“***Let us love NOT with word or speech, but with action and in truth.” [[1]](#footnote-1)***  These were the biblical words of healing and reconciliation taken from the Letter of 1st John, that President Obama offered to all Americans during this week’s Memorial Service of those police officers who were gun-down in Dallas, TX two weeks ago. It was not an easy speech to make in light of human tragedy, it is not easy to talk about LOVE, but that’s exactly what the remedy of hate is – LOVE.

Our nation is still in mourning and our nation and even our churches are as polarized and divisive with the ever-growing tensions among different races, cultures, and faiths. The world is NOT what it used to be and what we would like to be, as evident with the series of violence, the state of terror and the constant vigilance of the next evil attack.

Even professional athletes took the center stage before this past Wednesday’s ESPY award ceremony, declaring to the public that “enough is enough”. We must put an end to these non-sense and violence. Instead of hateful words and rhetoric, we must take action to restore hope, peace, and love with our actions – actions that lead to change and not to perpetuate the problems. Actions that must begin with ourselves, by examining ourselves in ways that we must change and extending our grace and humility towards other in order to make a difference! “***We must love not with word or speech, but with action and in truth.”***

Last week, we read about how Jesus was asked by a young lawyer about ***What must he do in order to inherit eternal life?*** Remember what Jesus’s response was? He said, **“*You must LOVE the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and [last but not least] LOVE your neighbor as yourself.”*** We focused on two particular words – **LOVE** and **ALL**. What do we mean when we say “we LOVE someone” and with “ALL” of our hearts, soul, mind and strength?

Jesus went on to illustrate what he meant by **LOVE** and **ALL** with the telling of the Good Samaritan parable. He gave us a charge (or more of a challenge) to “Go and Do Likewise” like what the Samaritan did who went out of his way to **build bridges instead of walls**, **us instead of them**, and to **bind up the wounds and the brokenness in this world**.

So often we get ourselves caught up and busy with our own life activities while trying to do what we think were the right things. Well, God has challenged us to do just that….to “love” someone with the same level as we demonstrate our love to our God with “all” of our hearts, souls, strengths, and minds. Often times we’ve neglected to “check-in” with God first before we take actions on our parts. We’ve made irrational decisions that are not pleasing to God’s sight. We’ve drawn our attentions upon ourselves and our accomplishments while failing to acknowledge what God is actively doing in our lives.

This brings us to our story for today, immediately after Jesus had told the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus arrived at the home of two of his closest friends – Mary and Martha. Upon Jesus’s arrival, Martha found herself busy in the kitchen and making some final preparation. While Martha was a busy-body running around, her younger sister – Mary, on the other hand was just sitting and chilling with Jesus, and listening to what Jesus had to say. As she was “distracted” and occupied by many other things, Martha came over to Jesus and started her complaints about her sister for not doing her share of the work in welcoming their guests.

This Mary-Martha syndrome occurs to every one of us, individually or as a church. We often find ourselves busy Doing, planning for the next event, special dinners or the BBQ while neglecting to soak in and embrace God’s presence to the fullest, when we get ourselves so caught up busy with activities. We’ve failed to respond appropriately in action and in truth.

When it comes to balancing our spiritual health in ministry, one question that often comes to our mind is this: ***Who do we ultimately serve? ourselves or others?*** Martha believes that she was serving Jesus by keeping herself busy and being a gracious host. She was just making sure that her out-of-town guest was well taken care of and properly fed. That’s her ministry through her action and service. That’s how she expresses her love for Jesus.

Mary, on the other hand chose to spend some quality time with her guest, patiently listening and communicating. Jesus commended Mary’s attentiveness to his teaching and rebuked Martha for her busyness in getting herself so caught up with things that need to be done, which have become a form of “distraction” and “worry” for Martha.[[2]](#footnote-2)

As a Japanese Proverb says, *“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”* Both action and vision must go hand-in-hand. **Real ministry takes place when we position ourselves with one foot at the cross and the other at the door.** It’s not enough that we spend most of our times “listening” and “hearing” the Word, but we do not translate it into action and be the “doers” of the Word. Conversely, it’s also not enough that we channel much of our energy on the “doing” part but not enough time listening and meditating upon God’s Word to us. There needs to be a balance of both. **God is our spiritual well that we must keep coming back in order to draw water from and to quench our spiritual thirst.**

Like Mary, at times we may find ourselves positioned at the foot of the cross, while listening and praying for the Word of God to be made relevant and prompted us into actions. Or at times we might be like Martha, by positioning ourselves at door, standing ready and eager to do whatever that need to be done, to be sent out by God as God’s agents and ambassadors in this world. We need to be both Mary and Martha at the same time.

Through our story with Mary and Martha today, Jesus implies that **there is a subtle distinction between the “hearing” and “doing” of the WORD**, **that we must honor and love God not only in Word and in Speech, but with Action and in Truth.** When Jesus declared that there’s only one thing we need and Mary has chosen the better part, he didn’t mean that we should neglect the “doing” part. The hearing and doing parts are equally as important. Our response to the Word through our actions is the by-product upon hearing and the listening of the Word.

**God remains faithful to God’s people whether we are the hearers or the doers of God’s WORD.** For all you Martha out there, there’s also a Mary in you as well and vice versa. This Martha-Mary syndrome presents a “reality check” of where we stand in terms of our spiritual priorities and how we share our gifts and talents, both individually or collectively with others. As Christ’s disciples, we have an obligation to fulfill God’s mission and activities here on earth. We are God’s agents, the hands and feet, the voice and the heart, in order to accomplish God’s mission. Jesus has already done the hardest part, we’re here just to reinforce what Christ has already conquered.

So therefore, Mary and Martha, **let us surrender ourselves in faithful obedience with one foot at the cross** and **another at the door** and **be the hearers and doers of God’s Word with our action and in truth!** We shall give thanks to God for creating us to be different and uniquely according to God’s image. We shall give glory to God for all that we do and with all that we have.

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *I John 3:18* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 10:41* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)