

“That’s *REALLY* how it works?!”

“It’s *REALLY* that good?!”

A boy wearing Adidas Sweatpants, a hoodie, and a knitted cap exclaimed.

He wore a face of fascination, contemplation, and excitement.

His cheeks were red with windburn

From spending too much time on the Everest steep, ice-glazed sledding hill.

“It’s *REALLY* that good?!”

We’ll come back to my friend in a little bit.

Our Gospel text comes to us from Luke 10:38-42*****

I invite you to turn there with me if you have your bible with you.

This story comes on the heels of last weeks parable of proximity

In the story of the Good Samaritan.

Our story this week offers us a slightly different invitation.

*****Hear the Word of the Lord:

Now as they went on their way,

He came to a certain village

Where a woman named Martha

Opened her home to him.

She had a sister named Mary,

Who sat at the Lord's feet,

Listening to what he was saying.

But Martha was distracted by her many tasks,

So she came to him and said,

“Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?

Tell her to help me!”

But the Lord answered her,

“Martha, Martha,

You are worried and distracted about many things;

There is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part

And it will not be taken away from her.”

This is the Word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.*****

I want us to make two observations

And accept an invitation this morning.

Two observations.

The first is this:

God comes home.

Let's start at the beginning.

“Now as they went on their way,

He came to a certain village where a woman named Martha

Welcomed him into her home.”

Martha opens her home to Jesus.

To Jesus!

The eternal Word made flesh,

The Son, the second person of the Trinity.

This Jesus,

Who as we just read a moment ago in Colossians:

“is the image of the invisible God,

The firstborn of all creation;

For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,

Things visible and invisible,

Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—

ALL THINGS have been created through him and FOR him.

He himself is before all things,

And in him all things hold together.”

Jesus Christ,

In his presence,

Angels roar their praise,

And demons furiously scurry away,

This Jesus

Is welcomed into Martha's home

God comes home.

God comes home.

"He came to a certain village,

where a woman named Martha

welcomed him into her home."

God comes home.

The Almighty, Everlasting, All-Knowing, Perfect, Humble, Gentle God

Receives Martha's hospitality,

And enters her and her sister's home.

God comes home.

The God of all-creation

In the flesh

Sits on their couch,

With their knick knack coo-coo bird clock on the wall,

And their paddy whack trinkets from their sister vacations

to Jerusalem on the coffee table.

God comes home.

The first observation is a declaration

Of what Christians have held to be true since the first century AD:

That the all-powerful, all-knowing, all creating God,

The God who MADE TIME,

Enters into it,

Takes on flesh,

Enters our turf,

Sits in our living room.

God comes home,

God enters our world,

God chooses to be with us.

Our God is not uninterested,

Distant,

Indifferent,

Far off.

In Jesus,

God humbly enters our humble abode.

God comes home.

“He came to a place where a woman named Martha

OPENED her home to him.”

God comes home.

The second observation builds on the first:

God comes home,

So that WE can find our *true* home in him.

“She (Martha) had a sister named Mary,

who sat at the Lord’s feet,

listening to what he said.”

Mary,

At home,

Sees Jesus as her truest home.

Mary sees that

Jesus is not just another house-guest,

But that Jesus actually is *her* true home.

I wonder if as Jesus was walking through their front door,

If Psalm 90:1 was ringing in Mary’s ears:

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations!”

Or maybe,

The familiar words of Deuteronomy suddenly slipped into her head,
“The eternal God is your dwelling place,
and underneath you are His everlasting arms.”

I wonder what prompted her to make such a costly decision
To find rest in her true home.

“Mary,
SAT at the LORD’S FEET,
listening to what he said.”

An unmarried woman sitting at the feet of an unmarried man is
scandalous.

A woman not actively offering hospitality to a male guest is
preposterous.

Mary’s decision to rest in her true home,
To rest in Jesus’ presence,
Is costly, radical, and counter-cultural.

Joanna Weaver wrote a book called,
Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World.

In this book,

She writes this about Mary:

“It isn’t every day God visits your house.

So she ignores tradition,
she breaks social etiquette,
and she presses closer.

As close to Jesus as possible.

It doesn't matter that she might be misunderstood.

She cares little that the disciples look at her strangely.

Somewhere in the distance she hears her name,

but it is drowned by the call of her Master.

The call to come.

The call to listen.

And listen she does."

God is our home.

Mary comes home.

"She had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet,
listening to what he said."

"But Martha (Pause).

"But Martha was *distracted* (pause)

by ALL the preparations that needed to be made.

She came to him and said,

"Lord, DON'T you CARE

That my SISTER has left me to do the work by MYSELF?

Tell her to help me!”

You heard what Joanna Weaver said about Mary,

Now hear what she has to say about Martha:

“I know we tend to sing Mary’s praises in bible studies.

But Martha, to be honest, appeals more to my perfectionistic tendencies.

What a woman!

What a hostess!

She doesn’t whip up an impromptu casserole of Kraft macaroni and cheese

and Ballpark franks as I’ve been known to do on occasion.

Not her!

She is the original Martha Stewart,

and Israel’s answer to Betty Crocker.

Or at least, that’s the way I imagine her.

She’s the Queen of the Kitchen—

and the rest of the house as well.

Luke’s story starts with Martha in her glory.

After all, this is Jesus.

She scraps her ordinary everyday menu of soup and bread

and pulls out all her cookbooks.

This, she decides, will be a banquet fit for a messiah.

For *the* Messiah.

Martha sends one servant to the field to slaughter a lamb,
another to the market to pick up a few of those luscious pomegranates
she saw yesterday.

