

## The Gospel of Hospitality

Luke 10:38-42

July 18, 2010

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It was different for Mary and Martha. Jesus was their friend. After all, he had brought their brother, Lazarus, back to life. Their doors were always open to him no matter what the risk might be. They had him sit down in the front room, washed his feet, and offered him water to refresh his face and hands.

Then Martha, apparently apprehensive about the condition of the rest of the home, unsure it met her standard of readiness for guests, started cleaning and cooking. She was such a good host. Fresh sheets were always on the all the beds and attractively and invitingly made. The soup and coffee were always on. Visiting Martha was always a pleasant experience because of her attention to details. Hospitality was her middle name – one of her strengths.

But something was different this time. The banging of the pots and pans seemed a little more dramatic. The smell of food burning filled the air instead of the usual pleasant smell of baking bread. It might have been because of the pressure of having so many stop in all at once. It might have been because of the presence of her special friend. But, it was for sure because her sister wasn't helping. The heat in the kitchen was the result of more than her cooking.

Finally, she'd had enough. Out of the kitchen she stormed. Getting right in Jesus' face – knowing full well that he knew that she'd been in the kitchen by herself – she shouted her concern to him: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?" And she didn't stop there. She went on to inform Jesus what she wanted him to do to correct the situation: "Jesus, tell my sister to help me!"

Now, to properly understand Jesus' response, it's important that we remember what was happening in his life where he was going – what was going to happen to him. He was on his way to Jerusalem for a confrontation with the religious and political power-brokers of his day. He was on his way to the cross and to his death. Jesus' whole being was wrapped up with the intense battle going on inside him between his will and God's. He sensed that despite the company that traveled with him, there were few who understood what he was going through – few who understood the turmoil going on inside him between self-preservation and carrying out the will of God – few who understood his need to be listened to.

When Jesus went into the home of his friends, everyone was excited. But, the crowds that followed him – even his disciples – didn't quite get it. They didn't sense the struggle in his heart. They only knew there was something significant, something exciting about their going to Jerusalem. Their sense was that it might mean something special for their future – maybe a role in some new political order. Martha was eager to celebrate it and tried to do her part by creating the very best spread she could – the most comfortable setting she could – and so she rushed and fussed and cooked. But that wasn't what Jesus needed at that point in his life – on that visit.

What Jesus needed was a little peace and quiet – an attentive ear – hospitable hearts and minds – open hearts and minds in addition to the open door. He had turned aside on his journey to Jerusalem to find an oasis of calm in the home of friends – to get away from the demands of the crowds so that he could think and reflect with friends who cared about him – who would listen to him. And that is what Mary did – and that is what Martha, despite all her good intentions at being hospitable, missed out on. And so, to Martha's question and directive, Jesus kindly responded: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her." "Martha, Martha, I don't need a big spread today – a simple meal will suffice. I need your attentive ear and heart. I need you, Martha."

Mary understood what Jesus needed – what kind of hospitality she needed to provide. Martha, well, she didn't quite get it. And Martha's mistake is one many of us make when it comes to being hospitable to those who come to visit us. So often those who visit us are in need of our ears and our hearts rather than the more elaborate dessert that means we have to spend most of the time they are visiting out in the kitchen putting the finishing touches on it rather than with them.

It's a good thing to keep in mind when friends simply stop by unannounced or when we go to visit our grown children or our parents or when we are making plans to do things with our teenagers or when our parents ask us to go out to eat or to go somewhere with them or when we are trying to help someone fix up their home on a mission trip as participants on both the youth and adult trips discovered again a few weeks ago – being present with others is often much preferred over the amount of physical labor we believe we're there to accomplish. Being hospitable means being ready to stop our busyness - our work – and make ourselves available for others to share what's on their hearts and their minds. Being hospitable means being able to relax and to sit at the feet of those who come into our lives – to listen to their life stories and to offer them the opportunity to find healing through our attention to the needs in their lives.

In a way, this encounter between Jesus and Mary and Martha was just as scandalous as the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus told just prior to his visit the way the author of Luke put his account of Jesus' life together. Jesus again ignored the social taboos of the day when he went to the home of a woman for a meal and when he allowed a woman to sit at his feet like a male disciple would. The rabbis who were observing Jesus' every activity had a very different understanding of the way men should relate to women in that day. A couple of the

well-known teachings were: “It is better to burn the Torah than to teach it to a woman,” and, “It is better to teach a daughter to be a prostitute than to teach her the Torah.” Just as the parable of the Good Samaritan upset the traditional notions of who was a person’s neighbor, so this narrative dramatically challenged the place of women in the community of faith.

