



Lectionary 16, Year C

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6th Sunday after Pentecost: Gospel Text - Luke 10:38-42

Luke 10:25-37

³⁸ Now as [Jesus and his disciples] 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."

SERMON TEXT:

Isn't it fascinating how children grow and develop in the same household, with the same parents or guardians, the same rituals, the same parenting strategies, education and general life experiences, and yet as young adults, they become so very, very different?

One sibling might be more vocal or opinionated and the other quiet and reserved, one might be very athletic but can't carry a tune, yet the other or others are musical prodigies but have a really hard time just throwing a ball, one might become more conservative where the other is more progressive, one is an extrovert and the other an introvert.

Certainly, we can't account for all life experiences and factors that make up one's personality, habits, behaviors, and decision-making skills, but in today's lesson, we certainly see some differences in how Martha and Mary both react to Jesus' visit with them, how they respond to his presence and most importantly, how they handle the inbreaking reign of God which is right before them, right there in their midst!

But first, a little backstory: in the verses right before the Mary & Martha story, Jesus has been traveling a bit, actually he's on his final trek to Jerusalem, and on the journey, he's teaching his disciples how to follow him, how to live faithfully, how to go out and minister in the community. Jesus teaches them about the power of God which has been bestowed upon them; the power to heal, to forgive and even to reject those who resist their presence and their teaching.

And this story goes on to show us some details of Jesus teaching his followers about the true meaning of his new commandment to love: as verse 27 reads: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

And to explain it, Jesus tells the story of Good Samaritan as a way to identify what it means to love. It is in this story that the most unsuspecting character in the story – Not the Physician, Not the Priest, but the average, ordinary guy, like you and me, actually he is from Samaria and he is an outcast from the Jewish perspective, but HE is the one who goes above and beyond to help the man who was hurt and lying on the side of the road. The Samaritan cared for the wounded man and financially supported his continued healing and care long after he had to leave. This is a story of going above and beyond for others – to work for, to care for, and to pay attention to the needs of others. For Jesus, this is the ultimate way to love one's neighbor.

And then we meet Martha and Mary. We're not really given any background on these ladies, just that Martha opened her home to Jesus. She welcomed him and then went about the business of serving him and her guests as her culture expected her to do when having a guest in her home. And when I say "'business'-of-serving-him" the story seems to tell us that this also means the "**busy** - ness" of serving him and others – going above and beyond.

If you've ever hosted a party or had guests come to visit your home, you are well-aware of the cleaning, changing the bed sheets, buying, cooking and serving food, and a whole lot more that goes into preparing and hosting special guests! You get the picture! Martha is consumed with providing well for her guests, for Jesus. And ya can't blame her for being anxious and wanting to host her guests well, that's what she's supposed to do!

And then we're introduced to Mary. Mary is Martha's sister who is mesmerized by this teacher, this rabbi, and she simply sits at Jesus' feet in awe and wonder, listening to every word, so that she can learn from this Jesus who is visiting her family.

Now, remember how we opened this message? We were pondering a bit about how siblings can be so different even when raised in the same environment and family? Although we don't know details of this particular family, we do know that the culture of the day would have had both women in the role of caretaking for guests, expectations would have had Mary locked in the "busy-ness" of hosting alongside Martha, and yet she breaks the mold and social norms, and sits at Jesus' feet to listen and learn. And Jesus not only accepts that, he supports it and acknowledges the importance of this response to his presence and teachings.

So, here's some questions for you: How easy it is for you to hear God's voice? How easy is it for you to be aware of Jesus' presence with you in the busy-ness and anxieties of life? Do you ever find yourself caught between wanting to take a quiet moment to sit at the feet of Jesus, to pray and listen to God but instead you get drawn into ALL the other responsibilities of life that impinge on your reality?

It could be a call from the boss, a crying baby, your own hunger pangs, the need to fit a run into your schedule, helping out at the homeless shelter, the grandkids facetime, the spouse or child who really needs to talk about his or her day, the lawn that needs to be mowed, the flowers that have been sitting in the driveway waiting to be planted for weeks now, the report that has to be written, the list goes on and on. Not necessarily bad, just stuff to be tended to in life.

Take a moment and think: What anxieties are keeping you up at night? Finances? Relationships? The state of our country? Preparing for a special visitor? A disagreement you had with a friend, neighbor or co-worker? Listening to the news or trying to keep up with all sides of the media storm? Your own personal melodrama? Anxiety about not having enough time to get things done?

How easy it is to get caught up in all the “stuff” of life, like Martha. And yet, in the midst of our chaos, Jesus shows us that his presence can reshape our reality, and he uses Mary’s radical discipleship as a glimpse of that. It is precisely in our most heated, anxious moments, or in the regular busy-ness of life that Jesus says to us, “stop, sit, focus on me, and let me give you something the world cannot give.”

What might that “sitting” look like? We know we all develop and respond differently, so for some it might mean sitting down for a few minutes a day with a prayer app on your phone; it might mean joining a Bible study or breaking out your Small Catechism book or looking it up on line and praying Martin Luther’s morning and evening prayers which help to reorient our minds and hearts to God’s presence in our everyday life; it could be taking a walk in nature, stopping to really look at the sunset, or it could look like listening to music that brings joy to your heart or doing some research on how many times the word or concept of “peace” and the message, “do not be afraid” is found in our scriptures. I can tell you it is over 400 times that God’s message to us, particularly through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is **peace**. And it is THIS peace that is only found through the love of God, given

through Jesus' sacrifice, experienced through the power of the Holy Spirit, that brings life re-shaping peace.

After the disciples watched their rabbi, Jesus, die on the cross they were mortified and scared, hiding away in a room not knowing what to do next. And the first thing Jesus says when he joins them is, "Peace be with you." Even before His crucifixion, in so many ways, Jesus was letting his disciples know that he would be sending them an ever-present peace through the Holy Spirit. And, he assured them that this would be a complete peace, one that could only come from God; it would be God's peace that would be with them (and US) regardless of what was going on in life or in the world. THAT is the peace that Mary was seeking at the feet of Jesus, and that is the peace that IS for you and me, when we, too, sit at Jesus' feet and experience the inbreaking reign of God.

The crucified and risen Son of God, Jesus, is present and among us right here, right now, whether we're standing or sitting, proclaiming God's love and peace into our lives. THIS is the Word that can reshape our lives; that can reshape the *world* in God's goodness as it disrupts our anxieties and distractions.

Friends, there is space for each and every one of us to sit at the feet of Jesus and receive this renewing word. Loving our neighbor is vitally important, but so is sitting with Jesus, and it is His peace that can and *will* reshape our lives.

Sit and be blessed.

In the strong, steady and peaceful name of Jesus, Amen

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