

“Jesus: The Good Portion”

Liturgical Date: Proper 11 (C)

Primary Text: St. Luke 10:38-42

Intro:

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary text for today, the 6th Sunday after Pentecost, is the Gospel lesson from Saint Luke, the 10th chapter. The title of the sermon is “Jesus: The Good Portion”. Today we see Jesus as the guest in Martha’s home. She is very concerned that He is being taken care of, but it turns out that He is actually the one who serves. JESUS SERVES US AT HIS FEET SO THAT WE CAN RECEIVE THE GOOD PORTION OF HIS GRACE.

The “good portion”. When it comes to food perhaps there is a favorite part that you enjoy more. If you are like me and like frosting, getting those corner pieces of a cake with the extra sugary and creamy portion brings a smile to our face. Or maybe things that are cooked in baking dishes like macaroni and cheese or brownies. The corner pieces on those can have a little extra “crusty” flavor. Or a roast or something cooked over a fire. Perhaps you like the exterior that is a little more crunchy, or the interior that is more moist and juicy. Whatever your “good portion” is in these scenarios, I can assure that Jesus is better. Today, in our text, Martha must learn this lesson.

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Our Gospel lesson for today is rather short, but that does not mean that it is not rich in lessons from God. As we have seen the last few weeks, Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem where He will suffer and die for the sins of the world. No doubt He is very tired from all of the traveling, teaching, and

challenges. Jesus and the disciples have to rely on the hospitality of those that they meet on their travels for food and shelter.

In the text, Jesus is invited into the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany, which was only about 2 miles from Jerusalem. Martha and Mary appear several times in the Gospels and are well known women disciples of Jesus. In fact, the Gospel of Luke has a large focus on women disciples of Jesus.

Upon Jesus' entrance into her house, Martha busies herself being a good hostess. Verse 40 says that, "*Martha was distracted with much serving.*" She was preparing food for not only Jesus, but for at least the 12 Disciples (and possibly more) as she hurried frantically around the house. Meanwhile, in Martha's view, her sister Mary is just sitting around listening to Jesus while she does all the work! A frustrated Martha tells Jesus in verse 40, "*Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me.*" In verses 41-42, Jesus gently rebukes Martha telling her that Mary is in fact doing the right thing in sitting at the Master's feet. **JESUS SERVES US AT HIS FEET SO THAT WE CAN RECEIVE THE GOOD PORTION OF HIS GRACE.**

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It is very easy for us to be like Martha. In trying to do the right things and fulfill all of our responsibilities we can miss out on the "good portion" that God has prepared for us.

We want us to be hospitable to our guests-and we should. The Old Testament Lesson for today from Genesis 18 shows Abraham showing hospitality to his heavenly guests. When we have company, we want the house to be spotless (especially many of us of German heritage): floors swept and mopped, dust banished, and toilets gleaming like the smile on Mr.

Clean's face. It would be the end of the world if our guests thought that our house was not as clean as so-and-so's house. And, of course, there is the food! We may want to have some new recipe that is delicious and intriguing to our guests or an old "stand by" that people love when we cook it. Especially us Southerners-we wouldn't want anyone to leave hungry!

However, in all of our preparations we can miss out on what is really important. We can be like Martha who showed impatience and excessive concern for mundane matters and thus miss out on the real joy of having company-actually spending time visiting with them. Even in church we can become so busy doing "stuff" that we lose sight of what it is really about: worshipping God, receiving His gifts, life together with our Christian brothers and sisters, growing in faith, and then sharing that faith with others. In fact, I think that distracting us is one of Satan's best weapons. The famous evangelist of the early 20th century, Billy Sunday, said, "*The people of the Church are like squirrels in a cage. Lots of activity, but accomplishing nothing.*"

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However, God has accomplished much and wants to us to share in it. JESUS SERVES US AT HIS FEET SO THAT WE CAN RECEIVE THE GOOD PORTION OF HIS GRACE.

We should not be too judgmental of Martha as she was showing hospitality, but Mary chose the "good portion." This is one of the cases in the Bible where God shows His sense of humor to make a point. Jesus, using the phrase "good portion" is a play on words referring to the best portion of the food as Martha bustles around. Hospitality and food are important, but the teaching of Jesus (the Gospel) is much more so. Showing

hospitality and doing other good works will not earn our entrance into heaven.

Mary is a devoted disciple of Jesus who shows spiritual desire and discernment. Her desire is to listen to and receive from Jesus above all else. Verse 39 says that Mary, “*sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching.*” Sitting at Jesus’ feet was taking the position of a disciple. How bold it was for her to do this, as it was unheard of in this culture for a woman to ignore her domestic duties and just sit down at a rabbi’s feet to listen to him. No doubt this caused a stir with the disciples as well as Martha. But Mary wanted to receive the “good portion.” In a later incident she would also draw the disapproval of the disciples when she anointed Jesus with an expensive ointment. Jesus recognized the heart of this humble disciple and showed His approval.

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Jesus was not a man of wealth in terms of worldly possessions to share with His disciples, but He gave of Himself. And He gave of Himself for our salvation as well. JESUS SERVES US AT HIS FEET SO THAT WE CAN RECEIVE THE GOOD PORTION OF HIS GRACE.

Jesus serves us His mercy. He gave of Himself to the smiters, the mockers, and ultimately gave His very life as a ransom for all. The 19th century British preacher Charles Spurgeon said about this text, “*His work for us is finished, accepted, abidingly effectual, and perpetually overflowing with priceless blessings.*” Physical food will only satisfy for a season, but Jesus’ “good portion” satisfies forever.

In the text it is important for us to see how Mary receives the “good portion” from Jesus. Mary simply sits at Jesus’ feet and receives His Word. The Gospel lesson does not even record her speaking-just listening to the

Words coming from the mouth of God Himself. We cannot do any works to receive the Gospel. God speaks through His Word and He comes to us in Word and Sacrament. God gives us His life, love, and salvation. Dr. Arthur Just in his commentary on Luke rightly points out that this is a beautiful picture of the Divine Service. True worship is not us giving anything to God that He needs-What would God need? He is the creator and ruler of everything. What we do is simply receive. We receive what we need from Him!

We close in prayer. *O Savior, bear my anxieties and remove my distractions, that I may receive Your good portion. Amen.*