

Grace, Mercy and Peace to you from Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

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Looking back to where we have been so far on this journey of ordinary Sundays. Today, we are in the ninth Sunday after the Pentecost. One thing I have said that we need to reflect on is Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51) and instructs those who would follow that the journey must be their first priority (9:57-58). Jesus sends the seventy ahead with no provisions for the journey and insists they depend on the hospitality of those in towns who welcome them (10:1-11). Then, Jesus tells a story about a man on a journey who is beaten and left to die. He is saved by an unexpected merciful neighbor (10:30-37). That was last Sunday, the story of "the good Samaritan." Jesus invites all of us to show neighborly compassion to any one in need. And we are here today, Jesus being welcome at Martha's home.

I like preaching on the text when we don't miss any verses from the end of the previous Sunday. It is a continuation and it makes it easy to follow up. So, let me say this upfront here. I don't want us to identify with either Martha or Mary in this text. I don't want us to wrestle with such questions: Which side are we in? Hospitality or listening? Attentiveness or learning? Is it service or sitting? I don't want us to try to figure out who is better or what is better? We are not to wrestle if this text is about the value of contemplation over the value of a deeds-based ministry or something like that. Yes, we are not going to conclude if hearing the word of God is just generally more important than doing and being busy? As we can easily do that or have done that before!

And you may wonder why? Because it doesn't really fit with the text we have heard so far on this Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Remember Jesus gave advice to the 70 mission workers in Luke 10 that when they were welcomed into someone's house, they were to eat whatever was set before them (Luke 10:8), meaning that someone had to get busy preparing the meals. And just last Sunday, Jesus is insisting for us to "Go and do likewise" To care and to have mercy for those in need. So all of this matter in contrast to someone, I mean Mary, who is content to do nothing but sit and listen. Do you see the dilemma if you pick a side? Are we saying that it is better to listen than to serve? Are we saying that It is better to be contemplative than to be active?

I don't see it that way. But let me say one thing about our busy and hard work Martha that we all can identify to her. Service is good. Service is lovely. Martha demonstrates hospitality by welcoming Jesus into the home she shares with her sister Mary. Martha takes the initiative to welcome Jesus. She then works hard herself with the tasks of serving their guest. Martha is determined to be the perfect host. All of us will do the same when we are hosting someone. There is nothing unusual about this--showing hospitality, welcoming guests, feeding them well--these are very important qualities to be a hospitable home. Martha was doing her best to show hospitality to Jesus and to make him feel at home.

But Martha did not stop there serving. She had taken the initiative to ask Jesus to rebuke *Mary* for not lending a hand. Do you see that? Martha came in for some criticism. *She tried to embarrass her sister in front of her guest, and by asking her guest to intervene in a family dispute. She even goes so far as to accuse Jesus of not caring about her (Lord, do you not care...?) Luke 10:40.*

She said that because she was frustrated and she just wanted to get some help out of her sister. But here is the thing; our busyness in life and our distraction come to play out of our good intentions to better our lives. Yes, we are a busy people because we want to provide for our families. We want to give our children every opportunity to enrich their lives. We want to serve our neighbors, and yes, we want to serve the Lord. Indeed, where would the church be without its “Marthas,” those faithful people who perform the tasks of hospitality and service so vital to making the church a welcoming and well-functioning community?

But know this, despite all of these good things, we need to be still in the Lord’s presence too and hear God’s word every day. Both listening and doing, receiving God’s Word and serving others, are vital to our Christian life; just as inhaling and exhaling are too vital to breathing. Today, we need to remember how to breathe in deeply. We are serving and at the same time we remember to be with God before we start the day. Every morning, let us take the habit of thanking God for the gift of another day. We have a new day and we are forgiven, let the past be the past. Don’t let the day pass by without reading or listening to God’s words. We have many opportunities for that thru the daily reading or whatever you choose. Jesus invites us to sit and rest in his presence, to hear his words of grace and truth every day. Jesus wants us to know that we are loved and valued as children of God. When we are listening to God’s words, when we are receiving the body and blood our Lord Jesus Christ, yes we are certain that we are forgiven. We are renewed in faith and strengthened for service.

Trinity members, we need to do what we need to do but we also need our regular rest and renewal. Because, for God we are loved. We are treasured for who we are, regardless of what we do. That is why we come to church on Sundays where we are being told again and again that we are God’s children, beloved for all time. We are marked with the Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and send for the sake of the world. Every Sunday we come together, we worship, we sing together, we pray together and Jesus is our host and we are the guest.

But yes, I know it is a Summer time and we still have couple months to enjoy it. For those who are counting, there are still 66 days of the Summer time remaining. There are plenty of things you can do out there. Go and spend time with friends, or take a vacation or a trip, or go and attend a family reunion or whatever it is, enjoy it! Don’t feel bad to miss the Church a Sunday or two. As when you come back, you will be reminded again and always of whom you are as God’s beloved child, now and forever more. When you are back to church, Jesus is welcoming you and host you for the heavenly meal at his table. Jesus will renew us again and send us out into the world to share God’s love through our daily living. Amen!