

Sermon for Pentecost 6

Three Sundays back we heard that Jesus Set His Face To Go Jerusalem. That was in Luke 9:51. The next ten chapters recounts this journey to Jerusalem where Jesus will give His life on the cross for you and me. And the life of the world.

With each stop along the way Jesus and His disciples were to be connected to people.

Two weeks ago, we heard that Jesus sent seventy-two to the towns and villages to connect the gospel to the people. Jesus sent these 72 as lambs in the midst of wolves and at the same time seeking hospitality. "When you enter a house say, "peace to this house." If they were welcomed they were to stay and eat what was offered and announce the "Kingdom of God has come near."

Last week was the next stop and with the Parable of Good Samaritan which answered the question, "Who is my neighbor?" The one we are to love. The bottom line is the one to whom is close, the ones we encounter along the way in our journey with Jesus. Yes, even love a Samaritan who you may like too much, but it was the Samaritan who shows the love of God to the Jew who was beaten on the road down to Jericho as opposed to the Priest and the Levite.

Now this morning we have come to the fourth stop on our journey with Jesus. And we come to a home where it is possible that two of those messengers that Jesus sent found a warm welcome. When these messengers return to Jesus, they must have reported, "When you come to Bethany stop at the house of Mary and Martha." There they find a warm welcome and Martha's cooking is out of this world. So, Jesus surely entered this house and greeted them, "Peace to this house." "The Kingdom of God is near."

Here at the house of Martha and Mary Jesus would have a place to lay His head. This house would become a ministry base when He would enter Jerusalem for the last time.

One of the things about the Bible is its honesty when it comes to life. In this gospel Luke does not hide it. Luke could have easily omitted the exchange between Martha and Jesus when He came to Mary's unhelpful attitude. Luke has easily painted an ideal picture for us that this home was the cottage with the

white picket fence and cherry tree in the front yard and the two sisters welcoming Jesus to the guest room with singing birds whistling "Joy to the World."

Thankfully Luke does not do that. It looks like this home is no different than any other home. It has its share of business, with chore that need to be done. There is resentment that one member is not doing her fair share of the work or pulling her weight. You know, it takes everyone to maintain a welcoming home. So there is some complaining and griping.

Now that is a home I can recognize.

Lest we forget, Jesus is not traveling alone. He has His disciples with Him. There would be at least 12 other guests and maybe 72 in total, if they are not all staying at Mary and Martha's place they would all like to eat together. And that is a lot of food to prepare.

"Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went to Him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!'"

Luke uses a word here that means strife. And the way the word is used it can give the sense that Martha got in Jesus' face. Obviously, Martha is pretty upset at the unfairness and demands that Jesus do something. I suppose many of us can sympathize with Martha here because at times I feel like that have carried the burden of all the work and feel that her frustration with her sister is justified. If I were to write the script it would turn out that Jesus would scold Mary instead of defending her. But that is not the way it turns out.

In fact, it turns out the Jesus has some words for Martha and as it would turn out that Mary has gotten it right. The words Jesus uses for Martha may come across as a scolding, but it is gentle and loving scolding.

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled by many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion and it will not be taken away from her."

We get the picture that Mary and Martha have welcomed Jesus into their home, and all the proper things are being done to ensure hospitality to Jesus and His disciples, Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet listening to His teaching and Martha is busy,

busy, busy with no time to take a break to listen to Jesus. For Martha the time to listen to Jesus is later after all the chores are done. Sound familiar?

To be clear this is not a lesson on how to be the better hostess. This becomes for us this morning on how to be the better host/hostess when Jesus comes into the house. Mary show the better way.

Now allow me to ask, How many of you have a Bible in your house? I am sure all would raise your hands. Now consider this. The Bible is not just like any other book you may have in your house, it is a book that stands apart. IT stands apart from the other books because the Bible is the Word of God. When you read the Bible, you are listening to God speak. It would also be right to say that Jesus and the Bible are one. For Jesus is the Word of God.

When you have a Bible in your house it is as though you have brought Jesus into your home. When you brought a Bible into your home you welcomed Jesus into your home just like Mary and Martha welcomed Jesus into their home.

So now, what kind of hospitality are you showing Jesus? Is the hospitality of Martha, Martha, you are distracted with many things.

When you read the Bible it is like sitting at Jesus feet and listening to Him. Someone asked Martin Luther one time what he did the first thing when got up when he had a busy day ahead of Him. He replied that read the Bible and prayed. He also added that the busier the day was the longer he read and prayed.

Oh easy it is to put the Bible on the shelf or lay it the table for looks. Then go about a busy day.

So, let us hear what Jesus says to Martha again? “Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her.”

It is a clever turn of phrase isn't it. Martha is anxious about getting food on the table to feed a hungry belly, and Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet being fed by God's Word in Christ to feed a hungry soul.

This is not about regular church attendance as important as it is. Here at Bethany, this is God's house where He welcomes you always. And it is here God's gives us all His divine hospitality. He welcomes you with the blessing of His peace, He

feeds you with His Word of Life. He listens to us speak as pray, He feeds you at His table with food for your hungry soul.

Then we will go home from here today to our homes. Is Jesus welcome there as He has welcomed you into His house? Maybe some of us will pray, "Come Lord Jesus be our guest."

In the midst of the things that make us anxious about life and trying to keep up with things, Here is the good portion which will not be taken from you (holding up the Bible.) Here is where you can hear Jesus speaking "peace to this house. Peace be to you." This the good portion that can not be taken from you.

Then after some time we will begin to wonder what we were so anxious about. Then fed and strengthened in faith we discover that our work and chore becomes our work.

Peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.