

The high-school age Jesus would have had such fun with our modern day personality profile inventories and job-skills assessment tests.

I can see the clinician reporting to Joseph and Mary: “OK-- he’s the son of the All Powerful God, and a really bright kid—clearly, he’s got propensity for over-achievement issues, and (I’d watch this, if I were you) he’s likely to be a bit of a perfectionist.”

“He’s got great organization skills—he’ll probably develop some amazingly popular and successful business, maybe franchise the carpentry thing you have going, Joseph, live to a ripe old age, and, because he’s the nurturing type, support you two through yours.”

“And if the prophecies are right, he’s got that eternity thing going on, so he’ll be great at planning and time management. Yep, he’s gonna be a real mover and shaker, this son of yours.”

“And with that ‘knows all and sees all’ factor, he could become a really successful multi-tasking efficiency expert.”

Yes, it could have been that we celebrate and pray 2000 years later to the exemplar of organization, time management and multi-tasking efficiency.

But we know in our heart of hearts, in our soul of souls, that, Messiahs, moguls,

mavens of industry, empresses and over-achievers included, it is not mere practical accomplishment that ultimately wins our deepest admiration, our awe, our love.

We’ve known this from as early as we’ve recorded our history.

## Jesus and the “To Do” list

And Luke, in this continuation of last week’s tenth chapter, knew it when he recounts in his Gospel the story of Martha and Mary.

It’s not that Jesus doesn’t appreciate the fact that Martha is working her tush off in the kitchen preparing some fantastic meal for her family and him when he tells her: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and anxious about so many things. Mary has chosen the better part...” In his loving, gentle way he is telling her “Martha, you hard working woman, you, Chill out here! I am not going to be with you forever, nor will your sister, or your brother Lazarus. Just BE with us—that’s what we really need in this precious moment here.”

Scholars speculate that Jesus was not only a devout Jew of the Hasidic tradition, but most likely also a practitioner of Kabbalah, the ancient, mystical branch of Judaism which holds as a major tenet and practice, a

reverence for the intimate presence, and action, of the Almighty in all existence, in all moments, and through all time.

It is perhaps in this spirit of reverence for the presence of God in all experiences that Jesus reminds Martha, so concerned about the practical matters ahead of her in the kitchen,

that she does not open herself to the intimate experience of God sitting there in her living room.

Indeed, Jesus invites Martha to be with HIM, but I think we lose much of the power of this Gospel if we limit Jesus’ invitation to “Hey, don’t miss out on this opportunity to be with ME, you know, the Son of God...”

The broader evidence of Jesus’ full-immersion-in-the-moment life is that he invites Martha to join her sister, Mary, in what the tradition of Buddhism calls the practice of mindfulness: The consciousness of being fully and wholly present wherever we are, whenever we are, with whomever we are. AND, recognizing in that moment, that meeting, the intimate presence of God.

The moments may not seem divine, at all. In fact, they may be the most mundane of all—just as mundane as the sitting room where

the un-agened Mary and Jesus shared their down time.

It may be the breakfast table, where schedules could be coordinated, or, in a more mindful way, hugs and “you are in my heart now and I can’t wait ‘til you’re home tonight” endearments could be offered. Or the dinner table, where “Did we get it all done today” declarations could be traded for the less head-driven, more heartfelt “What’s really happening in your life?” conversation.

And, perhaps most intimately, as we send our loved ones off to sleep, when we offer, more than a Good Night wish, an authentic “Do you know that you are the beloved of God, and that I see that divine spark in you every time I think of you?”

Our music this week focuses on Jesus’ invitation that we exchange our “To Do” list for a “To be Present” list.

We open our prayer with “I Heard the Voice of Jesus,” a simple lyric of invitation set to an ancient English tune arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Our Psalm, “They Who Do Justice” reminds us of how, through compassion and care for each other and

all creation, we translate God’s intimate presence in us into a universal presence in the world.

As we prepare the gifts for Eucharist we sing the plaintive “Only This I want, but to know the Lord.”

As we receive the Eucharist, the tangible Presence of God, we pray Dan Schutte’s “Here I am, Lord” and Bernadette Farrell’s “Restless is the heart.”

And as we send ourselves off to bring the Presence of God to the World, we sing the morning-to-evening story told in “Lord of All Hopefulness.”

May the readings and music of this Sunday teach us to be a people committed to choosing the better part—“doing” less, but “being” more. Being the parent, the child, the sibling, the lover, the boss, the co-worker who asks, as we wake each morning: “Who is it today who might need me to be most fully present, most fully there for them this day?”