

Sunday, July 21, 2019  
Lectionary 16, Year C  
6th Sunday after Pentecost

**Martha, Martha, Martha!**

Genesis 18:1-10a; Psalm 15; 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42

*Delivered to St. Stephen's Lutheran Church*

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*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable  
in your sight o God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*Amen*

*Grace and peace to you from God who was, and God who is, and God who  
will be forever.*

*Amen*

What do you think...should I split the room between Marthas and Marys? You know, those of you that feel more like Martha on this side and those of you that feel more like Mary on that side?

Or would I be setting myself up for a failed experiment where we end up all just sitting on this one side of the church? At least I know who will be doing the dishes after coffee hour!

I can't tell you how many folks in my short time here and my time in Chicago said they felt like Martha throughout the Gospel stories of her and her sister...and for Mary...well...I would not even need both hands to tell you how many people jump up and say "hey! I'm Mary in that story."

But why...why is this?

I think it would be in our best interest to invite someone up here more qualified to tell us why...someone with a background in therapy or psychoanalytics...but there is also a faith perspective to this question of why....

Why do we feel like Martha sometimes and not Mary?

Well, look at the picture icon on your bulletin...I hope it looks familiar. It is a famous icon of three angels...some say the trinity at table...but it is related to our first story...to the story of Genesis.

You know, so much of our faith comes from our very own understanding of stories in Genesis. In fact, there is a theological hypothesis that says theologians base their work and theories on their own personal and devotional readings of Genesis!

And our story today - is simple hospitality.

Abraham and Sarah did not show hospitality so that Sarah might bare Abraham a child. They did not show hospitality so that they are rewarded with eternal life in heaven...they showed hospitality because that is what you do.

You welcome the stranger. You comfort the grieving. You love the unlovable. You do this because that is what our faith tells us to do.

Abraham welcomed these strangers into his tent...into his life...Sarah made preparations for them so that they would find comfort and joy on their journey. They made sure they had food and water...and Abraham stood by the strangers and simply was present.

Somewhat of what Martha was doing in Luke:

“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.” 41But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

We might feel more like Martha because we do not want to miss the mark - we do not want to let others down - so much so that it consumes us and our time...it takes away from us the ability to be present in the moment.

This is not a story of criticism of Martha's lifestyle as a homemaker and hostess...it is a story about a specific moment in time and ministry of Jesus Christ...a story of being present in a moment of time that will not last forever.

We hear this story in Luke about Martha and feel guilty because we feel drawn and associated with her. But we need to throw that guilt away - forget about it - because if we feel like we are Martha then we cannot ever for one moment feel unloved by Jesus. Simply because Martha was loved so

very, very much by Jesus. It says so in the 11th Chapter of John “Jesus love Martha and her sister...”

He did not have on problem with her serving...I know this because in the 12th Chapter of John we find Jesus once again at table in Martha’s house...she is serving and Jesus and Lazarus are reclining at the table. Jesus does not correct her because she is doing her thing without being distracted by it. That leads us to believe that it is not her serving that is the problem, but her being consumed by it that she misses what is happening right there in front of her.

Just because Jesus corrected her does not mean he doesn’t love her. How often have you as a parent corrected a child or you as a child been corrected by a parent...most of the time it is our of love.

So you that find yourselves the Martha in the story...you best know that you are loved by Jesus so very much.

And interestingly enough, Jesus never once tells Martha to be Mary and in turn has never once told you that you must learn how to identify with Mary or else!

Jesus accepts you as you are, just as he accepted Martha just the way she was. After all, God did create us to be us...

Jesus asked Martha to pay a bit more attention to the present...being present in the moment does not make you less of yourself. Time is fleeting...the past is the past the future is the future...but there;s a reason the present is called the present. For Martha, Jesus was afraid she would miss out on the present of having the Christ in her home teaching...the dishes could wait until the morning.

And you know what...if you feel connected to Martha...I would make a wild assumption you have some sense of faith...even if you felt a bit of guilt by the story today.

Martha had incredible faith.

Do you remember when lazarus died? Remember what happened after Jesus arrived?

Martha said to him that *if* he were there then Lazarus would never have died. Even then, in all her grief and confusion, she had such deep faith in Jesus that she knew he could have saved her brother.

That simple yet profound moment in the Gospel reminds us that even in our grief, our faith in Jesus can see us through...even if we struggle with being in the moment as Martha did.

You know, the heroes of John's Gospel are those that know exactly who Jesus is...and MArtha ranks up there with them...for she was able to proclaim and testify that Jesus was in fact the messiah...the son of God...

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

You see...being the Martha in the story is not all that bad...sometimes you just need to be reminded to live in the moment and allow the dishes to go until the morning when the company has cleared out and the stories have been told and shared...I mean...after all...if there were no Marthas...who would do the dishes?