

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – 2022

Genesis 18:1-14

Colossians 1:21-29

Luke 10:38-42

A friend tells me of the moment he fell in love with his wife. She was the head teller at the local bank and he was going in to open an account. He had never seen her, never set foot in that bank, never dreamed of the moment that was about to change his life. He stood in line, attentive to what was going on around him, for that is his nature. She was supervising the teller next to her who was about to give a customer the incorrect change – a huge overpayment that she would not be able to ask for back if she actually gave it and the chief teller prevented the mistake – while efficiently concluding a transaction with the customer in front of her, handling an incoming phone call, tabulating her cumulative register record, inviting the next customer to come forward with a smile, closing and locking her cash drawer, again speaking to her apprentice regarding where to file the deposit slip and briefly but efficiently organizing her own workstation before the next customer arrived at her window. His heart lurched out of his chest. He was in love. All by virtue of this woman's ability to multitask.

And that's what we call it now; multitasking. I'm not sure what they called in when this interaction took place, but for women, in any era, it is second nature. And there's a scientific reason for this. Each of us has a broad band of nerve fibers which connect the two hemispheres of the brain (the right and left side of the brain). This bundle of fibers is called the corpus callosum. It is reported that a woman's brain has a larger corpus callosum, which means women can transfer data between the right and left hemisphere faster than men. Men tend to be more left brained, while women have greater access to both sides. Multitasking; the handling of more than one task at the same time by a single person. Life demands multitasking, probably especially for women. Imagine a mother of more than one child who cannot multitask.

The Lord Christ visits the home of Mary and Martha. These two women are the sisters of Lazarus, a dear family to our Lord. Hospitality is very likely Martha's gift and she sets about providing for the King of kings and the Lord of lords. If ever you would want to make things 'just so' for a visitor it would be for this man, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Martha is multitasking – stirring the pots, baking the bread, setting the table, pouring refreshments, sweeping the floor, clearing the hors d'ourves. And there's her sister, that Mary, who hasn't lifted a finger! Anxiety, frustration, self-pity, bitterness, anger, exasperation, resentment – it is written all over Martha's words. It's time for the hammer to come down on Mary and Jesus is to be Martha's Thor. "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me" (Luke 10:40).

This is a pretty lively encounter. There's a lot going on in this interaction but this way more than a mere family squabble that Jesus rectifies with a clarifying word. This brief exchange between our Lord and Martha is deeply theological. This priceless conversation is a divinely constructed window into this present moment. If you are

capable of grasping this one theological jewel and hold onto it like you would a five-carat diamond then you will leave here with heavenly treasure. Listen to the Lord Christ: "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."

Ah, Mary, the deadbeat sister, she is lifted up as the heroine in this whole affair. Mary; what's she doing? Seemingly nothing. She's just sitting there, sitting at the feet of the Master, soaking in His words, luxuriating in His teaching, absorbing the light that streams from Source of all goodness. Mary has chosen the better part (the One thing necessary), and it will not be taken from her. Multitasking – it has become our *modus operandi* in this late age. People make fun of you if you can't multitask. "Hah; that guy can't walk and chew gum at the same time." Mary is single-minded. Distractions are ignored; competing activities are abandoned. Her heart is where her treasure is. Christ and His Word – that is the one thing necessary.

Here is the competing theology in contemporary America. Is worship primarily something we do for God or is it something He does for us? Who is the object of the activity of worship and who is the subject? How about a little hint? Jesus said: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Kudos to Martha for wanting to give the Master a slice of deep-dish pizza, but what He really wants is to serve *her*, to pour His life into *her* by the power of His Word, to give her forgiveness, life, and salvation – to serve her, and Mary and Lazarus and Peter and Betty and Pat and Robert and Fred and Terry. Don't just do something, sit there.

Some would say that worship, the activity of the church service, is something we do for God. Really? Does He need what we have to give Him or do we need what He has to give us? When Jesus said: "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27), He was not only referring to the time between His incarnation and His ascension, but what He does for His church at all times. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). That is the One thing we need, His service. His service began when He leaped from His royal throne and took up residence in the womb of the Virgin. This service continued as He lived a radically faithful life to the Father. A perfect life lived out in this fallen creation in service to you.

The greatest became least and took up the form of a servant. Washing feet, bleeding for the guilty, dying for sinners; I am among you as one who serves. And I am going to *go on* being among you as one who serves. You come to this holy house to be served by the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And He is super pleased that you just sit there and receive what He has to give (with a believing heart). That, in fact, is the highest form of worship (receiving what our Lord wills to give).

[This brings up a point for me, I'm going to give you a little pastoral insight into what has been like for me for the last 2 ½ years. When this Covid thing began to happen this was the one thing that was in my mind – that we have to be Mary, sit at His feet, receive His Word. And the world was attempting to detach Christians from this word, where they are gathered for worship, doing precisely what our Lord has called us to do. And I fretted,

somewhat, with the idea “how do we maintain that action” which is not of a human origin but that through which God operates for our ultimate good, the principal mark of the church is that we sit at His feet and receive what He wills to give.]

And during that time, ours is a posture of reception. Martha would have Mary give up that posture and in doing so turns our Lord's words regarding the nature of worship on its head. "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" (Lk 10:41f).

Do you know what our intention is here at Christ the King? We intend to build the next generation of "Marys" in this place, believers who are so content, so fulfilled, so delighted to sit at the Master's feet and receive His gifts. Martha was anxious. Mary was not. The world entices you to lose all sight of the importance of sitting at Christ's feet. Will you allow it to do that to you? In love, Jesus reorients Martha. The Lord calls to her tenderly. Come to me, Martha, and I will give you rest for your soul. And you are to tell your friends. That's part of what being a Christian is – tell your friends this: Rest for your soul is found at Christ the King Lutheran Church where we sit at the feet of the crucified and risen Lord of life.

Martha was a towering figure of faith. When her brother Lazarus died, she found consolation in the only place that it can be found – in Christ. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Jesus responded that her brother would rise again. In this exchange she is drinking in His words. "I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24). Consolation was poured into her by the living voice of Christ. "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:26). Blessed Martha speaks for all Christians: "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (John 11:27). That is why we sit at His feet.