Jesus’ acceptance of women as vital members of the community of faith is not the only message to be gleaned from this text though. Again, Luke records this encounter as having taken place while Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem – a journey toward the cross and overshadowed by the cross. The question thus becomes you see, who will perceive the true character of his journey? Who will understand that the kingdom of God has drawn near in the person of Jesus? Who will receive him? What will receiving him look like – include – mean?

While there’s no question that Martha loved Jesus and was willing to serve, still, because of her attentiveness to other things she neglected to do what Jesus needed in that hour – having her spend time with him. At the heart of this story is the ongoing tension between those things which are a part of life and those things which are necessary for life: listening for and receiving the word of God.

It’s a tension that continues to be an issue for we followers of Jesus. To each one of us Jesus says, “Go and do likewise.” And many of us have done as we have understood Jesus’ instructive word. We have served as Sunday-school teachers – we have held numerous offices in the church- we have prepared meals for the homeless and the grieving and the families with a new baby and people returning home from the hospital – we have ushered one Sunday a month for years – and on and on the list could go.

Many of us are uncomfortable with Jesus’ response to Martha. We find it ironic – troubling – that Jesus applauded not the one who served but the one who sat and listened. That seems to us a bit like praising those who come to worship on Sunday morning but never to anything else in the life of the church or for the suffering in our world. We want Jesus to tell them that they should help us more rather than affirm their simply listening to the sermon or reading a daily devotional.

The point of the story in Luke though is not to force us to choose between service and worship – inward spirituality or outward service. It is not to make a case against social activism or doing church. It’s not to make a case for those who reject such activism. Rather, I believe the text speaks a needed word to a church that has too often perhaps tried to educate without service and to serve without worship. Christian service grows out of followers spending time with God and God’s word and God’s people. It’s loving God and serving our neighbors – both – in tandem with each other.

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There is a chapel somewhere in Wisconsin that has a stained glass window over the entrance. It’s a picture of the figure of Jesus with his arms outstretched. Some, seeing it for the first time, have remarked, “How meaningful! He seems to be inviting us to worship.”

“That’s true,” the pastor will say. “He is indeed inviting us to worship.”

And then when the service is over some persons going out the door, will again look up at the window with the figure of Jesus, with the same invitingly outstretched arms. This time they will exclaim, “Look, now he seems to be inviting us out!”

And the pastor will reply: “Right. The Jesus who invited you to worship now invites you out into the world to serve other people in his name.”<sup>1</sup>

A mother, listening to the bedtime prayers of her small daughter, heard the listing of requests for blessings that children often offer – mommy and daddy and grandma and grandpa and on and on. She was surprised, however, one night to hear her child conclude her prayer with: “Now, Jesus, what would you like for me to do for you?”<sup>2</sup>

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Mary and Martha loved their friend, Jesus – their Lord, Jesus. And he loved them – both of them. And he appreciated the attention he received from both of them – their listening and their serving. It was just that at that particular moment Martha had overdone her doing and Jesus sensed that her spiritual strength was waning – perhaps even the cause of her irritableness. Both the journey inward and the journey outward are important – both are spiritual – neither can exist without the other.

Service, devotion, meditation, reflection, the healing words of friends – there’s a time and a place for every one of them. Jesus was simply saying to Martha that what he needed and wanted at that point in his life were her ears and her heart – her undivided attention so that he could pour out his heart to her. If you’re anything like me, you probably have to confess along with me that more times than not Martha’s way has been the way the journey of faith gets lived out. May all of us hear our Lord lovingly whispering in our hearts and minds this day: “Calm down – slow down – spend some time with me – sit and listen.”

Our mission is *to be an open community of Christians who love God and serve our neighbors*. It takes loving God and serving our neighbors to be welcoming of all who come to our doors. In order to be hospitable we need to prepare our hearts and our minds as well as our hands. In order to serve all who cross our paths or enter our doors, we need to spend time loving God. The Gospel of hospitality invites us to keep our minds and our hearts and our doors open to all.

