



July 17, 2022

Pentecost 6

Luke 10:38-42, 16-20

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(Note – this sermon was provided for churches across the ELCIC by Bishop Sid Haugen, Bishop of the Saskatchewan Synod, as part of the ELCIC’s Summer Sermon Series. The first page or so is Pastor Paul’s introductory thoughts; the remainder of the sermon comes from Bishop Haugen. Bishop Haugen’s sermon is also available in its entirety on Epiphany’s website. Thank you, Bishop, for your word for us today!)

First, a few words from Pastor Paul: If you do a quick Google search for Martha’s kitchen, among other things you’ll find a handful of soup kitchens, food banks, or pay-what-you-are-able-or-don’t-pay-at-all diners here and there across the continent. Whoever it was who gets the idea to name a soup kitchen or a restaurant “Martha’s kitchen” knows that there is something good going on in this story that we just heard. Martha often ends up being left with all the criticism, but what gets overlooked is this: Martha is providing hospitality to weary travelers; food and drink and a place for conversation over a meal; a rest for achy feet to people who have spent a hard day on the road, in the street, or treading the alleys...

One of things that we need to remember as we read the gospels is that Jesus never does what he does alone. Right at the beginning he calls twelve to come and be his students or followers or apprentices. Soon he also invites women, with names like Mary Magdalene and

Joanna and Susanna, who join that community and actually seem to have money to help support the community. And not long after that Jesus finds another seventy and sends them off to prepare the way and do some of the work. Jesus doesn't travel alone. And somewhere along the way he added more people to this community, and more again, and somewhere along the way he added us, gathered in a room and on a livestream, and we are a part of that same community too. People in this ages old community are tired or cheery or afraid or uncertain or confident; if we're honest we know that we are never quite sure where we're going, and sometimes we need to stop...and maybe take a break in Martha's kitchen.

That's Pastor Paul's sermon. Here's Bishop Sid's sermon. Or better, here's your sermon, the words of Bishop Sid speaking the Word of God, the Word named Jesus, who walks in community with us.

So we hand it off to Bishop Sid Haugen as he begins with a prayer:

Let us pray: Creator God, you know each of us. You watch over us from the day of our birth, through all the changes and chances of life, through all the ups and all the downs. Speak to us as we gather this day as human beings, as people of faith, as church. May these words of my mouth and the meditations and imaginations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Strength, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

We are all in this community that is called the church. And this community is the community that travels with Jesus into this story today.

So we pick up the story here: "Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named **Martha** *welcomed him into her home*"

The narrative does not make clear who all was invited into the room. Who would be welcomed with Jesus in Martha's kitchen? Peter and John? Or the women? Some of the 70? Who is in Martha's kitchen for this story? I think, as we ourselves enter the story, the answer is that the church of every time and place is there in Martha's kitchen. It's a crowded kitchen that day. It's a

full house. The twelve, the women and the 70 are there. We are there. Watching. Wondering. Listening.

Martha welcomes Jesus **under her roof**. I wonder if as the older of two sisters, it is actually Martha's house. That this is literally Martha's kitchen. In any case, she welcomed Jesus into her home. The story may remind you of a story much later in Luke. The day, remember, when Jesus is walking down the road with a crowd all around him, and a little tax collector who can't see for the crowd, climbs a tree to see Jesus, to maybe be seen by Jesus. Remember what Jesus says to Zacchaeus, "Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today." There is something about Jesus in the house that matters in both stories.

Martha welcomed Jesus into their home. I wonder what welcoming Jesus into your home looks like today. Maybe it is saying table grace before a meal. We were taught the very quaint sounding table grace: "Come Lord Jesus be our guest, let these gifts to us be blessed." It is a simple little prayer we were taught as children, but it has stuck somehow in my family. When you think about it, the simple little prayer is a prayer in which we welcome Jesus in to our home, isn't it? Maybe that is why this little prayer is said among so many families in the faith communities.

What does welcoming Jesus into our home look like? Is it reading the Scriptures and meditating on them? Going to church together and bringing those learnings back to our homes? Martha welcomes Jesus into her kitchen. So do we.

