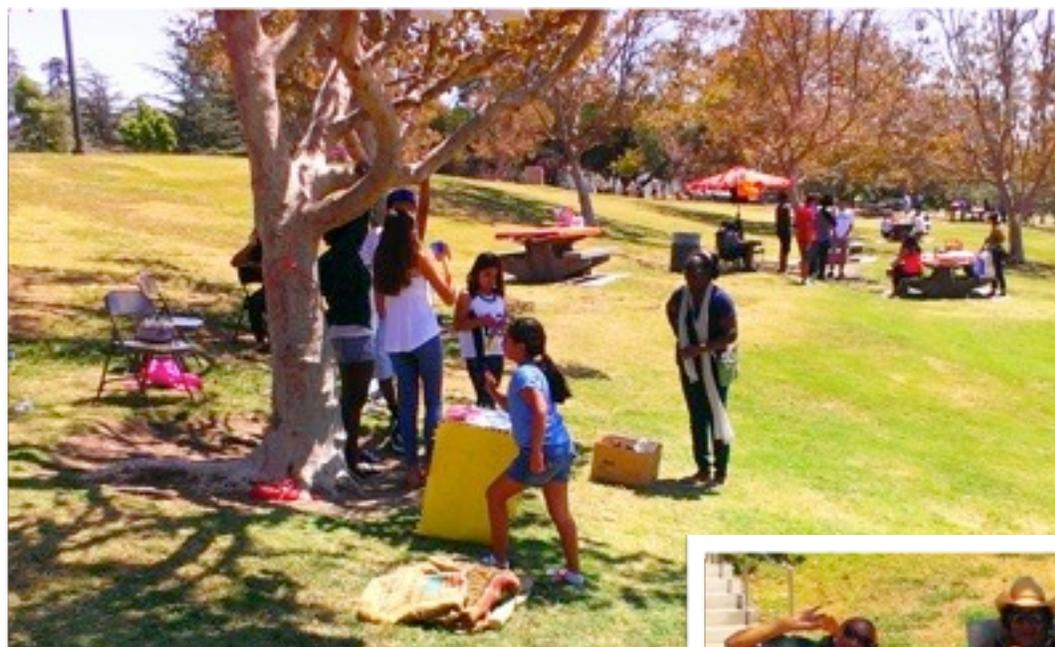
Volume LXXXII

No. 19

SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

**An American Baptist Congregation Making God's Love Known in Los Angeles Since 1874**  
**International • Intercultural • Ecumenical**

## ALL-CHURCH PICNIC PHOTO ALBUM



Photos by Ann Brodie

**August 24, 2014**

**Held at Pan Pacific Park in Los Angeles**

*A big thank you to all who helped and worked so hard to make the Picnic a success.*



## SERMON: "HAVING A MARY HEART IN A MARTHA WORLD, PART I"

I would like to begin a three part message based on the best selling book, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life* by Joanna Weaver. The book chronicles the lives of two women, two sisters, Mary and Martha making choices between dealing with the busyness and demands of life and developing intimacy with God – developing a relationship with him – drawing close to the Lord, deepening their devotion, and strengthening their service with less stress and greater joy. Do you have a challenge with balancing work and worship?



### NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **September 29, 2014**. Material and articles for the September 29<sup>th</sup> issue should **arrive** in the church office two weeks before publication, or no later than **9:00 a.m. on September 15<sup>th</sup>**.

### THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

(USPS 194-440) •

Annual Subscription Rate: • \$10.00 per year

Published biweekly by First Baptist Church, 760 South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90005. PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First Baptist Church NEWS, 760 South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles, California, 90005.

All copy for the NEWS should be typed or written plainly and reach the Church Office no later than **9:00 a.m.**

**MONDAY, two weeks prior** to publication.

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As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet listening to what he said but Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

**I. The first question I want to ask today is, Who are you? Are you Mary or Martha?** Mary is contemplative; Martha is active. Mary is about being; Martha is about doing. Martha thought she was going to serve Jesus the good portion, but Mary chose the good portion. Jesus is our good portion that will never be taken away. A meal is temporary, but time with Jesus is a gift that lasts forever.

We live in a Martha world; we're troubled, we're anxious, and we're distracted. But God built this world to be a Mary world with Martha moments. When sin entered the world, it turned into a Martha world in which we have to fight for Mary moments. The rhythm of our day is supposed to be Mary first, then Martha. Spend time with Jesus, then get stuff done. Worship like Mary, then work like Martha. Worship God before you work so that you can worship God in your work. We want Mary's heart and Martha's hands.

### II. God made us unique – We are not wired the same way

What we can see from this short story in the Gospel of Luke is that Martha and Mary were not wired the same way. They had different temperaments, different personalities, different priorities. Mary was the more contemplative of the two. She was more laid back than her sister. Martha was more of an activist. She was probably the first-born in the family and she had the classic tendency of the first-born to take charge, and to try to tell others what to do.

Martha was the one who took charge. When Jesus came to visit, Martha took charge and "opened her home to Him" (Luke 10:38). Mary wanted to be with Jesus. Martha wanted to do something special for Jesus. As Weaver notes in the book she wanted to give Jesus a banquet fit for a Messiah.

Martha had a heart for serving. She had the gift of hospitality, which is not a gift to be minimized. It is a tremendous gift. For Martha, life was about serving. It was about doing. Mary, on the other hand, had the tender heart of a worshiper and the inquiring mind of a learner. She wanted nothing more than to sit at the feet of Jesus and to take in every word He spoke. For Mary, life was about being with the Master. It was about spending time with Him.