Like a military general,
she barks commands to her kitchen staff.

Soak the lentils!

Pound the grain!

Knead the dough!

So many things to do and so little time.

She must make sure the centerpiece and the napkins match,
that the servant pours the wine from the right
and not the left.

Martha's mind is as busy as a room filled with kindergartners.

What would be just right for dessert?

A little goat cheese with a tray of fresh fruit?

Will Jesus stay overnight?

Someone must change the sheets and fold some towels.

Where's Mary?

Has anyone seen Mary?

she asks a servant scurrying by.

If Mary changed the sheets,

Martha might have time to fashion

an ark from the cheese

and carve the fruit into little animals marching two by two." (end quote)

Martha is in full-on hospitality mode,

And she finds her sister sitting at Jesus' feet.

"Lord!

Don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?!"

"Tell her to help me!"

Jesus is at their home,

Jesus is their home,

Mary comes home,

But Martha doesn't.

Instead,

She snaps at her sister.

Where might Martha's sharp rebuke of her sister come from?

Henri Nouwen,

A Dutch Catholic Priest,

And author of many books on the spiritual life,

Writes this, and this is actually in your bulletin

Under the thought for worship:

“There are three lies we believe:

We are what we have,

We are what we do,

And we are what others say about us.

When we believe these lies,

We forget what is the singular most important truth: we are God’s beloved.”

Do you see these lies operating in Martha’s mind?

Martha wants her resources to be recognized as ample, plentiful, and bountiful,

Martha doesn’t want her hosting efforts to come off as not good enough,

In the honor-shame culture of the New Testament,

Martha doesn’t want word to spread to others that she is not a good host.

Maybe Martha bought into these lies,

And maybe we do too,

More often than we'd like to admit.

Why do we believe these lies?

You are what you have

You are what you do

And You are what other people say about you

Write easy scripts to live by,

And easy formulas for how to assess our identity.

I know how to feel about myself if I have a Lamborghini,

And I know how to feel about myself if I have a 1997 VW Jetta,

Which,

By the way,

I DID have from age 16 until we moved out here.

I know how to feel about myself if I fail the test,

bomb the employee review,

blow the sale,

etc.

I know how to feel about myself if everyone else is telling me I'm no good,

Too emotional,

Too old,

Not smart enough,

Not athletic enough.

The scripts are easy, they're convenient, they're simple.

But they lead us far from home.

"Martha, Martha,

The Lord Answered,

"You are worried and distracted about many things;

There is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part,

And it will not be taken away from her."

God comes home, God is our home,

Here's the invitation:

So return home.

Returning home does not mean trying harder,

Praying harder,

Living more piously,

It means identifying where we have bought into the three lies,

And embracing our belovedness in Christ.

It means casting off everything that hinders.

It means returning to Christ,

Who indwells YOU

By His Holy Spirit.

I love the way St. Augustine puts it,

“God is more present to me than I am to myself.”

Or the way Chuck DeGroat, my professor at WTS says it,

“God is always home, it’s we who leave.”

God comes home. God is our home. So come home.

The one thing that Jesus says can’t be taken from Mary

Is her belovedness in and unity with Christ.

“There is need of only one thing--

Mary has chosen what is better,

And it will not be taken away from her.”

God comes home. God is our home. So return home!

Leave the three lies behind:

You are not what you have,

You are not what you do,

You are not what others say about you.

You are a beloved child of God.

You are not the price tag on your belongings,

You are not your last performance review,

You are not your reputation at work or in your family;

You are not your disappointments,

You are not your failures,

You are not what you have,

You are not what you do,

You are not what others say about you,

You are a beloved child of God.

God comes home. God is our home. So return home.

“It’s REALLY that good?!”

The boy,

With wind burned cheeks asked.

We were sitting in a circle,

And it was small group time.

My boss Scott and I had taken 11 kids from our after school program

To Cran Hill Ranch in Rodney, Michigan.

The majority of the kids we took to camp had minimal church experience,

And didn’t really know who Jesus was.

Just before our small group time,

We had a full-group worship session,

In which the main speaker shared the Gospel with all of the kids.

In his presentation of the Gospel,

He had clean water that represented sinless humanity,

Food coloring to represent sin,

And a wooden cross.

He put the food coloring into the clean water,

And then he put the cross in the, now, dirty water.

The water instantly became clean, clear, and pure.

This got the wheels of some of the kids we brought spinning.

So here we are in small group,

“That’s REALLY how it works?”

The boy asked.

He was wrestling with this.

“What about murderers? What about serial killers? What about them?”

Are they worthy of forgiveness?!

Can Jesus forgive them?!”

One boy chimed in,

“No way. No shot.”

Another said,

“That would be crazy!”

Scott interjected before I could say anything:

“Yes, a murderer can accept Jesus

and Jesus can accept a murderer.

God’s love in Jesus is big enough to embrace us all.”

“THAT’S REALLY how it works?!”

“It’s REALLY that good?!”

*****Friends*****

That’s really how it works.

It is really that good.

You are the beloved sons and daughters of God,

No matter what you have,

No matter what you have done,

And no matter what other people say about you.

So,

Though it’s costly,

And it’s different,

And it will put you out of step with the world:

Return home.

Sit down at the feet of Jesus,
and make yourself comfortable.

Sit and Listen,

As Mary did,

To Jesus who says,

“You are the beloved son

You are my beloved daughter.

I lived for you,

I died for you,

I rose for you.

I will come again and make everything new.”

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Amen.