



Sermon for Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. July 17, 2022 – Martha and Mary

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene
The Reverend Glenda Empsall, Deacon

[Amos 8:1-12, Psalm 52, Colossians 1:15-28, Luke 10:38-42](#)

All things came into being through The Word, and without The Word not one thing came into being. What came into being in The Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.¹ Amen.

Today's Gospel reading is only 5 verses – but when we picture the scene, we see that it is tightly packed. Jesus and his disciples came to Martha's house, probably for a meet, greet and teaching moment for other followers of Jesus, a rest stop, and a meal.

Jesus' followers gathered at his feet to listen. Mary was there; hearing the Word; engrossed in Jesus' teaching. Martha was busy making certain her guests were cared for. She was not amused that Mary wasn't helping! In that culture, failing to be a good hostess was interpreted as disrespecting your guests. I can imagine the next scene, but the female sibling pairs I know, specifically remembering my aunt and her younger sister, my mother, neither sat. Both of them were Martha!

Martha came into the room, saw Jesus with his followers and Mary (inappropriately for that culture) sitting together at Jesus' feet. I imagine Martha becoming angry because Mary was just sitting there. Martha wanted everything to be perfect for her guests. She felt overwhelmed by all that needed to be done – and there sat her slacker of a little sister doing nothing while, “Martha was distracted by her many tasks.”

Martha tried to recruit Jesus to her side. It's also called triangulation. “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me.” But Jesus didn't take the bait. Jesus recognized Martha's anxiety. He knew what not to say, “Calm down, Martha. Chill.” Neither did Jesus invite Martha to abandon her calling to diakonia², service to others, and to sit with Mary. Jesus acknowledged Martha's true feelings, hidden beneath her anger. “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things...” Jesus knew that Mary was doing something; something important. She was listening to the very Word of God which ultimately inspires believers to service. “...Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

We invite Jesus into our hearts when we listen, learn and share The Word (as Mary did). We dwell in Jesus when we love and care for our neighbors; practicing radical hospitality (as Martha did). By our presence and actions in community with one another -- sharing our gifts of time, talent and treasure -- we hope to inspire others to do the same.

¹ John 1:3-4

² Greek meaning “ministry of service,” root for Deacon.

O God, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, given to us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.