Meanwhile, Martha was occupied – or pre-occupied – with all the stuff she wanted to do for Jesus. But it was all piling up on her. There was so much to do, and so little time. Think about it. When you open your home you want to show them your best. Say this for Martha: She was a remarkable woman. Aside from the fact that she wasn't married (as far as we know), she was the New Testament version of the vigorous, industrious, much accomplished and greatly to be praised woman of Proverbs 31. Joanna Weaver says she was "the original Martha Stewart" (except for the part about going to jail). She was in perpetual motion, ever busy doing what she thought needed to be done. But busyness, we know, can be a blessing, or it can be a curse. What happened to Martha, and what happens to millions and millions of people today, including Christians, is that in all her busyness, in all her doing, in all her

preparations to make it a special dinner for Jesus, she got distracted and lost sight of what was most important. She was so busy trying to serve Jesus that she ended up neglecting Jesus.

### III. Be careful of distractions or interferences

Distractions are everywhere. The world is full of them. Satan, our great adversary, the enemy of our souls, is an expert in the art of distractions. You can get distracted by all sorts of things which I'm not going to mention. Some of you may be distracted at this moment, thinking about all the things you want to do and all the things you need to do instead of focusing on what God has to say to us today from His Word.

It is not only bad things that become distractions in our lives. Sometimes, like Martha, we get distracted by good things. Making a special dinner for Jesus is a good thing. But Martha allowed the good she wanted to do for Jesus to distract her from God's best on this occasion. Such admirable things as our sense of duty or our desire to serve God can actually distract us from what God Himself desires for us. We become resentful – Look at Martha. Not only was Martha distracted by all the things she was trying to do to honor Jesus, she was also becoming more and more resentful of her sister Mary with every passing moment, Mary was just sitting there at the feet of Jesus chilling, as the youth would say, while she (Martha) had to do everything herself.

But in this moment, we can also become frustrated. Martha's frustration finally reached the boiling point, and she complained to Jesus about being abandoned by her sister. "Tell her to help me!" she implored Him (10:40). She wanted Jesus to get on Mary's case. But that is not what He did. Instead of scolding Mary, Jesus gently corrected Martha. I think you can hear the tenderness and affection in the voice of Jesus as He spoke to Martha. "Martha, Martha," He said, "you are fretting and fussing about so many things" (New English Bible), "when only one thing is really necessary" (10:41-42a).

IV. **Intimacy with Christ** ("Living Room Intimacy" as Joanna Weaver describes it).

Before you decide who you are and who would you rather be, let's ask ourselves another question: How are we connected to Jesus? Where are you? Do you seek the living room intimacy, an intimacy where there is a real hunger for God? A story is told of a woman who was preparing for a dinner party (four course meal) and in the midst of the busyness of cleaning, cooking and preparation, she lost track of time. Somewhere in the middle of the afternoon, she realized that she was hungry and missed lunch. But it was 4pm and the guests would be there at 6pm, but she realized that she had a stash of Snickers bars and so she grabbed a couple of Snickers bars and relaxed in her clean living room. It did the trick and her stomach was not growling anymore and she was able to take a shower and get dressed for the dinner party. It wasn't until she sat down to that wonderful

dinner that she had prepared, that she had worked all day to prepare, that she realized her appetite was gone. The Snickers bar had taken the edge off her hunger and she ended up picking at her plate as she watched everyone one else dig in and enjoy their meal. The Lord showed me that we often fill our lives with spiritual Snickers bars – things like friends, books, shopping. They may be good things, innocent things – but not when they take the edge off our hunger for God.

We feel our lives with so much clutter - our spiritual lives hunger and thirst for His presence and as we feast at his table (at his feet), we get hungrier and thirstier; we want more. Do you have the same hunger for God that Mary had or are you caught up in the performance trap feeling as though you must prove your love to God by doing great things for him? In doing so, we rush past the intimacy of the Living Room to get busy for Him in the kitchen with ministry and "church work."

Perhaps you have known the Lord your whole life and have not found the peace and fulfillment that you have longed for. So you've stepped up the pace, hoping that in offering more service, somehow you will merit more love. You volunteer for everything (sing in the choir, teach Sunday school, etc.) and find yourself staring into the night and wondering if this is all there is. Or perhaps you have withdrawn from service. You've stopped volunteering, stopped saying yes. No one calls anymore. No one asks anymore and frankly you don't want to be asked anymore. You go to church. You go through the motions of worship and return home to the same life of emptiness. Jesus invites us to come and rest in Him (Matt 11:28) in the intimacy of the Living Room and become like Mary.

– Sermon by Norman Bullock, July 13, 2014

## GOD SPEAKS

In languages many –

In accents clear – God speaks

His voice resounds

In the thunderous judgment,

In the healing whisper of love.

Where ears are sensitive,

Where hearts are tuned,

God's voice is heard.

O God of sound and silence

Speak to me today,

Break Thou the sound barrier,

Play harmony in my soul,

Make my life a sounding board –

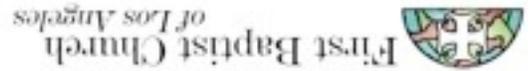
My character a carillon –

To ring forth Thy messages,

Sound forth thy praise.

–Oliver deWolf Cummings  
Associate Minister 1950-1983

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PERIODICAL

SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

## **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2014**

***10:00 a.m.***

Worship in the Sanctuary

**“THINKING OUTSIDE THE PEWS”**

(Please read Acts 2:42-47 in preparation)

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching

***11:30 a.m.***

Church School Classes for All Ages



## **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2014**

***10:00 a.m.***

Worship in the Sanctuary

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching

***11:30 a.m.***

Church School Classes for All Ages

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