The text continues: **Martha had a sister named Mary**. Mary was there – in Martha's kitchen.... She sat at Jesus' feet **and listened to what he was saying**. Mary sat down in Martha's kitchen and was drawn by the teachings of Jesus--profound words, life giving words. Like these: The kingdom of God, the dream of God is like a sower who goes out to sow. Most seed is lost. But some grows beyond all human expectation. Or this: Do not be anxious about what you are going to eat. Does not God feed the sparrows? Do not be anxious about what you are going to wear. Are not the

lilies, who 'neither toil nor spin' clothed wonderfully? Mary was fixed on the Gospel of Jesus. She hung on every word.

The text continues: Martha was "**distracted with many tasks.**" She was setting the table for Jesus in her kitchen. Preparing food. Practicing hospitality—a good thing! Maybe also trying to impress. With Jesus in the house, wouldn't you? Or maybe, just maybe she was trying to be one up on her sister. Sisters and brothers can be like that. Maybe she was fussing anxiously as though somehow this good work would make her worthy of love. A lot of things might have made Martha busy—and very likely she wasn't sure herself what kept her so busy. Does that sound familiar?

Martha, however, is not too busy to notice that she is doing all the work and sister Mary is just sitting there. So Martha comes to Jesus and says, "**Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.**" Now, you might have thought that Martha could have quietly ask her sister to help out, rather than telling someone else about it. But no, Martha takes the so familiar and so destructive indirect route and tells Jesus to tell Mary to help out.

In fact, as you read the text, Martha is mad at Jesus for not already telling Mary to get to work. "Lord, you don't even care." Martha's kitchen can be a complicated place.

The text continues: The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha." I love that piece. "Sidney, Sidney" my mother used to say to me from time to time--and I knew that I was being directed, and I knew that I was being loved. "Martha, Martha" Jesus says to her.

Listen to Jesus' words sounding to the church gathered together in Martha's kitchen: "Martha, Martha; Peter, Peter; Joanna, Joanna **you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.**"

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

The text, perhaps surprisingly, ends there. There is no explanation by the narrator of ‘what does this mean?’. Rather we have heard a story that lives on, inviting us in, inviting us into Martha’s kitchen.

Peter, James, John, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Suzanna, and the whole church still gather round the story and even now are listening. What does this story say to us in the midst of the events of our lives as this moment in the summer of 2022?

I wonder how it sounds to you in your life. But let me share with you how the story meets me today as a human being and as a part of our faith community.

I do hear the story speaking to me as a human being as summer holidays begin. It has been a busy year. It has been busy both with work and even more with constantly working out how to pivot our work to the latest wave of the pandemic. It has been a thoroughly distracting year. This summer seems to be a time when we may be called to set down the complexities of the last few years. To take some time for quietness again. To do whatever activity gives you some space to slow down enough to hear God speak. Like Mary did in Martha’s kitchen.

I do hear the story speaking too to our faith communities as we worship. It is so important to gather – and we do gather in-person and online together now - and take the time to be still and know that God is God. As we sing the music or listen to the music played. As we open our hands for the bread and wine. As we open our ears to listen to the Word. As we reach out to our companions on the journey. Maybe in Martha’s kitchen.

One more profound image comes to me as a person of faith as I enter into the story this year. When my father passed away many years ago, I was gifted with a very familiar book: his personal

Bible. I have to admit, I can't use it. It is in the King James Version. The language, while beautiful, is not my language. On the other hand, this old Bible, its look and feel, speaks to me of Martha's kitchen. The pages have yellowed a bit—some are almost brown with use. It is underlined throughout. There are notes in the margins of texts that were used for this event or that a certain pastor may have used for a sermon. It was the Bible of a life-long farmer, a life-long person of faith. But the most striking thing to me is not the pages or the notes, it is, of all things, the cover. I imagine at one time it was shiny and stiff and new. But after all those years of use, the black leather is soft and supple. The cover spoke of years of taking the time to sit at the feet of Jesus, hanging on every word.

I know. . .there are other stories to be told about the importance of work and service. Many of them. In fact, do you know what story immediately follows the story of Martha's Kitchen in Luke's gospel? The Good Samaritan. But let those stories sound on another day. Today, this week, in the summer of 2022, I would invite you to spend some time in Martha's kitchen. I would invite you to take the time to sit at the feet of Jesus and hang on every word.

As you are this morning.

Amen.