

Sermon Notes – July 20, 2025
The Holy Gospel of St. Luke 10: 38-42
Peace Lutheran Church
“Heed The Word That Gives Life”

Building upon last week's emphasis on love of God and neighbor, today's readings urge service to the same. The Greek word that Martha uses for “work” (Luke 10: 40) is *diakonia*, from which we get words like “deacon” and “diaconate.” We see God's people serving Him and neighbor faithfully at times (Gen. 18: 1-10; Luke 10: 38-42), and at other times failing to serve (Amos 8: 4-6), while the psalms respectively praise or lament these attitudes toward service (Ps. 15 and 52).

However, while it would be easy to write off those who have forsaken God's path toward love and service, His unmoving desire for the reconciliation and righteousness of all His people is also a consistent theme across the texts. The “steadfast love” of God emphasized in Psalm 52: 8 is paralleled by the steadfastness of those who love Him in Colossians 1: 23, even as the author of Colossians expresses his desire to “present *everyone* mature in Christ” (1: 28, emphasis added). Indeed, God's very appearance to Abraham in Genesis 18, after all the ways he has doubted God's promise and attempted to maneuver it to his own purpose, illustrates his unrelenting faith in God.

Read in this light, Jesus' encounter with Martha need not be interpreted as diminishing Martha's path of service but rather can be interpreted as broadening her frame of reference to recognize the expansive possibilities for serving in the household of God the Father. Martha and Abraham are both house-holders who host a divine guest. Luke makes clear that it is *Martha*, not an imagined husband, father, or brother, who welcomes Jesus into her house (10: 36). While not the norm in the first century world, a woman running a household wasn't unheard of either. Inheritance laws provided for both widows with no sons and for daughters with no brothers. Since Martha's sister, Mary, seems to reside with her, we can assume the latter is the case. (This however differs from John's narrative of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.)

As a result, the expectations of both the householder and the woman of the house fall on Martha. She is both host and hostess. In contrast, Abraham relies upon his wife and servant to provide for his guests (Gen

18: 6-7). Nevertheless, following the pattern set for receiving Jesus and his disciples into one's home (Luke 10: 5-7), Martha does so as an act of faithful discipleship. Jesus' critique, then, is not of Martha's busy hospitality - in fact, He relies upon it - but her inability to see Mary's listening as its own service. Looking deeper gives us much more insight as to the mind of Jesus!