

+ In Nomine Jesu +

Luke 10:38-42

Date: July 20, 2025

Liturgical Date: Pentecost 6 (Proper 11C)

Title: Hospitality for the Word

*In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Martha, Martha. These two words of Jesus seem to set the tone for the sermon. Don't be a Martha. All of her busy-ness. All of her anxiety. All of her trouble. Don't be a Martha. And, if you are taking notes for the sermon, you probably already have written down – Martha bad, Mary good. Got it. Now let's hope pastor wraps up the sermon so that we can get to Sunday brunch with the family, because the bacon and eggs hits hard. But what is Jesus correcting her for? And is there anything commendable about Martha?

Jesus was traveling much around the country side. He had set his face to go to Jerusalem, when the days drew near for him to be taken up. He sent out messengers ahead of him to several villages. Some did not welcome Jesus as he was coming. A Samaritan village wanted nothing to do with Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem. In the midst of his travels, Jesus commented that, "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Then, as Jesus sends out the 72 into every town and place where he himself was about to go, he instructs them to expect hospitality in some instances. The 72 were sent out with nothing of their own for the journey. They were to go house to house with a word – "Peace be to this house." And if a son of peace is there, then he would provide something to eat and drink for whomever Jesus sent before him. The son of peace would show hospitality for the sake of the word of God.

Even before Jesus had set his face to go to Jerusalem, he and his disciples traveled through cities and villages. Several women traveled with them, and those women provided for Jesus and the disciples out of their means. One of the women who supported Jesus, Mary Magdalene, had seven demons cast out of her. So these women help out and serve Jesus and the disciples in appreciation of his ministry of the word. All of this is commendable service.

Abraham in the Old Testament reading for today provides a beautiful example of hospitality. Abraham is sitting by the oaks of Mamre. Mamre was an ally of Abraham. Mamre helped when Abraham's nephew Lot was captured from Sodom by rival kings. Abraham mustered a raiding party with Mamre and a few hundred other men and brought back Lot and everyone and everything else from his kin that were captured from Sodom.

Abraham himself had traveled to this place, to Canaan. Abraham came to Canaan according to the Lord's promise. "The Lord told Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abraham journeyed, not seeing the land or knowing where he was going, but, looking

forward, he obeyed the word.

Abraham walked by faith, trusting in that word and promise of God. When the Lord said, "Fear not, your reward shall be very great." Abraham responded, "I continue childless. You have given me no offspring." And the Lord said, "Your very own son shall be your heir. Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. So shall your offspring be." And Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Abraham was looking forward to promise, walking by faith, with the word as a lamp to his feet and a light to his path. Abraham wavered from the promise, as Sarah told her husband that the Lord prevented her from having children. So Abraham had a child with the slave woman Hagar. But that child, Ishmael, was born according to the flesh.

The Lord continued to promise a blessing for Abraham. When Abraham was 99 years old, the Lord made a covenant with him - the covenant where Abraham was given that new name Abraham (and his wife was now Sarah). You are a father of a multitude of nations, Abraham. The Lord would multiply Abraham greatly. And the Lord gave the covenant of circumcision, so that the males would be circumcised on the eighth day, as an everlasting covenant.

And then the Lord gives Abraham a promise concerning his wife Sarah. "I will bless her and moreover, I will give you a son by her." Abraham laughed when he heard it. He was almost 100, Sarah about 90 years old and entirely barren. As good as dead. Thus, the laughter. God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac." Isaac means he laughs. This time next year. Abraham looks forward to when the promised child will be delivered.

And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. Three men stand in front of Abraham. Abraham is full of the promises that God gives through his word. So when these three men appear, Abraham treats them with the highest honor. He bows before them. Abraham invites them to stay, for he himself was once a sojourner. If I have found favor in your sight - Abraham has found favor, as he believes the word that the Lord declares.

Abraham offers hospitality and service to the three men. He offers them water for thirst and for washing. He offers them food, a morsel of bread. Abraham directs Sarah to commence with the busy-ness. Three seahs of flour, make cakes, and those would have been pretty big cakes. Abraham finds a man and gives him the tender calf. The calf must be prepared and served. Abraham rushes around, takes curds and milk and the calf and puts it in front of the three men. And Abraham waits on them.

Abraham performs this service for the sake of the word of the Lord. A godly conversation follows after Abraham's hospitality. The men ask about Sarah - who is part of the promise that the Lord made to Abraham. The Lord repeats the promise - this time next year, Sarah will have a son - this time so that Sarah would hear for herself this word. She, too, considers that she is old. Her husband is old. Is there any pleasure any more for her, she laughed

to herself.