Let us pray: We do so want to please you, Lord. We know our need to sit in calm – to strengthen our inner being for the challenges the world puts before us – but our need to be busy and to get on with it overshadows our knowledge. Slow us down, Lord, so that we might be better able to fight for your causes in this world. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

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Finally, she'd had enough. Out of the kitchen she stormed. Getting right in Jesus' face – knowing full well that he knew that she'd been in the kitchen by herself – she shouted her concern to him: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?" And she didn't stop there. She went on to inform Jesus what she wanted him to do to correct the situation: "Jesus, tell my sister to help me!"

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But something was different this time. The banging of the pots and pans seemed a little more dramatic. The smell of food burning filled the air instead of the usual pleasant smell of baking bread. It might have been because of the pressure of having so many stop in all at once. It might have been because of the presence of her special friend. But, it was for sure because her sister wasn't helping. The heat in the kitchen was the result of more than her cooking.

Finally, she'd had enough. Out of the kitchen she stormed. Getting right in Jesus' face – knowing full well that he knew that she'd been in the kitchen by herself – she shouted her concern to him: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?" And she didn't stop there. She went on to inform Jesus what she wanted him to do to correct the situation: "Jesus, tell my sister to help me!"

Now, to properly understand Jesus' response, it's important that we remember what was happening in his life where he was going – what was going to happen to him. He was on his way to Jerusalem for a confrontation with the religious and political power-brokers of his day. He was on his way to the cross and to his death. Jesus' whole being was wrapped up with the intense battle going on inside him between his will and God's. He sensed that despite the company that traveled with him, there were few who understood what he was going through – few who understood the turmoil going on inside him between self-preservation and carrying out the will of God – few who understood his need to be listened to.

When Jesus went into the home of his friends, everyone was excited. But, the crowds that followed him – even his disciples – didn't quite get it. They didn't sense the struggle in his heart. They only knew there was something significant, something exciting about their going to Jerusalem. Their sense was that it might mean something special for their future – maybe a role in some new political order. Martha was eager to celebrate it and tried to do her part by creating the very best spread she could – the most comfortable setting she could – and so she rushed and fussed and cooked. But that wasn't what Jesus needed at that point in his life – on that visit.

What Jesus needed was a little peace and quiet – an attentive ear – hospitable hearts and minds – open hearts and minds in addition to the open door. He had turned aside on his journey to Jerusalem to find an oasis of calm in the home of friends – to get away from the demands of the crowds so that he could think and reflect with friends who cared about him – who would listen to him. And that is what Mary did – and that is what Martha, despite all her good intentions at being hospitable, missed out on. And so, to Martha's question and directive, Jesus kindly responded: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her." "Martha, Martha, I don't need a big spread today – a simple meal will suffice. I need your attentive ear and heart. I need you, Martha."

Mary understood what Jesus needed – what kind of hospitality she needed to provide. Martha, well, she didn't quite get it. And Martha's mistake is one many of us make when it comes to being hospitable to those who come to visit us. So often those who visit us are in need of our ears and our hearts rather than the more elaborate dessert that means we have to spend most of the time they are visiting out in the kitchen putting the finishing touches on it rather than with them.

It's a good thing to keep in mind when friends simply stop by unannounced or when we go to visit our grown children or our parents or when we are making plans to do things with our teenagers or when our parents ask us to go out to eat or to go somewhere with them or when we are trying to help someone fix up their home on a mission trip as participants on both the youth and adult trips discovered again a few weeks ago – being present with others is often much preferred over the amount of physical labor we believe we're there to accomplish. Being hospitable means being ready to stop our busyness - our work – and make ourselves available for others to share what's on their hearts and their minds. Being hospitable means being able to relax and to sit at the feet of those who come into our lives – to listen to their life stories and to offer them the opportunity to find healing through our attention to the needs in their lives.

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Then Martha, apparently apprehensive about the condition of the rest of the home, unsure it met her standard of readiness for guests, started cleaning and cooking. She was such a good host. Fresh sheets were always on the all the beds and attractively and invitingly made. The soup and coffee were always on. Visiting Martha was always a pleasant experience because of her attention to details. Hospitality was her middle name – one of her strengths.

