

“The Better Part in a Distracted World”

Luke 10:38–42 | Amos 8:1–12 | Colossians 1:15–28

A Sermon for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Some time ago, I visited a Filipino refugee family whom I had known back in my home country. Life had taken a harsh turn for them—once active members of the community, they had to flee because of threats that made staying no longer safe. Now, they live in a cramped space here in Europe, trying to begin again from almost nothing. When I arrived, the father was quietly fixing a broken table leg, the mother was nursing their newborn, and their teenage daughter smiled as she prepared coffee for me.

While we were catching up, the daughter asked, “Bishop, do you still remember the nights when we used to gather in the chapel and just sing until the lights went out?”

I said yes, of course I remembered. She paused and said, “That was the only time we didn’t worry. That was when it felt like God was with us.” Her words stopped me.

They reminded me that sometimes, amidst our survival, struggle, and service, we forget to sit still in the presence of God. We forget to simply listen.

And that brings us to the Gospel today. Jesus enters the home of Martha and Mary. One is busy with many tasks, the other sits at his feet to listen. When Martha complains, Jesus responds with tenderness—not to shame her, but to invite her: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part.”

This is not a battle between contemplation and action. Jesus is not saying that work is wrong. But he is reminding Martha—and all of us—that our doing must be rooted in being.

Before we rush, organize, fix, and even serve, we must remember to rest in God’s presence. To listen, as Mary did. To be still, not because nothing matters—but because what matters most begins in stillness.

That’s also the cry of Amos. In the first reading, the prophet denounces a society where greed has replaced reverence. People cannot wait for the Sabbath to end so they can go back to selling, cheating, and exploiting. The poor are being bought for a pair of sandals. And God declares: “I will send a famine... not of bread... but of hearing the words of the Lord.”

It’s a frightening thought—a famine of listening. In a noisy world of manipulation, injustice, and constant distraction, the silence of God is not caused by God’s absence—but by our failure to pause and pay attention.

This call to sit, listen, and be present is not only personal—it is also prophetic. Amos doesn't just speak to individuals but to a whole system where greed has overtaken reverence. The poor are sold, the wheat is mixed with sweepings, and no one seems to care. And so God declares again: "I will send a famine—not of bread or water, but of hearing the word of the Lord."

It's a chilling judgment—not just material hunger, but spiritual deafness. A society that no longer listens to the poor eventually becomes unable to hear God.

This is the warning of Amos: when our world becomes too distracted by profit, noise, and self-interest, the ability to hear the truth—to hear God's voice—is lost.

But Paul, in Colossians, gives us a centering hope. He presents Christ as the image of the invisible God, the one in whom all things hold together. This Christ is not distant. He is at the heart of creation and reconciliation. And Paul reminds us that proclaiming Christ is not about frantic activity—but about maturity, wisdom, and faithfulness. He writes: "It is he whom we proclaim... so that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

Christ is not something we simply add into our already busy schedules. Christ is the center, the one who holds all things together—even when the world feels like it's falling apart. Without that center, our work loses its meaning, our activism becomes noise, and our service can become mere exhaustion.

Today's world is much like Martha's kitchen...

There is so much to be done: families to care for, wars to flee, bills to pay, systems to confront. But in the rush to respond, we often forget to listen—not only to God but to one another, to our own hearts, to the cries of those whom society has made invisible.

And so this Sunday's message is not to stop doing. It is to start listening again. To Christ. To the poor. To the wounded earth. To the child who still longs to sing in the chapel, far from fear.

That Filipino family I visited is still struggling—but their faith remains alive, because they remember how to listen. So must we.

Let us not be so distracted—even by good things—that we miss the better part. Let us reclaim stillness not as an escape, but as a holy ground where justice, healing, and faithfulness begin.

In a distracted world, may our listening be an act of resistance, a path to restoration, and a space where Christ still speaks. Amen.