



Pastor Gwen's Message
6th Sunday after Pentecost
"Go and Do or Listen and Learn?"
Sunday July 17, 2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Ah Mary and Martha. This is a story I have preached on many, many times, and I still love this story. Probably my second favorite story after Noah's Ark. There is so much to learn from Mary and Martha in these 5 verses in Luke. I guess, maybe it is because I have only one sister and she and I are as different as night and day, or Mary and Martha. I was the studious one that loved pushing paper and being inside. Where Gail loved being outside with nature and had a bit of dislike for school. I would do her taxes every year and she would change the oil in my car. Today we are still very different but have learned to accept one another's strengths and gifts. And although it took me a long time, I realize that as different as we are, God loves us both, just as much as Jesus loved Mary and Martha. God created us individually and uniquely and gave us a variety of ways to live out our lives. And I have learned to celebrate our differences and recognize the fact that we don't think and act alike. We are still as different as night and day, yet we both love Jesus because He first loved us.

And I do believe that God calls us all to be both Mary and Martha depending on our circumstances. The Marys among us will be called to be Marthas on occasion and the Marthas among us will be called to be Marys on occasions. Simply put we will need to be able to "see and do" as well as "listen and hear".

I told you that there is a lot in this little story about Mary and Martha. Not to make things too simplistic, trite, or too unimportant, but just imagine with me for a few minutes how life would be if you lived with a Martha. The house

would be spotless and there would be three wonderful meals on the perfectly set table each day. Sounds pretty nice, doesn't it?

But you would have to put up with Martha's fretting over lots of stuff. Don't you dare leave your wet towel on the bathroom floor or you might get a chewing out. Putting your feet on the sofa might get you another chewing out. And certainly, a chewing out would come if you did not take your muddy sandals off at the door. There is no room for not following her rules.

But if Mary were your roommate, you would be eating off paper plates if there was a meal ready to be had. PB and J might be a typical bill of fare. And find a place to sit and eat that sandwich might be difficult as there would be clothing laying around not to mention an inordinate amount of dust on all surfaces.

Who would you rather live with? So, who would you rather be? Mary or Martha. I think in the Gospel of Luke story, Jesus has cast his vote. He would go with Mary as she has "Chosen the better part." Remember here, that Jesus is on his way to the cross and his time is limited on earth. He has some last-minute teaching to do, and it seems that Mary is more than ready to listen and hear what Jesus has to say. She is not pre-occupied with cooking dinner or other hospitality duties. And I might guess that Jesus does not have food on his mind either. And if he were offered a fancy meal, he would probably give it away to someone really hungry.

Last week we heard the story of the Good Samaritan. That was the story in Scripture that immediately proceeds the Mary and Martha story. The Good Samaritan story is one of action, of doing. Jesus is our Good Samaritan, and he has done so much for us on the cross by giving us the generous gifts of forgiveness, abundant and eternal life, by this death. Remember how that story ends. Jesus tells the lawyer who is asking all the questions to "Go and do likewise."

I think it is no accident that Luke tells the Mary and Martha story next. We need a story to tell us that it is important to hear and listen to Jesus as Mary did, but also go and do like he told the lawyer in the Good Samaritan story. Both are important to our relationship with God. There are times we need to listen and times we just need to go out and do it. And although Martha is doing in this text it might not be the right time. Remember Jesus has little time left to teach and preach before he is to die. Yet Martha is doing the inviting by taking Jesus into her home. She is doing the cooking to feed her

guest. Wonderful hospitality which was important in those days and usually done by the women.

Mary is also doing, but a different kind. She is poised at Jesus feet, a familiar place for her, but not a usual place for the women of their time. She is sitting quietly and listening and hearing what Jesus has to say. She is being taught by Jesus at his feet where his disciples would usually sit. Mary is content to hear the word of God.

These two women have Jesus in their home. Mary understands that God is in their midst. And Martha is still busy doing stuff in the kitchen, things that were expected of her, things that need to be done. Martha is distracted by her need to serve, to get things done right. As Luther would say, she has an agenda of "Good works". Yet, she is missing the point of the visit. It will be the last time either woman is in the presence of Jesus, God incarnate. What would you do if Jesus stopped at your house in his last days? Would you want to listen and learn from him, or would you go to the kitchen and busy yourself with dinner? I would like to think that I would not worry about my stomach at that moment, but rather sit at the feet of my Lord with open ears ready to take in all I can learn from His teaching.

The Good Samaritan story and the Mary and Martha story together are a good reminder that discipleship is more than just doing or more than just listening. There is a time and a place for both the discipleship of Mary and the discipleship of Martha. We need to be careful that we don't over "do" with one or the other. To be sure about what we are to do, we must listen to God. We need to sit back and listen to what Jesus has to say in His Word.

When we are in our Martha role, we do need to remember that Jesus said, "you are worried and distracted by many things, there is need of only one thing." That one thing is the word of God. Jesus wants Martha and us to find a balance in our discipleship. He wants us to serve others and "go and do likewise", but in order for us to know what it is we are to do; we need to be fed spiritually with the words of life. We need to take time away from the distractions of life in order for us to find life. We must allow ourselves that quiet time in prayer and reading Scripture, that will enable us to listen to and really hear God in our lives.

Each worship service, after announcements, we begin by thinking of the Psalmist words, "Be still and know that I am God." We quiet our hearts so they will be open to listening and hearing the word of God, so we can come to know

the love that God has for each one of us. This morning we were blessed with a beautiful song from our guest Karen, as we were still, listening to hear God's voice, to feel His love surrounding us.

You might have heard this story before. There were three women that were killed in an accident on their way to a prayer meeting. They reached the Pearly Gates together and one by one, they stood before St. Peter. He asked the first woman, "Were you a Christian on earth?" She replies, "Oh, yes. I was Roman Catholic and here are my rosary beads." St. Peter noticed how worn the beads were and said, "Welcome to God's heavenly kingdom." Then he turned to the next woman and asked her, "Were you a Christian on earth?" She said, "Oh, yes, I was a Southern Baptist and here's my Bible." St. Peter looked at the Bible, how worn it was and said, "Oh, Welcome to God's heavenly kingdom." And he then turned to the last woman and asked the same question, "Were you are Christian on earth?" And she said, "Oh yes, I was a Lutheran, see, here is my casserole!"

Well, all kidding aside, casseroles are usually wonderful, kale withstanding. They can calm the hearts of the sick, grieving, and the elderly. They are a help in welcoming and being hospitable. And I am sure they are pleasing to God and important somewhere in the ministry of Christ's kingdom. What we do is important if it is used correctly. What we do in important to the kingdom, if it is what God calls us to do. There is a time to get up and go and do likewise and another time to be quiet and listen and learn.

Today, I hope that you will be fed with God's word and carry His love in your heart out into the world this week. Our world is hurting and needs God's love spread to every corner. Listen and hear the good news and then go and do, and share His love. **AMEN**