

# still waters

home church studies

## psalm 52

[Worship]

1 Why do you boast, O mighty one, of mischief done against the godly? All day long 2 you are plotting destruction. Your tongue is like a sharp razor, you worker of treachery. 3 You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking the truth. Selah 4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. 5 But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah 6 The righteous will see, and fear, and will laugh at the evildoer, saying, 7 "See the one who would not take refuge in God, but trusted in abundant riches, and sought refuge in wealth!" 8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. 9 I will thank you forever, because of what you have done. In the presence of the faithful I will proclaim your name, for it is good.

### Consider:

At times Jesus very directly confronted the conventions of his day or the traditions of his people when they stood in the way of true faith and real justice. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the temple, healed on the Sabbath, and condemned the scribes who "swallow the property of widows" (Mark 12:40). At other times, however, his actions served as a more subtle rebuke to deeply entrenched institutions and ways of being. In fact, without a careful read we risk glossing over the significance of his more understated lessons.

### [Think & Pray...]

Today's gospel is a case in point. Jesus doesn't so much denounce the old ways, but rather he gently models and affirms the new. The story is familiar. As one translation puts it, "Because much work fell to Martha, her agitation flared up," and she complained that Mary sat and listened at the feet of Jesus. Behind Martha's complaint—whether she intended it or not—was the force not only of thousands of years of tradition, but of law. Women were prohibited from receiving religious instruction—even from touching the Torah. There Mary sat, at the foot of the rabbi, in the company of men, drinking up the words of Jesus. When called to task, Jesus affirms Mary for choosing the "better part," the "one thing needed": to listen, learn, and be changed by the Word of God.

Amos reminds us of the nature of that Word. The Lord, he writes, shall never forget the trampling on the needy and the bringing to ruin of the poor. How does this oppression occur? In the small deceits and injustices carried out in the name of maximizing profits; "buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals," ransoming lives for the material benefit of the few. The Lord will not forget these actions by those who "trusted in abundant riches and sought refuge in wealth" (Psalm 52:7). But for those who seek the one true thing at the foot of the Lord—the Marys among us—the better part will not be taken away.



## luke 10.38-42

### [The Scripture]

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42 there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."