But something was different this time. The banging of the pots and pans seemed a little more dramatic. The smell of food burning filled the air instead of the usual pleasant smell of baking bread. It might have been because of the pressure of having so many stop in all at once. It might have been because of the presence of her special friend. But, it was for sure because her sister wasn't helping. The heat in the kitchen was the result of more than her cooking.

Finally, she'd had enough. Out of the kitchen she stormed. Getting right in Jesus' face – knowing full well that he knew that she'd been in the kitchen by herself – she shouted her concern to him: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?" And she didn't stop there. She went on to inform Jesus what she wanted him to do to correct the situation: "Jesus, tell my sister to help me!"

Now, to properly understand Jesus' response, it's important that we remember what was happening in his life where he was going – what was going to happen to him. He was on his way to Jerusalem for a confrontation with the religious and political power-brokers of his day. He was on his way to the cross and to his death. Jesus' whole being was wrapped up with the intense battle going on inside him between his will and God's. He sensed that despite the company that traveled with him, there were few who understood what he was going through – few who understood the turmoil going on inside him between self-preservation and carrying out the will of God – few who understood his need to be listened to.

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What Jesus needed was a little peace and quiet – an attentive ear – hospitable hearts and minds – open hearts and minds in addition to the open door. He had turned aside on his journey to Jerusalem to find an oasis of calm in the home of friends – to get away from the demands of the crowds so that he could think and reflect with friends who cared about him – who would listen to him. And that is what Mary did – and that is what Martha, despite all her good intentions at being hospitable, missed out on. And so, to Martha's question and directive, Jesus kindly responded: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her." "Martha, Martha, I don't need a big spread today – a simple meal will suffice. I need your attentive ear and heart. I need you, Martha."

Mary understood what Jesus needed – what kind of hospitality she needed to provide. Martha, well, she didn't quite get it. And Martha's mistake is one many of us make when it comes to being hospitable to those who come to visit us. So often those who visit us are in need of our ears and our hearts rather than the more elaborate dessert that means we have to spend most of the time they are visiting out in the kitchen putting the finishing touches on it rather than with them.

It's a good thing to keep in mind when friends simply stop by unannounced or when we go to visit our grown children or our parents or when we are making plans to do things with our teenagers or when our parents ask us to go out to eat or to go somewhere with them or when we are trying to help someone fix up their home on a mission trip as participants on both the youth and adult trips discovered again a few weeks ago – being present with others is often much preferred over the amount of physical labor we believe we're there to accomplish. Being hospitable means being ready to stop our busyness - our work – and make ourselves available for others to share what's on their hearts and their minds. Being hospitable means being able to relax and to sit at the feet of those who come into our lives – to listen to their life stories and to offer them the opportunity to find healing through our attention to the needs in their lives.

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Jesus’ acceptance of women as vital members of the community of faith is not the only message to be gleaned from this text though. Again, Luke records this encounter as having taken place while Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem – a journey toward the cross and overshadowed by the cross. The question thus becomes you see, who will perceive the true character of his journey? Who will understand that the kingdom of God has drawn near in the person of Jesus? Who will receive him? What will receiving him look like – include – mean?

While there’s no question that Martha loved Jesus and was willing to serve, still, because of her attentiveness to other things she neglected to do what Jesus needed in that hour – having her spend time with him. At the heart of this story is the ongoing tension between those things which are a part of life and those things which are necessary for life: listening for and receiving the word of God.

It’s a tension that continues to be an issue for we followers of Jesus. To each one of us Jesus says, “Go and do likewise.” And many of us have done as we have understood Jesus’ instructive word. We have served as Sunday-school teachers – we have held numerous offices in the church- we have prepared meals for the homeless and the grieving and the families with a new baby and people returning home from the hospital – we have ushered one Sunday a month for years – and on and on the list could go.

Many of us are uncomfortable with Jesus’ response to Martha. We find it ironic – troubling – that Jesus applauded not the one who served but the one who sat and listened. That seems to us a bit like praising those who come to worship on Sunday morning but never to anything else in the life of the church or for the suffering in our world. We want Jesus to tell them that they should help us more rather than affirm their simply listening to the sermon or reading a daily devotional.

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“That’s true,” the pastor will say. “He is indeed inviting us to worship.”

And then when the service is over some persons going out the door, will again look up at the window with the figure of Jesus, with the same invitingly outstretched arms. This time they will exclaim, “Look, now he seems to be inviting us out!”

