



Christ United Methodist Church

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Date: July 21, 2019

Sermon: The Quality of Our Hospitality

Text: Luke 10:38-42

Speaker: Pastor Karen Muntzing

A family pattern in the Muntzing home, especially involving food and matters of the kitchen, is to prepare and provide far more than is necessary—more choices and more quantity than persons attending a meal could consume in a few meals, not simply the one being provided. We are prone to go overboard, prone to excess, and prone to the stresses that going to excess often entail. We've worked together enough that we get through the stress just fine—most days. We know how the other moves, and stresses, and we usually allow for it.

My reason for telling you this is two-fold. The first, is because we've invited the youth to our home—we're hoping they'll say yes, you can encourage them. Even though we're daunted at the prospect of feeding multiple teenage boys, we trust there will be more than enough to go around. We'll try not to stress excessively. My second reason for bringing up this notion of excess is that some of what's going on in today's text is about excess.

Jesus has arrived at Martha's home. What we know from the stories of Jesus is that he never traveled alone. There were always a bunch of merry men trailing along with him—the named disciples, and likely other men, women and children, too. Jesus had commissioned 72 to go out and help with the mission and ministry of healing, blessing, and declaring that the kingdom of God had come near. We don't know the size of Martha's home—and we can only imagine how maybe people are trailing around Jesus for the evening meal.

From the text, we know for sure that Martha was frenzied—in an uproar—the root word of distracted, *thorubazein*, means more like the noise of a stirred-up crowd. There was a buzz that was unnerving to Martha. No doubt she felt excessive pressure to make sure things were just right. Maybe you've been there, and been overcome by that kind of brain noise rushing around inside of you, which contributes to your rushing around others.

Honey, I'm bringing a few people home after work—we'll be there in 15 minutes...

As we think about today's text, it's helpful to remember the story we talked about last week—the good Samaritan. If you weren't here, check it out, it's immediately before today's text. It's a story about showing love to a stranger, maybe an enemy—who by the way, is also our neighbor—love your neighbor, as you love yourself, Jesus says. The question the lawyer had asked was: How do I inherit eternal life? Jesus followed with the Good Samaritan story. He called him and us to be aware of

ways that we can show love in our actions, and provide hospitality, compassionate care, even while on the road.

Martha was providing a ministry of service—*diakonian*—like deacon. She was a recognized leader, providing hospitality, serving and waiting on tables, participating in ministry on behalf of the community who had come.

It's not been uncommon for interpreters of this text to pit Mary against Martha. One must be better than the other—that's the way we do things, isn't it—there are winners and losers, first place, and everyone else. We can read what Jesus said, that Mary had chosen the better part, and even look scornfully at Martha. And we should stop that. Jesus really isn't pitting one against the other, and neither is the author of Luke.

“All Christians are called to be hospitable. But it is more than serving a meal or filling a bed, opening our door—it is to open ourselves, our hearts to the needs of others. Hospitality is not just shelter, but the quality of welcome behind it.” – Dorothy Day