

Pentecost 6, July 17, 2022 (Lk 10:38-42; Ps 15; Gen 18:1-10a; Col 1:15-28)

Sometimes Jesus really confuses me! Last week's gospel was the story of the Good Samaritan. Remember how the text ended? After finishing the parable, Jesus said to the self-righteous lawyer, **Go and do likewise!**

Today's gospel follows immediately after those four words. And what does Jesus say to Martha? *Don't be so busy doing—instead, sit down and listen with your sister, who has chosen the better part!*

How do we deal with such apparent contradictions? How can we know which of Jesus' words apply to *us*—not only in this instance, but at all times and in all places?! How can we allow the Bible—God's holy Word—to make sense to us, so it can truly be **a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path?**

What's my favorite "c" word? *Context*. Last week Jesus was teaching about putting *people*, and *kindness*, above religious rules and expectations. It was a *foreigner*, one who didn't even worship God the right way, who showed compassion, who put flesh on the command to *love your neighbor as yourself*.

In that teaching we learned that sometimes the people we want to exclude or condemn are the very ones who actually fulfill the law and the will of God. In caring for the battered Jew in the ditch, the untouchable Samaritan was *doing* the law of the Jews.

The concepts of *good and bad, insider or outsider, acceptable vs. unacceptable*—these judgments have no place within the faith of Jesus and Paul. So how are we to understand today's gospel about Mary and Martha? What's the *good news* in this for all of us?

Martha was fussing and fretting about a traditional Jewish value, hospitality—the kind of hospitality Abraham showed the three visitors in our text from Genesis. But Maratha’s guest wasn’t just anyone, it was *Jesus*, the one she called *Lord*. **Lord, don’t you care?** she asked. And Jesus answered, in his own way, **yes, dear child, I care very deeply—but not about *that!***

If Martha had quietly prepared and served the meal, listening along with her sister, perhaps she too would have earned Jesus’ commendation for *choosing the better part*. It’s not the *busy* Martha Jesus is chiding, but the *worried and distracted* Martha, who focused all her attention on her frustration instead of dwelling in the presence of her Lord. [*Feast, C, p. 387*]

Mary chose the better part, sitting at the feet of Jesus to be with him, to learn from him. Jesus, we read in the Gospel of John, is *the Word of God*. Jesus, we heard from Colossians, **is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. . . all things were created by him and for him. . . and in him all things hold together. . . . For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.**

Jesus is *the Word of God*. To be without the word of the Lord—without the teaching and comfort of the scriptures—that would mean we’d be without Jesus, the *living Word* of the Lord. **And he is the head of the body, the church.**

*The church is the body of Jesus Christ, and it’s Christ whom we proclaim. . . . The church of Jesus [the] Christ does not exist for us. **We**, the church, exist for one reason: to proclaim Christ, the first-born of all creation!* (*Feast, C, p. 383, Rodger Y. Nishioka*)

Mary chose the better part, while Martha struggled to understand. **Lord, don't you care?** she cried. And Jesus said, **I have come that you may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep** (Jo 10:10-11).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. . . For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day** (Jo 6:35, 40).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die** (Jo 11:25-6).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another** (Jo 13:34-5).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid. . . I am the way and the truth and the life** (Jo 14:1, 6a).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. . . My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. . . You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. . . This is my command: Love each other** (Jo 15:9, 12-3, 16-7).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!** (Jo 16:33).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do** (Lk 23:34).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **Come to me, all you who labor and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light** (Mt 11:28-30).

Lord, don't you care? cried Martha. And Jesus said, **Yes.**

Thanks be to God!