

**Luke 10:38-42** – “Being Served and Serving”

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Our Gospel reading is a familiar one about Jesus’ visit with Martha and Mary. Our OT reading, though maybe not quite as familiar, also speaks of the Lord visiting two of His disciples, Abraham and Sarah. In both readings there is hospitality going on—“Being Served and Serving.” Something similar is happening this morning in the Divine Service. Therefore, I would like to draw some comparisons between the three to help us better appreciate “Being Served and Serving.”

After hearing about Abraham and Sarah preparing a meal for the three men who stood outside their tent (one of whom was the LORD), we may be a little confused about Jesus’ gentle criticism of Martha in our Gospel reading, who was evidently also preparing a meal for the Lord. But there are some differences. If you notice, Abraham first asked the LORD if he (together with his wife, Sarah, and their servants) could serve them, and the LORD gave Abraham permission, saying: “*Do as you have said.*” After they ate the meal that was prepared for them, the LORD then delivered the message He had come to give them—the promise of a son. When the Lord entered Martha’s home, however, He evidently began to deliver His message right away. While He was speaking Martha continued what she was doing, and Mary stopped what she was doing to “*listen to [Jesus] teaching.*”

It certainly wasn’t wrong for Martha to want to serve the Lord by preparing a meal for Him, as Abraham and Sarah did. But Jesus explained to Martha, in a very tender and loving way, that there is a time and place for everything. There is a time to serve and a time to be served. When the Lord was in their presence, speaking words which give and sustain eternal life, it was time not to serve Him but to be served by Him—to receive “*the one thing necessary.*” “*The one thing necessary*” is Jesus Christ and His message of salvation.

The same is true at this moment in time for you and me. Having established this time for worship, we come today not foremost to serve God but to be served by Him through His Word and Sacrament. It’s His will, therefore, that we stop what we’re doing when at all possible to receive the awesome gifts that He is here to give us. That’s why we call this the Divine Service. It’s the Divine’s/God’s service to us. Jesus tells us in John 6:63, “*The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life*”—eternal life!

We receive Christ best when we, like Mary, stop what we’re doing and listen to His Word. That’s one of the reasons God tells us that everything during this time of worship is to be done “*in a fitting and orderly way*” (1 Corinthians 14:40), not talking over each other (unless, of course, you’re a baby). When we are speaking God’s Word in the liturgy, hymns, readings and sermon, God is at work serving us and others through us.

Let me illustrate this truth in the [Children’s Sermon.] Have you every seen a lamp like this one along the driveways and sidewalks of people’s homes? They come on during the night to light the way to their front door. Do you know how they are able to do that? This one gets the power to light the way for people during the night from the sun that shines on this solar panels during the day. By storing the sun’s power in batteries, its able to shine during the night.

Something similar is true for you and me. Who gives us the power to live forever? God does, through Baptism and the Good News about Jesus' death on the cross to pay for our sins and His resurrection from the dead to give us new and eternal life. Once God gives us faith in this Good News, we have the light of His eternal life in us. So we don't need to be afraid of the dark or even death. We know that God loves us and is with us always to keep us alive with Him forever. Through the faith God gives us in Jesus as our Savior, God also enables us to reflect His light to others through what we say and do (pass out reflector cross stickers).

But what will happen the longer this lamp or these stickers are separated from the light of the sun. They will lose their ability to give light to others. The same is true with our faith. Without the light of God which He gives us through the Bible, especially the Good News about Jesus as our Savior, the light of our faith will go out. This is disastrous for ourselves and others.

That's why we want to continue to come to church and Sunday school, and to read the Bible at home, so that God can keep the light of our faith in Jesus strong for the good of ourselves and others. Through the Bible the Holy Spirit enables us to: "Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory (x2). Children of the Lord."

Another helpful comparison between the OT and Gospel readings and the Divine Service is the Good News that despite our sins God comes to us like He came to Abraham, Sarah, Martha and Mary, to serve us with His gifts. In the eyes of the world the gifts the Lord gives us through His Word and Sacraments look like "a little water" and "a morsel of bread." In reality, however, because of the power of God's Word and Spirit, the little water used in Holy Baptism gives us the new and eternal life of faith which washes away not only the dirt on our feet, but all our sins.

And the Lord doesn't stop there. Knowing that we can do nothing without Him, God continues to come to us to feed us through His Word and the Lord's Supper. He lays on an incredible feast through the words of the liturgy, hymns, Scripture readings, and (hopefully) the sermon, and especially through the Lord's Supper. When you put them all together, in any one service we are given an incredible feast of encouragement, wisdom, guidance and strengthen from the Lord God Almighty Himself.

For God has gone so much further than killing the fattened calf and baking a loaf of bread. Through the fires of His judgment on the cross He has sacrificed His Son in payment for our sins and prepared for us the Bread of Eternal Life. That's what He serves us here today. As we sang last week in the Divine Service, "This is the feast of victory for our God." Here in the Divine Service, God gives us His Son; born in us not by the will of man but by the will of God. Our resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is present not to hear of our victories for Him but to tell us of His victories for us. The Lord says, "*Be still, and know that I am God*" (Psalm 46:10).

When we're given such incredible gifts, it's certainly appropriate to thank the Lord. We do this with our praises, prayers, and offerings. When we, like this reflector cross sticker, reflect the light of God's salvation through Jesus Christ with others, God works through our joy in the midst of a world that's falling apart, to lead others to the light of eternal life, Jesus Christ.

All glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.