



ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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Volume 12, Issue 8

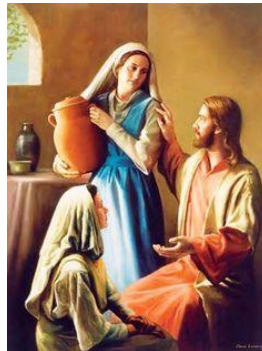
August 2019

From the Pastor's Desk

"But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, '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.'" Luke 10:40-43



We heard the above text as our gospel lesson at our Parish-wide worship service in the park at Scarville. But as I thought about the month of August, this text came back to mind. This text is a challenging text to us. Over and over again through the gospels Jesus tells his disciples and people in the crowd to follow him by serving others. Right before this text we hear the story of the parable of the Good Samaritan. A Lawyer has asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus turns the question back upon the Lawyer, who answers, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus affirms the Lawyer's answer. But the Lawyer wants a clarification of just who is his neighbor. The Lawyer wants to know, what are the limits to the people I am expected to serve? In response, Jesus tells the famous parable of the Good Samaritan. After Jesus tells the parable, he asks the Lawyer, which proved to be the neighbor. The Lawyer answers correctly once again, the one who has shown mercy. Then Jesus instructs the Lawyer, and us to "Go and do likewise." Then we have the story of Mary and Martha.



Martha seems to be doing exactly what Jesus has been teaching, "Go and do, serving." Martha and Mary are hosting Jesus and at least his twelve disciples if not more. Martha wants to be a good hostess, after all hospitality was a very important part of the Mid-Eastern culture. So Martha is busy making sure that servants have washed all the feet of her guests. She is busy instructing servants to bring out water and she is putting together some snacks for the guests to be brought out why she is cooking and supervising servants helping with the cooking. She wants to make sure the plates and cups are clean to set the table. She checks the bread that she is baking in the oven for her guests. There is a lot to be done to welcome and feed her guests. When Martha takes a moment to see if everything is getting done, she notices Mary is just sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to Jesus teach. Martha asks herself, what in the world is Mary doing? She shouldn't be out there with the men sitting at Jesus' feet. She should be in the kitchen helping me to prepare to serve Jesus and our guests. I am sure Martha banged a couple of lids on the pots in the kitchen to draw Mary's attention. But Mary didn't move. So she stomps out of the kitchen and asks the Lord to tell her sister, to get off her bun and come and help her serve him and the other guests. Martha is surprised by the Lord's answer, "Martha, Martha, you are worried about many things. Mary has chosen the better part and it shall not be taken from her."

I think Martha's response was probably, "What?" Which is probably what we think as well. "What? Jesus you are always calling us to serve one another. Mary is just sitting and

listening, which is well and fine, but how is the meal going to be put on the table. Jesus calls us over and over to serve, to love, calling us to action. But here he is saying Mary has chosen the better part. "Well, what about that?" we might think. As we pause to think about that, notice Jesus said Mary had chosen a better part. He did not negate the part Martha was doing, which was serving. Since we tend to be doers, going here and there, rushing to this task and the next, and feel like we are answering Jesus' call to serve, we need to pause a moment to think about what Jesus is teaching us here.

In August, as in many months, we find ourselves busy rushing here and there serving our roles as parents, siblings, friends, adult children to our parents and much more. We want to serve our children by giving them opportunities to grow and discover their gifts, so we take them to softball and baseball practices, baseball and softball games. We take them to 4-H meetings and help them with their projects for the fair. We try to create fun family memories on vacations. We teach our children the value of playing together as a family, each one taking certain responsibilities for camping and other chores to do together. Plus, we are still busy with our jobs and other activities we do most of the year. We are busy like Martha doing a lot of different things, answering the call to serve.

