

*Pentecost 6-July 17, 2022*

*Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish*

*Genesis 18:1-10a and Luke 10:38-42*

## **“Stop...and Listen”** *Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad*

*Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen*

In the first lesson for today from Genesis the Lord appears to Abraham represented by three men who come to his tent. In the gospel for today, the Lord appears to the home of Mary and Martha in the human form of Jesus Christ himself. Martha would probably want me to correct how I said this and call it her house and say that Mary just lives with her. Clearly in this house Martha is in charge. It was Martha who got up to meet Jesus at the door and welcomed him as scripture says into HER home. In today's scripture readings there is one Old Testament reading and one New Testament example of two different responses that can happen when the Lord shows up in your presence. What happened as recorded at both ends of the bible are two possible responses from us today when Jesus comes near to us. We can either respond like Abraham did when the three men first appear or like Martha responded to Jesus by getting to work or we can respond like Abraham at the end of the reading for today and as Mary responded to Jesus by stopping what we are doing and listening to him.

Depending on what is going on in our lives we might align ourselves with either Martha or Mary. Probably more often we are like Martha's, and we are busy bodies, always doing something. We have made busyness into a virtue, and we agree with the old saying that idle hands are the devil's workshop. We greet people by asking them how or what they have been doing. Hopefully there are times in our lives when we can rest at the feet of Jesus and give him our full attention and listen to what he has to say to us. In both stories, there is no condemnation for the Abrahams who are running from place to place or the Martha's who are distracted by many things. From the very beginning, the Lord commanded that we should work six days and the seventh should be a day of sabbath rest. The Lord is not opposed to work. He commands us to work more days than we are to rest. However, the Lord also makes it very clear that if you want to hear what he has to say to you, you must stop from what you are doing... and listen.

In each of these readings, the busyness of the people is done for a good purpose. They are busy serving the Lord. We often do the same. It certainly is a good thing to open the door and welcome people into our churches just like Martha did for Jesus. It is certainly a good thing to provide some food and time for fellowship along with our worship services like Abraham was hurrying to get ready before hearing the message that his guests came to deliver. Churches with filled calendars are preferred over churches that have little going on. Jesus knows and says there are many things to do, but he cautions against the many things becoming distractions from the one thing that matters. Mary chose to listen to Jesus rather than listening to what Martha had planned for her to do.

We often boast about our ability to multitask. We pride ourselves in being able to get many things done at the same time. We have laws against distracted driving, yet we have devices in our vehicles that enable us to

phone or message people or watch movies while driving. I often will have the tv on while I look at the latest YouTube videos I follow. Research confirms that multitasking is more of a myth than a reality. In 1740, Lord Chesterfield wrote a letter to his son stating that there is time enough for everything in the course of the day, if you do but one thing once, but there is not time enough in the year, if you will do two things at a time. I believe this is good advice still today. Most likely Martha was close enough to Jesus that she would have been able to catch some of what Jesus was saying in her little home. And Jesus didn't condemn Martha for the work that she was doing, but he also did not compliment her as a good multitasker. Jesus did not tell Mary to be more like Martha. Jesus didn't tell Mary that she would be able to help Martha and still be able to pay enough attention to what he was saying so that she would at least catch the highlights of what he was saying.

I get tired just listening to all that Abraham was doing when the Lord appeared at his tent. Before the three men could open their mouths, Abraham gets busy. He didn't just answer the door, Abraham ran to it. Abraham doesn't let the men of the Lord assist in any way with anything. Abraham tells them, "Let me...get water to wash your feet. Let me..bring some bread. Then he runs to Sarah to get her busy to help do what he said he would do. Abraham is over 90 at this time and I know what I look like attempting to do things in a hurry and have an image in my mind of what Abraham's efforts at doing things quickly might look like. Until these three get their feet washed and their meal prepared it is only Abraham who is doing the talking although it was the men who came to Abraham's tent who had the important message to deliver. In the same way, what Jesus had to say to Mary and Martha when he came to his house was more important than Martha coaching Jesus on what he should say to Mary so that she too could get busy rather than sit at the feet of Jesus.

It is also interesting that in each of these stories, the Lord does not appear after receiving an invitation to come and visit. The Lord decides when to appear. And when the Lord appears, his function is to speak and not to see how busy you are or listen to what you have been doing, even if what you have been doing was for his sake.

The third commandment is to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Without receiving a command from the Lord to sit and listen to him, we will always choose to be busy rather than to stop and listen to him.

After Abraham finished all that, he wanted to do for the three men of the Lord, he finally stopped and stood by the men under the tree. It was then when these men had the complete attention of Abraham, and they were ready to deliver the good news to Abraham and his wife Sarah. Then one of them spoke up and told them the news that they had been waiting for. "You and your wife Sarah will have a son."

Jesus did not come here today because you have invited him. Jesus arrives whenever two or three are gathered in his name. For a few minutes today, you, like Mary, have chosen the one thing that cannot be taken from you. To hear the good news of what God has done for you which will never be taken from you. Amen