

Proper 11 – 8TH Sunday after Pentecost
July 18, a.D. 2010
Luke 10: 38 – 42

The Good Samaritan taught us that we should always be ready to take our neighbour to the hospital, because this is what it means to love your neighbour as yourself. Father Abraham taught us that we should always be hospitable, even to strangers because we never know if we are entertaining angels as happened to him.

Compassion and hospitality are good qualities. We see them in Martha who invited Jesus to her home and was busy being a hostess for Jesus. Most of us can identify with Martha and with being busy. If you ask someone, “How are you?” what is the common answer? Busy! Busy with my job or else busy looking for one. But either way we are always busy. Hurry up and get busy so we can get to our vacation.

Now the confusion enters when we hear Mary doing nothing while her sister is busy with cleaning, cooking and serving. Isn't it reasonable to see Mary as a lazy person because she is doing nothing? Especially compared to her busy sister Martha!

There is more confusion when Jesus praised Mary in choosing the better thing even though Mary was not showing hospitality nor was she busy doing anything. So which is it, if I am to choose between being hospitable and doing nothing, even appearing lazy?

The answer of course is found in Jesus. When I come to worship Jesus, then there is no better thing than to receive from him. The highest worship of our Lord is to let Him give to us. Does that sound strange to you, even backwards?

Not if you hear what Jesus has to give. He offers you his priceless blessings of forgiveness and eternal salvation. And after receiving such wonderful gifts from God, then there are many opportunities to serve and to see Jesus in every one of my neighbours in need of love and mercy.

And so it comes down to order. Order is important also when it comes to showing hospitality. Normally when you invite someone for a meal, there is a certain order of serving the guests. What would you think if dessert came first in the meal? Tempting, yes, it not necessarily wrong but it is not what we expect.

But when it comes to serving God, He is telling us all that first things are always first. The first thing when it comes to Him, is to receive. Then after receiving from him, we serve and love in response. It's been that way ever since the beginning. First God gave Adam and Eve nighttime rest and then came the work of the day. Sleep before working in Eden's garden. First there was evening and then came morning. That has always been God's order. First He gives, then we respond.

The same holds true in the order of worship. First comes the Gospel in the sermon, and then we respond with our offering of thanks to help our neighbour. If the offerings come first, then we forget what our Lord gives. But can the church survive without my offerings? That's what happens when I forget that I cannot survive apart from what Christ has to offer.

Mary quietly sat at Jesus' feet and was fed the Word of life. This was unusual in Jesus' day for a rabbi to accept an invitation from a woman and to teach her. But Jesus is no ordinary Rabbi, he transcends time and space for He is God and He shows us what kind of God He is by coming to serve us not to be served.

Jesus came to give himself over into death for you so that you can live. He offers life and salvation, which the world and all our toil and labour could never earn in this life. Don't feel guilty in receiving from our Lord, for that is the kind of Lord he is. He wants to be your Saviour and has come to take your place when your day of Reckoning comes and says, "I have covered all your sins and paid all your debts. Go you are free!"

Now Father Abraham didn't know it, but his guests were sent from the Lord. One of them was the Angel of the Lord who promised Abraham and Sarah that in one year's time, they would have a son. That son would mark God's gift of an heir and that the Saviour of the world is coming. So you see, that it was God who came to Abraham in order to give him the gift of a Son.

Our greatest blessing, the one thing we need the most is the gift of God's Son again and again. For in him is the life of the world.