**7/20/25**

**Martha, Mary, or…**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 10:38-42 (NRSVUE)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

If you happened to hear the same story that I just read from our Gospel, or if you read it when your bulletins came out in the Thursday email, or if you went on the church website and downloaded the bulletin and read it, or if you examined this text from our Taking Faith Home or other Devotionals… then I venture that you were thinking in a rather similar manner that I had been since I first read this text and began my studies earlier this week. That being… There is a lot going on in just a few short verses! Let alone, whose side should I pick here? Then, of course there is the analysis of self which sets in and might have you all thinking… I have been on both sides of very similar situations like this over the years. So, just maybe I shouldn’t even be picking a side at all. Then again, maybe there really is no side to be on! So, with all that thinking and overthinking I would say that we have some intentional slowing down to do in our additional work together here this morning.

So, as we begin to unpack things, and if we were going to be active participants in a debate, then we would move between the pews here at church and in our living rooms at home on the conference call and gather on whose side we stand on. That of course could probably turn church for all of us into something rather interesting and even completely awkward this morning. With our most common points of debate being… Do we side with Martha being right and welcoming Jesus into her home and preparing food and other things for a meal? or… Do we side with Mary for sitting at the feet of Jesus and spending time with their guest? Those indeed are both signs of hospitality, but they are both very different approaches to it, and there is nothing wrong with either approach. So, I ask that you please keep that in the back of your minds as we move forward. Alright, as we move on and if we extend this debate even further… Do we side with Martha who gets frustrated with Mary and even demands Jesus to have her come help? or… Do we side with Mary who just sits there quietly and has Jesus defend her position of listening and attentiveness to him? I am rather sure that this debate could actually continue on, and that our minds could keep swirling about as we created more questions and continue weighing in on things. I venture we might even switch sides a time or two as we came to different conclusions. However, for the respect of all of our focus here I am going to suggest that we push on.

While still engaged in an active debate, let me challenge you with this question and alternative mindset. Do we come to the realization that there is actually a third side here? A side of this debate from the guest and host in every circumstance. Jesus’ side of this debate actually exists, and I am pretty sure many of us may not have even considered it if I had not brought it up just now. This story despite having so much and yet so little detail does not really force our minds to go onto that side of the debate very freely or easily. The side of Jesus as guest and host is almost completely foreshadowed by the two sisters here. The side of Jesus is practically non-existent unless we actually slow down and read things over and over again, and do a little more studying and contemplation. This is precisely why I say when we dig in and wrestle with the texts that we have the chance to come up with alternative viewpoints and mentalities. It is also why I often say that this is not a glorified book report that I happen to have the privilege and authority to get up here and share. It is indeed way more than that, and that is why I always choose to thank you for allowing me to do what I have been called to do. I thank you because opening the gates wide open of scripture and interpretation is vital in all of our faith walks, and by doing it together in this community versus doing it on our own we have the opportunity of a vitally full experience. So again, thank you for allowing me to do what I do, and for joining me here in this space.

Now, let’s continue moving along, and with our alternative mindset let us consider even some more questions… What role does Jesus’ side play in this entire debate? Would we eventually need a third position for all of us to divide up amongst ourselves and sit in as we move further along in this active debate? Do you feel that Jesus’ side even exists, or are we still just so focused on Mary and Martha’s positions? All of these are good questions, and all are good thoughts. They all are awesome ways to really wrestle with and interpret this text in scripture! However, what we should all come to realize is that there actually is only one side here. If we are truly focused on our faith then the only true side to this debate is fully on the side of Jesus. I am sure we all could argue or debate further, but that point is pretty simple.

So, let’s expand your mindsets just a little more as we work towards closing out here. I will say that hospitality is rendered in various ways, and neither way is wrong, and that is precisely why I asked you to keep that in the back of your minds earlier on in this sermon. However, the one glaring thing or exchange that is wrong here would be that Martha practically throws Mary under the proverbial bus as she blames her for not doing what the culture of the times traditionally expected of women. Mary was supposed to be alongside Martha in the kitchen and being a servant. Mary was not supposed to be in the role of a male sitting at the feet of a Rabbi, at the feet of Jesus listening and learning intently. This story yet again tells of the counter-cultural role Jesus plays when he is interjected into the mix. He turns cultural norms upside down and demands that we all be treated equally. Jesus demands and further commands love and respect for everyone. Furthermore, we are reminded that we are called to deliver that very same love and respect to one another.

