

Sermon July 17, 2022 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We can't say enough good about Martha. She had a sense of what was important. She knew how to show honor to those to whom honor was due. She knew how to serve. She knew how to be a host. She was a git-r-done hard worker. So, when in his travels Jesus came to Martha's village, she would not fail.

The word about Jesus had been going around. A few towns over, Jesus had healed a boy with an unclean spirit. Before that, he had fed five thousand families at Bethsaida. He had calmed the storm on the sea. He had raised a widow's son from the dead. This kind of news goes viral!

But there was also the news of a Samaritan village rejecting Jesus, rudely sending him on his way. Jesus answered that rebuke by identifying himself with the Samaritans in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Now Jesus enters Martha's town, and she is not going to allow to be done to Jesus in her town what had been done to him in that Samaritan town. Martha will allow no rudeness, but provide as warm a welcome as she knew how.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. Luke 10:38:

Here there will be a proper welcome. Jesus will find hospitality. He is the Anointed One for Israel, the Savior for every sinner, the healer of diseases and comforter of

the afflicted, and Martha will make sure he is treated as such. The Samaritans had not been good hosts; the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, they kept all the rules, but they were not gracious hosts to the Christ. But with Martha, he will be an honored guest. She knows how to serve. She knows how to be a host.

If you're having an honored guest over, you bring out the good dishes and buy the expensive foods. If your boss or a favorite politician is coming to your house, would you sit them down at the table and then say, "I forgot to bring home meat for tonight, I forgot to wash the dishes, I forgot to get good wine, but, hey, here's some peanut-butter and bread, and let me grab some water to go with that?" Definitely not!

Martha had a big job to do. Set the table with the good dishes. Prepare the dinner. Bring out the good wine—everyone knew how much Jesus liked good wine ever since they heard the account of him supplying the best wine at that big wedding in Cana. If you're Martha, and Jesus is now a guest in your home, are you going to bring out cheap table wine after hearing of how he supplied the best wine for that wedding in Cana?

This is no small job for Martha. The nerves begin to fray. So much could go wrong. The bread might be too doughy or too brown. Jesus is a guest in her house, and she will treat him as he deserves.

You can't say enough good about Martha. She had a sense of what was important—and if anyone is worthy of good care, it's the Teacher of Israel, Jesus, now seated in her home. Martha knew how to serve; she knew how to be a host.

And Jesus loved her. And here's what he shows her. He shows up as guest in order to become the host. He shows up to be served, in order to make himself the servant. He had come to that wedding in Cana as guest, but then, he made himself host, he supplied the good wine. Now he comes to the home of Mary and Martha—he's the guest. Martha is serving. Then she finds Jesus is there not to *be served*, but to *serve*. He himself brings the gifts and takes on the role of the host.

What gift is he serving? His Word. His word of forgiveness and mercy, of grace and life, his Word of the ransom he is to pay for all sinners at the cross. It is his

Word justifying the sinner, bestowing the Holy Spirit, cleansing the conscience and imparting wisdom and healing.

Mary is receiving the gifts Jesus gives. She is hearing his Word. Jesus loves Mary. He loves also Martha. He will not leave her out of the gifts.

The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41

It will not be taken from Martha, either. Later, when her brother Lazarus dies, Martha will see more gifts from Jesus. She will hear him remind her of his Word of life, then she will see him even call Lazarus out of the grave, giving him life. Martha will see more gifts. The death on the cross, the resurrection, then, life eternal—it’s all there for Martha. No gift left out. Martha—the worthy host, treated by Jesus as the most honored guest of all, a woman to be served gifts by the Son of God.

Jesus came to her as a guest. He entered the town, after all. Martha didn’t have that wrong. This is the gift of Jesus coming in the flesh. He became man, he came with a body. Coming as a human, he came among us as one to be served. St. Augustine put it like this:

The Lord had a body. And just as he deigned to assume a physical body for our sake, so also did he deign to be hungry and thirsty. As a result of the fact that he deigned to be hungry and thirsty, he condescended to be fed by those he himself enriched. He condescended to be received as a guest, not from need but from favor. St. Augustine

So it is for us. As our Lord came with bodily needs, bodily hunger and thirst to Martha, but he did it in order to bring to her his gifts of grace and life, so even now, our Lord comes to us in his Church. The Church has worldly needs. Buildings are kept up, supplies are purchased, bills are paid, wages are paid. This is our Lord condescending to come to us in the way of earthly needs. It is in order to enrich us. He comes giving gifts. We think we are here to serve him, but then we find out, he came not to be served, but to serve. And the ones he serves are the least deserving of being served.

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came to call not the righteous, but the sinners.” Mark 2:17

If you know everything, live in a perfect life, and have no sin, then you have no gift from Jesus.

But if your understanding is limited, you are plagued by the problems of life, and are a sinner, then Jesus has something good for you.

“... you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before [the Father]. Colossians 1:21

He is your host. You are his guest. He feeds you with the bread of life, with the wine of forgiveness. For this he comes to you, to give you every good gift. Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ as you believe and trust in him. Amen

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