

6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY after PENTECOST

July 17, 2022

**COLLECT:** ALMIGHTY GOD, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**THE LESSONS:** First Lesson: Genesis 18:1-10a

Psalm: 15

Second Lesson: Colossians 1:15-28

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42

**THE SERMON:** We are often told to be hospitable. We live in a town where hospitality is the driving force of our economy. It is said that Las Vegas thrives on hospitality and uses it to attract people from all over the world. Las Vegas and Orlando, Florida rank #1 or #2 in the hospitality of its service industry.

You may ask, "What is hospitality?" **Webster's New World Dictionary** defines hospitality as solicitous entertainment of guest. What then is solicitous? It is showing attention, care, concern, anxious desire or eagerness.

So being hospitable means that you are showing care in the treatment of guest. And hospitality is the thing you are offering to make your guest feel at ease and welcome.

In the scripture lessons for today there are two stories of showing hospitality. In the Old Testament Book of Genesis and in the Gospel of the New Testament. What they have in common is that they invite someone into their homes, provide them hospitality in the form of rest and a meal.

In Genesis, Abraham is at the opening of his tent on a hot day. He saw three men, walking in the desert, coming towards his tent. He ran out to meet them. Perhaps looking at the way they were dressed, he knew they were important persons, superior to him. He bowed down and said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant." This is the same as saying, "Come let me invite you into my tent if you would like." He invited them to have some water to drink, some water to wash the dust off their feet and a place to rest awhile.

Abraham doesn't know who these three men are. He lives in the desert in a tent that he can take down and move anytime he desires. He normally moves it when he is looking for pasture land for his animals.

Abraham looks at these three men and although he doesn't know who they are, he looked at the way they were dressed and may have assumed they were from a town or city and held important positions. He did know they were not a herdsman like himself.

Abraham wanted to show them his best hospitality. He invited them to have something to eat and then they could go on with their journey. They accepted his invitation. He called into the tent to Sarah and asked her to take her best flour and make three cakes of bread. He then went out to his herd, selected a tender young calf and gave it to his servant to prepare. He then

got some cream and milk, gave it to the three men as they ate the tender young calf, he had prepared for them.

The scripture says Abraham didn't eat with them, instead he stood aside and watched while they ate. I can imagine that Abraham felt pride that he could so quickly prepared the meal that these three important men now enjoyed.

Abraham still didn't know who they were or where they were going. One of them asked, "Where is your wife?" and Abraham said, "There in the tent." The stranger then said, "I will come by again and your wife Sarah shall have borne you a son.":

You might imagine this was great news for Abraham to hear. His greatest want was for a son born of his wife, Sarah. He would pass all his property to a son of his and Sarah's genes and not one to a man slave born in his house, but with a mother other than Sarah.

This news also perplexed Abraham for he and Sarah were old, beyond child bearing age. They didn't believe it.

Today's scripture of Genesis stops here. Abraham still doesn't know who these strangers are. Further reading will tell and show Abraham that he has entertained the Lord/God and two angels. It will also show God trying to decide whether he should tell Abraham who they were and that they were heading to Sodom and Gomorrah. Later, Abraham will bargain with God to save the lives of some of the people in the towns.

But at this point, in today's Gospel, Abraham is proud that he has shown great hospitality to the strangers.

St. Matthew's/San Mateo, the lesson for us is that we too should readily offer hospitality to guest and strangers, because unknowingly we might be entertaining angels!

The Gospel lesson for today provides us the second story of hospitality. Jesus is in the Galilee area and he is invited into the home of the sisters Mary and Martha. While Martha is making preparations for the meal her sister, Mary, decides to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his discussion with the men. She is defying cultural tradition.

When men are invited into the home, women are normally in the rear of the home not seated with or taking part of their discussions. The women's roles are to prepare, to cook and to serve the men. Women are separated unless the men are relatives.

There are many tasks involved in preparing the meal and Martha is doing it alone. She approaches Jesus and asked him to tell Mary to leave the men's discussion and come to help her. Jesus acknowledges that Martha has much to do, but he tells her Mary has chosen the better thing to do and he won't discourage her.

You may say Jesus saw Mary as feeding her soul with his teachings while Martha was taking care of the physical needs of the body.

Both, the Old Testament and the Gospel are about hospitality, inviting, sharing and serving guest. In the Old Testament lesson the host is pleased at how the dinner turned out. He doesn't eat with the guest, but stands off to the side and watches them eat. I imagine he feels proud that he can do what is culturally acceptable. In the Gospel it is a different story, Martha, the hostess, feels frustrated. Her sister had deserted her and left her to do all

the work. Jesus instead of helping her, told her that Mary has made the better choice. She had chosen to listen to his teachings and was free to share in the conversation of the guests.

At this point, Martha is not pleased in sharing hospitality. She is disappointed with Jesus, he not only defies tradition by letting Mary sit with the men, but he refuses to tell her to come and help.

So, as you can see, sometimes sharing hospitality can be a blessing and at other times it can be frustrating. Yet we are encouraged to share with others, to love others as we love ourselves and that may involve some disappointment. Yet following the words and teaching of Jesus, we are encouraged to do the work he has given us: To love and serve the Lord. As I mentioned earlier, we may entertain angels.

God shows his hospitality to us each day that we are allowed to wake up. He loves us by watching over us and forgiving us of our sins. He allows us to make decisions about our lives and he provides the Holy Spirit as our guide. You may think of the Holy Spirit as your conscience. Amen.

Now on a different note, as I researched and prepared this sermon, I discovered a fact that I didn't recognize earlier. Jesus had two sets of friends named Mary and Martha. There is the one we are talking about in today's Gospel of Luke. This set of Mary and Marthas lived in the Galilee area and there is little written about them.

The other Mary and Martha, in John's Gospel, live in Bethany, just two miles from Jerusalem. They are the sisters of Lazarus, the friend for whom Jesus wept and raised from the dead. This Mary also sat at the feet of Jesus

while her sister, Martha, was also left alone to prepare the meal and do other tasks. This is the same Mary who used the costly oil to bathe the feet of Jesus and dry them with her hair.

In each case though, it appears that both Marys were intent on learning the teachings of Jesus while the Martha were intent on serving others.

Which are you? Do you see yourself as a Mary? Are you intent on learning and sharing the Gospel, the words of God with others? Or are you a Martha? Would you say yours are the hands of God at work in this world?

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