Jesus says Martha’s name twice in the middle of our Gospel Reading by no mistake, and perhaps we could even picture him shaking his head while doing so. It is a redirect and an invitation to come sit down. Jesus is not mad with Martha, and he is not even rebuking her as one may traditionally be thinking. Jesus is frustrated, or even disappointed, with the fact that he has been asked to get involved in such a small and meaningless quarrel. He wants them to focus on all aspects of importance, to respect one another, and to be truly present with him as guest and host.

Luke chapter ten closes with this story, and Luke chapter eleven offers us nothing additional as it moves us on to the Lord’s Prayer. So, we do not get an end of the story as one might think if they continued reading along in any other traditional book. That is the blessing of the Bible folks, it allows our minds to expand and think and just does not give us one pointed and defined end of a story. The Bible and this text in Luke has Jesus highlighting the important points of hospitality, respect, attentiveness, love, and compassion in just these few short verses in this story. Jesus has also called us into a more advanced role as we continue on in our faith walks in our daily lives. We are not supposed to allow anything to stress us out, to take our sight off of Christ, or to take our heart out of it. We are supposed to focus on what we do best and who is in our midst, and by doing so we honor God in all things. That is the true call to discipleship, and that is the true call of taking up the cross with Christ. We have to sacrifice or even give up all that we have commonly come to know, or all we are called to think of in this world’s format, and we are called to life in Christ. When we allow Christ to truly enter the depths of our hearts, minds, and souls; when we allow Christ’s presence to be truly remarkable, and allow Christ to be the end all and be all then nothing else will cause us strife, anguish, frustration, or despair. When we focus on Christ and not allow other things to get in our path, just as Mary and Martha did over the course of time in our Gospel Reading today, then all services and sides will be covered in the kingdom here and the kingdom yet to come. We can come to love and respect one another, we can work together for a common cause, and we can truly be present at Christ’s feet fully abiding in his presence in the total grace and mercy that he pours out. Let us no longer debate, but let us embrace where we all should be, and where all of our friends and family, and even those people out there in the streets should be. Let us offer them the chance to come and fully be in the presence of Christ here at worship, here in their hearts, and everywhere and anywhere out in the world as we carry on as the hands and feet of Christ.

**Amen****.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

Preaching

Year C 2025

July 20th, 2025

6th Sunday after Pentecost

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

Revised and Updated

A Guide to Biblical Preaching

Paul Scott Wilson

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Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Hospitality is exceedingly important in the biblical world in general and in Luke’s

Gospel in particular.

July 21, 2013

Commentary on Luke 10:38-42

Elisabeth Johnson

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

We can do right and good things but still be distracted by the wrong things

July 20, 2025

Commentary on Luke 10:38-42

Jennifer S. Wyant

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

I am not a skilled chef by any stretch of the imagination.

July 21, 2019

Commentary on Luke 10:38-42

Brian Peterson

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

The ministry of diakonia should not absorb our energy and time and drive us to

neglect God’s word

July 17, 2022

Commentary on Luke 10:38-42

Niveen Sarras

(8) WorkingPreacher.org

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The design and structure of Luke’s story about Jesus’ visit in the home of Mary and

Martha (Luke 10:38-42) is straightforward, and it is told in a linear fashion.

July 17, 2016

Commentary on Luke 10:38-42

Mikeal C. Parsons

(9) WorkingPreacher.org

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Several years ago a church in our area was named Saints Martha and Mary,

because, as the developer said, it was going to take both Marys and Marthas for the

new church to grow.

July 18, 2010

Commentary on Luke 10:38-42

Marilyn Salmon

**Luke 10:38-42 (NRSVUE)**

During his visit to the home of Mary and Martha, Jesus reminds Martha that her concern for her many tasks distracts from the one thing that precedes all else: abiding in the presence of God.

38 Now as [Jesus and his disciples] went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus’s feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.” 41 But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, 42 but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”