And the pastor will reply: “Right. The Jesus who invited you to worship now invites you out into the world to serve other people in his name.”<sup>1</sup>

A mother, listening to the bedtime prayers of her small daughter, heard the listing of requests for blessings that children often offer – mommy and daddy and grandma and grandpa and on and on. She was surprised, however, one night to hear her child conclude her prayer with: “Now, Jesus, what would you like for me to do for you?”<sup>2</sup>

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Mary and Martha loved their friend, Jesus – their Lord, Jesus. And he loved them – both of them. And he appreciated the attention he received from both of them – their listening and their serving. It was just that at that particular moment Martha had overdone her doing and Jesus sensed that her spiritual strength was waning – perhaps even the cause of her irritableness. Both the journey inward and the journey outward are important – both are spiritual – neither can exist without the other.

Service, devotion, meditation, reflection, the healing words of friends – there’s a time and a place for every one of them. Jesus was simply saying to Martha that what he needed and wanted at that point in his life were her ears and her heart – her undivided attention so that he could pour out his heart to her. If you’re anything like me, you probably have to confess along with me that more times than not Martha’s way has been the way the journey of faith gets lived out. May all of us hear our Lord lovingly whispering in our hearts and minds this day: “Calm down – slow down – spend some time with me – sit and listen.”

Our mission is *to be an open community of Christians who love God and serve our neighbors*. It takes loving God and serving our neighbors to be welcoming of all who come to our doors. In order to be hospitable we need to prepare our hearts and our minds as well as our hands. In order to serve all who cross our paths or enter our doors, we need to spend time loving God. The Gospel of hospitality invites us to keep our minds and our hearts and our doors open to all.

Let us pray: We do so want to please you, Lord. We know our need to sit in calm – to strengthen our inner being for the challenges the world puts before us – but our need to be busy and to get on with it overshadows our knowledge. Slow us down, Lord, so that we might be better able to fight for your causes in this world. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

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A mother, listening to the bedtime prayers of her small daughter, heard the listing of requests for blessings that children often offer – mommy and daddy and grandma and grandpa and on and on. She was surprised, however, one night to hear her child conclude her prayer with: “Now, Jesus, what would you like for me to do for you?”<sup>2</sup>

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Service, devotion, meditation, reflection, the healing words of friends – there’s a time and a place for every one of them. Jesus was simply saying to Martha that what he needed and wanted at that point in his life were her ears and her heart – her undivided attention so that he could pour out his heart to her. If you’re anything like me, you probably have to confess along with me that more times than not Martha’s way has been the way the journey of faith gets lived out. May all of us hear our Lord lovingly whispering in our hearts and minds this day: “Calm down – slow down – spend some time with me – sit and listen.”

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Let us pray: We do so want to please you, Lord. We know our need to sit in calm – to strengthen our inner being for the challenges the world puts before us – but our need to be busy and to get on with it overshadows our knowledge. Slow us down, Lord, so that we might be better able to fight for your causes in this world. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

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## The Gospel of Hospitality

Luke 10:38-42

July 18, 2010

Those of you who were here last week will remember that we read about an encounter between Jesus and a lawyer which concluded with Jesus telling a story about a good Samaritan. The primary message we concluded was that neighbors are those who are in need of mercy and those who show the necessary mercy. Those who heard Jesus tell that story or heard about him telling it, were shocked. It was such a radical departure from the way they had interpreted things before.

Following the open-air classroom encounter Jesus and those who were traveling with him continued on their way toward Jerusalem. One of their stops was at the home of two sisters, Mary and Martha. According to other sources they and their brother, Lazarus, were good friends of Jesus.

Jesus had to have been relieved to have been able to stop at the home of friends after such encounters with those who wanted to make him look bad – those who challenged him in hopes of discrediting him. He had to have been getting weary of the travel and the tension of knowing what lay ahead when he arrived in the beloved holy city of Jerusalem.

Jesus wasn't as welcome everywhere as he once was. People were becoming a bit fearful of the tension that was growing between him and the religious authorities over some of his teachings and the following he was attracting. They were starting to figure out that the end result could possibly include some heads rolling and they weren't sure they wanted theirs to among them. And so, it's probably understandable that a few doors and windows were closed as Jesus and his followers passed by.

