

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Justin Johnson
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Bellingham, WA 98225
8th Sunday after Pentecost July 18, 2010
Text: Luke 10:38-42

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Amen.

“Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, 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.”

This is how our gospel reading for today concludes. It is a brief story where Jesus is welcomed by Martha into her home. Martha goes about the many tasks of hosting, while her sister, Mary, a woman, sits at Jesus' feet, as a disciple, something only men did at that time.

This is an interesting story following our text from last week where twice Jesus tells the lawyer to go and do and this week it appears as though Jesus is commending not the doer, but the one who is sitting and listening. So what gives? Generally when one looks at this story, one comes to the conclusion that Mary is to be praised and Martha is to be chastised for her doing, for her busy-ness. But Martha is not chastised for her doing, she is chastised for her anxiety. Jesus says that she is worried and distracted by many things, there is need of only one thing.

Martha's service and desire to provide hospitality is not a bad thing. The trouble that Jesus points out is Martha's anxiety about it all, that keeps her from seeing what is needful, to hear the word of the Lord.

Worried and distracted. Perhaps you are feeling that now on this day that we say good-bye to one another. I am. Perhaps you wonder what the future is. Maybe, the many tasks that seem as though they are before you seem overwhelming and you wonder how it will be done. I know that I am wondering that about the future.

Now we could say to each other, “Don't worry.” But what happens when someone tells you that? You just worry more. The more you think about the things that you are not supposed to worry about, the worse one's anxiety gets. So how do we move from worry and fear to hope? We remember. We remember the ways in which God has provided in the past. We remember God's faithfulness. We

remember the challenges that we have faced before and we remember the presence of God in the midst of those challenges. We remember with joy the gifts that God has provided along the way.

Remembering does two things. It reminds us that God brought us through what we've gone through in the past, both good and bad and thus gives us hope that God will bring us through what is to come. And remembering moves us to thankfulness as we give praise to God for God's faithfulness.

God has been faithful in the time that we have done ministry together. And God has sustained ministry in this place for over 100 years. God has provided and God will provide. And for this we give thanks.

In our Old Testament reading for today, we have the story of Abraham and Sarah welcoming three visitors that are angels of the Lord. The angels bring word that Sarah will bear a son that will be the start of the great nation that the Lord promised Abraham that would descend from him. Sarah and Abraham were in their nineties, but God was faithful to the covenant that was promised. God kept his word, and God kept his promise, for from Abraham did descend the great nation of Israel. This story was recorded in Genesis so that the generations to follow would be reminded of God's faithfulness as this story was told and re-told. What stories will you tell? How will you remember?

I will tell stories of Christmas Eve. I will remember community meals in the basement and table talk gatherings at the parsonage. I will remember new roofs for the church, parsonage, and Our Saviour's House being provided for. I will remember sitting at bedsides and gravesides in times of sickness and death. I will remember the relationships formed in these four years together.

And now we will be saying good-bye to each other. I don't know about you, but I don't like saying good-bye to people that I care about and love. It is hard to say good-bye not knowing when you will see someone again, but I trust in the promises of Jesus Christ and I trust that if I do not see you again in this lifetime, I will see you in the next when we meet at Jesus' feet and we sit like Mary sat.

As we move into the future from this day in different directions, we move into the future knowing that God is faithful, that Jesus has gone before us, and that it is Jesus that will hold things together. He is the one needful thing. Paul says it like this in Colossians, "Jesus himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1:17-18a)

If you find yourself worried and distracted by many things in the days to come, remember there is one thing that is needed and that is Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ, we know that God is faithful and that God is for us. For it is in Jesus that God's love for you and for me and for the world is made known. In Jesus, God comes to us to dwell among us and to lead us into the future. We don't know what lies ahead, but we know that God is with us, Emmanuel. We know in Jesus Christ that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:38-39) For we are God's children, claimed in the waters of baptism and joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And this is our hope, that since Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we will be, too. And this, my friends, is a wonderful future. A future that is yours and mine in Jesus Christ.

It is a future that gives us hope in the midst of sadness, it is a future that calms our fears in the midst of uncertainty, it is a future that is calling us forward into God's Kingdom. Thanks be to God. Amen.