But the Lord returns the hospitality with a confirming word. Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Can the Lord even give life to the dead? Can the Lord, who called all things into existence, even things that did not exist, grant a child to a 100 year old father and a 90 year old mother? The word of the Lord points forward, again, to next year, when the Lord would return, and Sarah shall have a son. Abraham's faith in the promise in what is coming leads him to serve the three men in the present time.

Jesus was in the village where Martha was. Martha opened her house to Jesus, welcoming him in. Martha is not like the Samaritan villages which did not welcome Jesus. She shows hospitality and welcomes Jesus in, even as sons of peace welcome those whom Jesus sends out before him. When Jesus comes into the house, Martha keeps preparing and preparing and preparing. Martha is very generous in her service to the Lord within her house.

But the situation calls for something else. The preparations are nice and even worthwhile. But the preparations pull Martha in every which direction. Check the stove. Is the water ready? Clean this or that. So many things for Martha to consider. She needs to make the preparations now. Jesus is here. She has to prepare everything for him. But Martha is so absorbed in the present needs, she forgets to look forward to what Jesus' word promises. Martha is torn apart.

Her sister, called Mary, sits at Jesus' feet. She is listening and learning. The Lord is teaching his word. Mary is a faithful student. The Lord promises much to her through his word. The teacher who sends out his apostles with the message of peace now brings peace to Mary. Mary hears the word and becomes a catechumen, ready and eager to hear the word and look forward to the fulfillment of the same.

Martha is so torn apart that she sees Mary's listening as nothing. Martha is doing many things. Mary is doing nothing. Martha is so torn apart that she petitions to Jesus to do something about Mary doing nothing. Make her help. I am the only one doing anything. Mary is concerned about so many things, she forgot to be concerned about the word that Jesus teaches.

Jesus brings Martha back gently. Martha, Martha. You are anxious and troubled about many things. All of the preparations have a place and a priority. But Martha is spread so thin, she fails to learn the lesson from Jesus. So Jesus gives her the lesson anyway. But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.

The word is of prime importance. Jesus wants Martha to hear the word. Don't be anxious. One thing is needful, the word. Jesus wants Martha to grasp this one thing needful, listening and learning. Jesus is always bringing people back to himself. The 72 rejoiced that even demons were subject to them. Jesus brings them back to what is most important. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. The lawyer wanted to justify himself. Jesus brings him back to what is important. The law does not help you, but there is a Good Samaritan who compassionately helps you. Martha, there is one thing needful, the word. Come back to me.

In the same way, Jesus brings us back to himself. When we become concerned with the

many cares of this world, Jesus brings us back to himself. The concerns of this world are many. We get stretched thin. We can get caught up taking care of our family or ourselves. Or the concerns of our jobs or work can become overwhelming. They all seem so important to do at the time. When these concerns mount and make us anxious, Jesus desires to bring us back to himself. Certainly caring for family or job or congregation are worthy endeavors.

But they are not the one thing needful. And without the one thing needful, these endeavors are worthless. These concerns look to the present, but the one thing needful looks forward to that which is to come. These concerns will be here today and gone tomorrow, but the one thing needful stands forever. To not receive the word is fatal. We receive the word in the Divine Service, and we should not be so busy to miss Sunday church. We ought to make time at home to hear the word.

And that is why Jesus showed compassion on Martha. He knew that without the one thing needful, her concerns for the many things would lead her away from Jesus. Martha tried to do many things to serve. But Jesus points her to the Word. Mary had been sitting at the Lord's feet, hearing his Word. His Word is life. His Word is the one thing needful. Through the Word comes faith and life.

And Mary is commended for choosing this one thing needful. She heard the word, as a pupil hears her teacher. She knew her Lord and the life that his Word brings. For this, she was commended for choosing the better thing. The life of faith flows from God's promises in his word. But Jesus does not commend Mary's life and condemn Martha's life. He wanted Martha to join Mary so that both of them would hear his teaching. But he did not want Martha to abandon her life of service. She was too anxious with the cares of the household and with her service. Jesus wanted to direct her to himself, so that her cares for the present would be calmed by the eternal truth of God's Word.

While the Word is the one thing needful, from it flows the life of the Christian, the life of service and hospitality. Those who hear the Word and trust the promises cannot help but go and serve others. The Word guides us in all our ways, as the psalmist writes "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Jesus directs us to hear the Word as well as live our entire life according to the Word. Mary listens and hears the promises of God. Jesus wants Martha to join in the hearing of the word, so then she could serve faithfully.

+ Soli Deo Gloria +

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