

Here is a pop quiz. What is the title of my sermon today? That's right, it is *An answer for stress*. Someone asked me today on the way into worship if a part of the answer included a Martini?

No, it doesn't. While having a Martini might make us feel a little better for the moment, it doesn't really solve the deep down concerns that many of us really face. Do you ever feel stressed? Do you ever feel like you are pushing too hard?

A while back I heard a remarkable story about some men who traveled to Africa for a safari. They were excited about their trip. They were looking forward to getting away. Their safari was going to take them deep into the jungle to hunt big game. It was a place few had ever been.

When they landed in Africa, they discovered that their original guides had backed out of taking them on the trip. There was a day of confusion as the person who met them was trying to figure out what to do.

But the confusion didn't last too long. He found some others from a tribe who lived in the area they were scheduled to go hunt. These tribal members said they would take the hunting crew to that location. Everything was arranged and they would leave the next morning.

The men in the hunting party were anxious to go. They had already lost a couple of days of their hunt.

Bright and early on that first day to leave, the Bushmen were ready to go. They took off traveling fast through the jungle. They traveled all day, walking through the brush. They next morning, they woke up early, again traveling fast and furious, all day long. The third day the same thing. The hunters were excited because at this pace, they would arrive at their destination for the hunt by the next

afternoon, back on schedule. Even though they were tired, they knew they were going to get to hunt soon.

The next morning however, they were surprised when they woke up and discovered the Bushmen were just sitting around relaxing. The leader of the hunters said, "What happened? We have been traveling so fast that we will arrive at our destination today. Why aren't we moving out? What is going on?"

The leader of the bushman said, "We are not traveling today."

"What? What do you mean we are not traveling today? We are almost to our destination. Let's go."

The leader of the bushman said, "We have been traveling so fast, we have been pushing our bodies so hard that now we must stop and let our souls catch up to our bodies."

I love that story. The bushman understood that it is okay to push hard. It is okay to work hard. But our lives need balance. And if all we do is push and push and push and quickly move through life, we run the risk of living without our souls. We run the risk of forgetting who we are.

Do you ever struggle to deal with the stress of living? Do you ever push too hard?

I suspect there are many of us here who are pushing pretty hard. I suspect there are many of us here who are rushing through life so hard, that we aren't giving our souls time to catch up with our bodies. Has that ever happened to you? Is it happening now?

In our scripture for today, Martha is pushing hard. She has welcomed Jesus into the family home. And she is working hard to make sure that everything goes just right. She is doing what is

prescribed in that society for a responsible woman. She is caring for the family. She is caring for her guests.

What do you do that keeps you moving? Why do you do the things you do? Is it to care for your family? Is it to provide the income you need? Is it because of what you were taught growing up?

Most people I know these days work hard. In fact they work too hard. We work so hard that there is little margin in our life. We are working so hard and pushing so fast and we feel like we will never catch up. The difficulty with leading a life that is always pushing, always rushing, always moving, is that we can become angry and resentful real quick.

We become like Martha. As she worked hard, she became more and more frustrated. Because her sister Mary, who was supposed to be helping her in the kitchen, doing the work, was sitting out with the men. She was listening to Jesus. She was learning and taking time to reconnect with the one who gave and gives life. And Martha became so upset, she went to Jesus.

"Look, I am working so hard and my sister is just sitting there. Tell her to get up and do what she is supposed to and get with it to help serve."

Jesus just looked at Martha and said, "Oh Martha. You are working so hard, you have lost sight of what is important. There is really only one thing that matters, it is time with God. Mary has it right today."

We live in a world where people are pushed and stressed. We live in a culture that is working out of fear without taking time to stop and reflect on why we have so much fear. We live in a time where we have given ourselves little time to escape the rat-race. And it is showing.

I believe it is time to give ourselves permission to take a break. I believe it is time to give ourselves some margin. I believe it is time for us to sit in the presence of the God who loves us. Can you find 15 minutes a day to sit in the presence of God?

There is a delightful story that I want to share with you. Helen Montone and her husband adopted a son. They always wanted their son to know that he had been adopted. So from the time he was very young, they explained it to him in a way he could understand.

Helen would say, "I was told that I could not have a baby in my belly and Jesus knew this. Jesus also knew that there was a lady who had a baby in her belly that she could not be a mommy to. From heaven, Jesus saw this baby on the day he was born. Remember we wanted to be a mommy and a daddy and the lady could not be a mommy, And Jesus decided that the baby (that was you) belonged with us. That's how we became a family."

One day on their way home from nursery school, their son asked her if he was born in Jesus' belly. Helen explained that he was not and once again she explained about how they became a family. After driving a while in silence, he said, "*Oh no, Now I remember. I wasn't born in Jesus' belly. I was born in his eyes!*"

I love that story. It reminds me that Jesus wants to give birth to each one of us. Jesus wants to make each one of us whole.

Is your life out of balance? Have you been trying to do too much on your own? Turn to God, turn to trusted friends and let them help you. And through God's grace, allow God to restore you.

Amen