

July 17, 2022  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Kingdomtide  
“Call”

Announcements:

- Health Team/Covid Hazard
- Listening Tour after worship, 10:30 – 11:30;  
Thank you to those who signed up. Still openings in August, check in with the office or the SPPRC Chair to sign up or call me to set up a meeting.
- Ad Council meets Monday, July 18 at 6:30
- SPPRC meets Tuesday, July 19 at 6:30
- Chuck Crain in concert, Monday August 29 at 7 pm.
- Printed copy of the sermon available.

Pastoral Prayer:

In peace let us pray to the Lord saying,  
Lord have mercy.

For the church throughout the world, that we may follow Christ our Head, and be blameless in living the gospel of reconciliation, let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord have mercy.**

For the nations of the world, that all may live without fear of oppression, poverty, or war, let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord have mercy.**

For the earth, that we may wisely use its resources for the benefit of humankind and offer help wherever natural disaster has fractured human trust in the goodness of creation, especially for those suffering from drought and heat, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord have mercy.**

For the leaders of the nations, that they may honor justice, protect the weak, and serve the common good, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord have mercy.**

For our communities and neighborhoods, that all may dwell in harmony, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord have mercy.**

For our enemies, that we may find reconciliation with them for the sake of Christ and our common humanity, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord have mercy.**

For all who are sick and in trouble, that they may find healing and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord have mercy.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, offered in steadfast faith and hope in your care for us. For we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

As the people of God, let us pray now, together, that prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples:  
**Our Father (the Lord's Prayer)... Amen.**

### **Luke 10:38-42**

*38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.<sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

*41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,<sup>42</sup> but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

**May God add a blessing to this reading from God's holy word. Amen.**

{SLOW DOWN AND SPEAK CLEARLY}

What does it mean to be called?

And who gets called?

To be called is to be captured by a vision, and committed to a mission, that comes from a person.

To be called means to listen AND to hear.

When we talk about being called, we're talking usually, about two things, together:

Being called by Jesus to follow him;  
to be his disciple, and no one else's,  
to be part of the ministry of reconciliation,  
as part of a covenant community.

(that's one)

And we talk about being called through Christ by God to specific ministries, remembering that the word ministry means service, so calls to particular ways of serving;

as missionaries, for instance;  
or to those in prison, or feeding the hungry,  
or to the set-apart ministry of the ordained,  
or to married life, or singleness, and so on.

Some calls are lifetime commitments, some are for a season.

To know you are called means to listen and to hear Jesus saying "Follow me", and then discovering what that looks like in this moment, and living into it.

Everybody gets called.

**Will you pray with me?**

**Lord Jesus, you know what is needed in each moment. Help us to let go of the demands we impose on others, the burdens of false propriety that we take on ourselves, and all the ways in which we distract ourselves from hearing what you have to say, to avoid the discomfort of**

**change. Free us indeed, Lord, for joyful obedience; for loving and creative service. Call us again, in this season, and show us what is better.**

**May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight for you are our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.**

It's worth remembering that the gospels were written by men, but if it weren't for women, we wouldn't have heard the good news.

I'm not disputing that Jesus said what he said in this story.

But it's worth remembering that the guys who told this story to Luke are the same guys who Jesus told to give a crowd something to eat, the same group of guys led by Peter who Jesus had to tell three times to "feed his sheep", and who, in the sixth chapter of the book of Acts, slough off the responsibility of making sure that there is justice in the church's feeding program by prioritizing Bible study over serving at tables.

There's a lot of missing context here; a lot of unanswered questions: why is Martha so distracted, how many people did she open her home to, what were the social expectations of hospitality in that time and that place, what did Jesus mean when he

said Mary had chosen the better, what was the one needed thing?

And so on.

I do think that there is a useful interpretation, one that is faithful to the gospel, that takes this story as a reminder to begin our doing with Jesus.

To start with that relationship, with prayer, with listening and hearing the voice of God for our lives and what it has to show us.

But it seems to me that Martha is often cast as the bad guy here, and because of that, there ends up being an interpretation that glorifies study over action, and I don't think that's right either.

I'm quoting Reverend Jim Bell when I say, the devil does not care which side of the boat you fall out of.

Martha's doing all the things that are right and proper in her society in first-century Palestine, a culture that deeply honors hospitality.

We might wonder about the social expectations that are placed on women, then and now, the roles that they are expected to play, the labor that gets displaced onto them, so that others can be comfortable.

We might recognize the ways in which we participate in maintaining systems that oppress, even ones that oppress us.

The way we enforce the injustice that we have suffered onto others.

In light of those considerations, Jesus' treatment of Mary is radical, culturally subversive, transformational, breaking down the socially constructed barriers around gender.

But maybe, Jesus is just suggesting to Martha, that she needs to manage herself, and not add the anxiety of managing her sister.

Martha's not the bad guy.

And certainly not because she's prioritizing hospitality.

When I was first starting as a pastor, I was invited to drop in on a Tuesday morning Bible study, and that's where I met Betty.

Betty was in her eighties and had brilliant insights into the Scriptures from a lifetime of faithful wrestling and application.

Her son Gordon told the story, with some relish, of how the previous pastor had preached on this story from Luke, extolling the virtues of Mary, and at the

end of the service, Betty had told him, "I'm a Martha, and that's okay."

Betty knew what her call was.

Everybody gets called.

I think that the wisdom in this story of Mary and Martha is recognizing that we're called to different things, in our lives and in the seasons and moments within them.

There's not only one right way of following Jesus, even if there IS one thing that's true of all the ways of following Jesus.

Following Jesus requires you to love.

Not just to have affectionate care and concern for others, but to live into a genuinely costly love of God and neighbor.

To sit at the feet of Jesus, devoting time and energy and attention when all the world around is enticing, and pressuring, when family is demanding that you do what they expect of you.

And following Jesus means managing yourself, your own expectations of others, dealing with the discomfort of people who have a different understanding AND a different call.

The possibility that you might be wrong about the one thing that's needed in the moment.

And in the middle of that, following Jesus means listening AND hearing what the Lord has to say to you.

Jesus never tells Martha what to do.

He names what's going on within her, and the ways that she's relating, and refuses to enforce her will on her sister.

But he begins by calling her by name.

Everybody gets called.

What is Jesus calling you to today?

Invitation to the offering:

Jesus calls all of his disciples to a life of generous self-giving. In the spirit of our Lord, who gave himself for us, let us offer our gifts and ourselves for the sake of his call.

Charge:

Saints of God, Marys and Marthas and all the variety of disciples called of God, I charge you this week to listen AND to hear; begin with prayer, begin at the Lord's feet, listening to what Jesus says, and then, if that is where you are called in the moment, remain, until God calls you to move. Answer the call that is

for you, from God, which makes you whole, and not the voice of the roles that the world imposes on you, which make you less than you were meant to be.

Benediction:

Beloved Saints of God, go now in peace, and may the love of God, the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the fellowship and power of the Holy Spirit go with you now and remain with you always. Amen.