In the midst of the busyness, even the busyness of answering our Lord's call to serve one another, Jesus lifts up Mary's choice to sit at his feet to listen to him. Many times, through the years, many have contrasted Mary's choice and Martha's choice as if they were contrary to each other. After all, Jesus lifted up Mary's choice as the better choice. But what if Jesus was trying to make a point that both are important. What if Jesus is lifting up Mary's choice to spend time with Jesus as an opportunity to center ourselves upon Jesus and his love as the reason we are answering the call to serve. After all, our jobs, our roles as parents and friends have cultural and relational expectations apart from Jesus' call to serve. Sitting at Jesus' feet reminds us that Jesus has called us to these roles, our vocations as servants of his love. We need to be fed by his love and his presence to be empowered by his love to be his servants. So there are times when we need to be like Mary, to sit at Jesus' feet, before we act like Martha, to be a servant.

So as we rush here and there being a servant of our Lord as parents, friend, adult children to our parents, plus all the other roles we answer, let us also take time like Mary to sit at Jesus' feet.

Pastor Randy

WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS

God's Bag of Cookies

A modern parable: *One afternoon the secretary who worked in a large office building took a well deserved coffee break. She stopped by the vending machine and bought a bag of cookies, which she slipped into her purse. The she waited in line for a cup of coffee. After she got her coffee, she found a vacant chair at a table in the break room and sat down to enjoy these few brief minutes away from the office. She had brought the latest issue of a popular magazine with her, and she opened it to the article she had started reading that morning over breakfast. After taking a sip of her coffee, she reached out and took a cookie from the bag. To her astonishment, a man sitting across the table from her also reached into the bag and took a cookie! She was a little bit upset by this, but she didn't say anything. After all, it was only one cookie.*



A few minutes later, she took another cookie. Once again, her table companion also took a cookie from the bag. Now she was getting a little bent out of shape, especially since there was only one more cookie left in the bag. Apparently the man also noticed that only one cookie was left. He reached into the bag, took it out, broke it in half, offered one half to her, and ate the other half himself. Then he smiled, rose from the table, and walked away.

By this time, steam was coming from the woman's ears! She was mad enough bite the head off a nail! How dare this jerk ruin her coffee break by helping himself to half of HER cookies! She hastily folded the magazine and snatched up her purse, which fell open to reveal her unopened bag of cookies. All this time, she had been helping herself to someone else's cookies, and he didn't seem to mind at all! Actually it was the person with whom she shared the table who had every right to be offended. She had taken what had belonged to him without asking or even acknowledging the generosity of her host with a word of thanks.



We struggle to live in “thanksgiving”. We are surrounded by conversations of commodity prices, the effect of tariffs, stock markets, failing economies, loss of jobs, and taxes. And in the midst of worldly the tone of those conversations we sometimes get lost and overwhelmed in our own worries.

But the place where we always need to start the conversation is with the question – “Whose bag of cookies is it?” And then recognizing it is always God’s bag of cookies, not ours. All that we have in this world, all that we lay claim to in this world, all in this world – is God’s. Always has been and always will be.

God made and owns the universe. Everything belongs to God. We humans create and own nothing. We merely get to use what belongs to God, and we are expected to do that responsibly. God will provide. That attitude “everything is God’s” is hard to live, but it is the bottom line. And when we finally embrace that fact, then we are able “to let go and let God.”

In relation to this modern day parable, so it is with us. All our lives, we've been helping ourselves to God's bag of cookies. Whether we realize it or not, whatever cookies we have are cookies that come from God. Can we acknowledged the source of the gifts with which we have blessed, or do we simply claim them as our own and dare anyone to try to take part of them away?

- By remembering that all we have comes from God, sometimes it is easier to trust that God will continue to provide.
- By remembering that God has provided, sometimes it is easier to trust that God will provide – again and again and again.
- By remembering God...and what he has done...we learn to trust what God will do.

In the meantime, enjoy the cookies!

Genesis 1

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”



*Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters*



I KNOW YOU ARE ALWAYS WITH ME!



Worship With Us



Exercise Your Faith... Walk With Jesus

Walk By Faith

