

About ten days ago, when The Elora Singers were gathering for the first day of rehearsals, full of anticipation and enthusiasm, one of the singers arrived early in the church. She was carrying an immense vinyl cargo bag in her hands, and as it was released from the grip in her hands it landed with a thud on the floor. The look of astonishment on my face must have given away the question without me having to even articulate it out loud. “Oh,” she said with a smile on her face, “yes, that’s all the music for the next three weeks!” Again a look of even greater astonishment on my face must have given away the second question that was beginning to emerge in the silence of this rather one way conversation. “Go ahead,” she said, “try lifting it up and see how heavy it is!” I didn’t need to try to lift it. I believed her.

Ah... the burden and weight you have all carried in your bags, in your rucksacks, over your shoulders, in your hearts, over these past days and indeed these past years, to bring exquisite sound and clear voice from the pages of the texts and scores that you have brought with you under your arms and into the choir stalls of this holy space, has satiated our thirst for beauty, and inspired us and moved us to become people who can now live with a greater depth of grace and drink deeply from the well of love. So from the

bottom of our hearts we thank you and all the guest artists and all the volunteers for your commitment, your skills, your gifts that you share with us over these days of The Elora Festival.

You don’t need to be a member of a choir, a volunteer organization, a work place, or a family to appreciate the inevitable tension that is created between two people when *one* person is feeling like they are left to do *all* the work. They are the one left to do *all* the heavy lifting. They are the one left to make it *all* happen.

“Do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work?” The desperate cry from Martha is one that all of us at different times and for different reasons can relate to.

This is a common question to Jesus in the gospels: The workers in the vineyard ask: “Do we, who have borne the heat of the day, get the *same* wage as those who have worked only one hour?”

The disciples ask: “Which one of us is the greatest?”

The mothers of Simon and Andrew ask: “Can our sons sit at your right hand in the kingdom?”

The older brother asks: “I have been with you all this time, and do I not even get a kid goat to celebrate with my friends?”

All of these questions come from a place of feeling that injustice has been done; and the person asking the question feels they are entitled to *more* attention, *greater* reward, or *extra* favour.

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things...” Yes, but someone has to do the work, run the photocopier, make the meals, prepare the flowers, do the accounts, set up the chairs. All of this doesn’t just appear out of no where. It all takes hard work. For those who are involved in running a festival, or leading a church or managing a household, it all takes a LOT of work from people who are largely working invisibly behind the scenes to make all of this happen. They form the foundation for all of this. Martha is probably thinking, “Don’t tell me that I am worried and distracted by many things. None of this would be possible if it weren’t for me.... Tell my sister to get in here and DO something for a change.”

“Martha... there is need for only one thing; and Mary has chosen the better part ... *for HER....and Martha, you have chosen the better part for YOU.*” Mary has a distinct and different role from Martha, which will not be taken from her. Martha has a distinct and different role from Mary, which will not be taken from her.

Find your one thing that you are called to do, and it will not be taken from you. If it is to sing, then sing;

if it is to administer, then administer; if it is to collect the bulletins or polish the brass, then tidy up and clean; recognizing that all of these distinct and necessary roles are united in one goal: to reveal the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations.

And the revealed mystery is this: that Christ, who existed before time, and holds all things together, is the image, the expression, the articulation of the fullness of God who was invisible. And in that expression the God who appeared to Moses in a burning bush, or to Abraham in the stars, or to Jacob in a dream, or to Mary in an angel, has now been fully revealed; and in that revelation those who were feeling the injustice or out on the margins, or alienated and excluded are now all brought in to the heart of God’s very self: *Love*. Even more, God now lives in you so that you may be the hope of glory.

I’m not making this up and it’s not just my personal opinion or belief. Whether we believe it or not, whether we understand it or not, this revealed mystery is an objective reality that is true for all people. That’s what all the apostles are giving a testimony about, and that’s we read this morning. Regardless of our role, our one shared goal is proclaim Christ, that we might present everyone mature in Christ and thus find our peace.