It was different for Mary and Martha. Jesus was their friend. After all, he had brought their brother, Lazarus, back to life. Their doors were always open to him no matter what the risk might be. They had him sit down in the front room, washed his feet, and offered him water to refresh his face and hands.

Then Martha, apparently apprehensive about the condition of the rest of the home, unsure it met her standard of readiness for guests, started cleaning and cooking. She was such a good host. Fresh sheets were always on the all the beds and attractively and invitingly made. The soup and coffee were always on. Visiting Martha was always a pleasant experience because of her attention to details. Hospitality was her middle name – one of her strengths.

But something was different this time. The banging of the pots and pans seemed a little more dramatic. The smell of food burning filled the air instead of the usual pleasant smell of baking bread. It might have been because of the pressure of having so many stop in all at once. It might have been because of the presence of her special friend. But, it was for sure because her sister wasn't helping. The heat in the kitchen was the result of more than her cooking.

Finally, she'd had enough. Out of the kitchen she stormed. Getting right in Jesus' face – knowing full well that he knew that she'd been in the kitchen by herself – she shouted her concern to him: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?" And she didn't stop there. She went on to inform Jesus what she wanted him to do to correct the situation: "Jesus, tell my sister to help me!"

Now, to properly understand Jesus' response, it's important that we remember what was happening in his life where he was going – what was going to happen to him. He was on his way to Jerusalem for a confrontation with the religious and political power-brokers of his day. He was on his way to the cross and to his death. Jesus' whole being was wrapped up with the intense battle going on inside him between his will and God's. He sensed that despite the company that traveled with him, there were few who understood what he was going through – few who understood the turmoil going on inside him between self-preservation and carrying out the will of God – few who understood his need to be listened to.

When Jesus went into the home of his friends, everyone was excited. But, the crowds that followed him – even his disciples – didn't quite get it. They didn't sense the struggle in his heart. They only knew there was something significant, something exciting about their going to Jerusalem. Their sense was that it might mean something special for their future – maybe a role in some new political order. Martha was eager to celebrate it and tried to do her part by creating the very best spread she could – the most comfortable setting she could – and so she rushed and fussed and cooked. But that wasn't what Jesus needed at that point in his life – on that visit.

What Jesus needed was a little peace and quiet – an attentive ear – hospitable hearts and minds – open hearts and minds in addition to the open door. He had turned aside on his journey to Jerusalem to find an oasis of calm in the home of friends – to get away from the demands of the crowds so that he could think and reflect with friends who cared about him – who would listen to him. And that is what Mary did – and that is what Martha, despite all her good intentions at being hospitable, missed out on. And so, to Martha's question and directive, Jesus kindly responded: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her." "Martha, Martha, I don't need a big spread today – a simple meal will suffice. I need your attentive ear and heart. I need you, Martha."

Mary understood what Jesus needed – what kind of hospitality she needed to provide. Martha, well, she didn't quite get it. And Martha's mistake is one many of us make when it comes to being hospitable to those who come to visit us. So often those who visit us are in need of our ears and our hearts rather than the more elaborate dessert that means we have to spend most of the time they are visiting out in the kitchen putting the finishing touches on it rather than with them.

It's a good thing to keep in mind when friends simply stop by unannounced or when we go to visit our grown children or our parents or when we are making plans to do things with our teenagers or when our parents ask us to go out to eat or to go somewhere with them or when we are trying to help someone fix up their home on a mission trip as participants on both the youth and adult trips discovered again a few weeks ago – being present with others is often much preferred over the amount of physical labor we believe we're there to accomplish. Being hospitable means being ready to stop our busyness - our work – and make ourselves available for others to share what's on their hearts and their minds. Being hospitable means being able to relax and to sit at the feet of those who come into our lives – to listen to their life stories and to offer them the opportunity to find healing through our attention to the needs in their lives.

In a way, this encounter between Jesus and Mary and Martha was just as scandalous as the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus told just prior to his visit the way the author of Luke put his account of Jesus' life together. Jesus again ignored the social taboos of the day when he went to the home of a woman for a meal and when he allowed a woman to sit at his feet like a male disciple would. The rabbis who were observing Jesus' every activity had a very different understanding of the way men should relate to women in that day. A couple of the

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