

## Sermon Notes July 17, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 10:38-42

Our Gospel reading for this morning is a short five verses.

Luke places this story right after the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now, if you remember the story from last week, the listeners were shocked because the Samaritan was the hero of the story. They did not see that coming. They were expecting the hero to be one of the religious leaders not a Samaritan who many saw as an enemy of the Jews.

This week, Luke shocks the listeners and the readers of this text by having Jesus welcome Mary to learn from him. In this story, I believe that we can see Jesus promoting a vision or even a foretaste of equality. He is letting individuals know that these women have as much to learn and teach as any man. In the first-century, they were not ready to hear that message but that is the message that Jesus gives and that message shocks them.

The story in Luke really focuses in on Jesus and how Martha and Mary respond with Jesus being in their house. With the story being connected to Martha and Mary, I wanted to make sure that I listened into the voices of my female colleagues. Thus, this week the thoughts of Niveen Sarras, Elisabeth Johnson, and Marilyn Salmon really directed my sermon thoughts and preparation.

To understand this passage, I think that it is vital for us to understand **both the early church ministry developments** and the **cultural context**. Those two components may not seem like they connect, but they do and when we take a look at these two components and look at the story, I think that we may come to a more complete understanding of this text and with a more complete understanding, I hope that we can make a deeper connection on how it can effect our life here at Bay View Lutheran.

What can we learn about the **early church ministry developments**? Acts chapter six is the best place to go. The number of individuals that were connected to the church was growing. The twelve disciples realized that they were abandoning their duties of preaching and teaching because there was so much need in the community that they were serving. They asked the church community gathering to pick seven men and the disciples assigned them tasks to do so they could focus on preaching and teaching. Stephen and Philip were two of the seven that were chosen to participate in the ministry of service. I highlight those two because later on in the Christian story we see both of them engaging in the ministry of the word. These two may show us a very important truth in the life of the church. Ministry of Service must come after learning and meditating on the word of God. Jesus is teaching that the ministry of service and the ministry of the word require each other. The needing of both: service and word was definitely highlighted at our bible study on Tuesday.

Next, let us examine the **cultural context** to understand the passage and the context that this story sits in relates to the practice of hospitality is central to understanding this text. In first-century Palestine, eating together is an invitation to be part of the family circle. The hosts understood that the hospitality that they were extending were opening up the door to allow the guest to share the sacredness of the family space. In the first century, the women's role was to do all the cooking and food preparation. It would have been highly unusual for a Palestinian woman to join the male guest before they were done with the food preparation. Failing to be a good hostess means disrespecting the guest.

Now, even though this text has the conversation focused on Martha, Mary and Jesus; we must remember that this would have been a full house event. All the disciples were traveling with Jesus at this time. Thus, Martha's anxiety level would have been extremely high since she oversees the material care of her guests. She wanted them to feel welcomed in her home.

Now, Mary on the other hand seems to ignore or neglect her traditional duties of helping her older sister Martha. Mary prefers to sit in the living room by the feet of Jesus and listen into the words of Jesus. She wanted to hear all that he had to say. It was not normal for a first century Palestinian-Jewish woman to

join men in learning. Yet, the language in this passage describes a student's action by Mary. Mary acts as a disciple of Jesus, who allows her to listen and hear the word of God.

Hopefully, you have noticed our art on the center pews today. Are you taking time to listen and hear what God has to say to you?

In our baptismal promises, we promise that we will *hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper*.

But, I want us to take a step back from the perspective for a moment. Too many times, individuals give Martha a hard time for working so hard. But, we must understand her actions from a woman's perspective of that time. She is probably extremely exhausted from the burden of hospitality that has been placed on her shoulders especially without the help of her sister which she was most likely expecting. So, she complains. Her complaint is fairly legit.

In essence, she is saying, "Jesus, no one helps me in this house." Then in a passive aggressive approach, she states, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work?" One of the aspects of this story that I did not think about until this week is that Martha's question puts up a barrier for the chance of hospitality to be provided. Martha breaks a hospitality rule by trying to embarrass her sister in front of her guest and then even takes it to another level by asking her guest to intervene in a family dispute.

Jesus responds to her by telling her, "You are worried and distracted by many things." The problem with Martha is not her serving, but rather that she is distracted and worried. I have to be honest, I have heard many Christians and possibly even myself a few times hear these words in a patronizing way. But, what if we flip our ears and tune our listening skills into hearing Jesus sharing these words with love and care. Maybe Jesus just did not want Martha to be taken away from the central focus. Her worry and distraction were preventing her from being truly present with Jesus.

Then, there is something that might be even deeper. This deeper message is something that I think many here may need to hear. The one thing that Martha needed at this time was to receive the gracious presence of Jesus, to listen to his words, to know that she is valued **not** for what she does or how well she does it, **but** for who she is as a *Child of God*.

Then, what about us. Is there something that is occurring in our daily lives that is distracting us from what we know is true? There are many theories on what Jesus meant when he followed it up with there is need of only one thing. Jesus nor the text really dives into it. I think that future readings will shed some light on that for us though and I think it is *trust in God*.

It is very important for us to realize that Jesus is not asking Martha to give up the ministry of service. Instead, he is inviting her to relieve her anxiety and exhaustion by sitting next to her sister and learning from him. Then, Martha and Mary can both resume the hospitality through service.

Luke's story leaves us hanging. We are once again left in suspense. We do not know what happens. Did Martha and Mary reconcile their relationship? How long did it take? Were the house guests able to enjoy the meal after this episode? Did Martha have the capacity to put the pause on her hospitality duties and simply sit and give Jesus her full attention.

We might not know the answers to all of these questions, but what we do know is that Jesus invites them and now us to sit in his presence. Jesus wants us to release all of our worry and let our anxieties go. Can we trust him and let everything that is distracting us go?

Are you able to hear and listen the following words?

You are loved – You are a valued Child of God.

Whether you consider yourself to be a Martha or a Mary, remember that both are needed in the Kingdom of God and in our church.

**Amen.**