

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Genesis 18:1-14

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. ³ He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.” “Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.” ⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.” ⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree. ⁹ “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said. ¹⁰ Then the LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?” ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.”

18:1 *appeared.* See note on 12:7. (CSB)

This was Jesus. The other two men who accompany him are angels. (CSB)

As has already been stated, because of the importance of what took place when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, this year is particularly memorable. In fact, it is the most memorable year in his life. Within it family circumcision and the two promises, the spiritual and the material; later on the journey to Palestine and the deliverance; also the overthrow of Sodom. And, what is most important, the Lord appeared to Abraham several times and conversed with him in a friendly manner. (Luther)

The chief content of this chapter is that God wants to confirm the promise He had made concerning Isaac. In the preceding chapter Abraham is promised a son from Sarah, and the Lord calls this son Isaac because Abraham had laughed. But Sarah was not present at that time, and it seems that she did not believe Abraham when he told her about this. Therefore the promise is repeated here, in order that Sarah may hear it, not from the mouth of Abraham, as had been the case, but from the mouth of God Himself, of whom it is stated that He stood turned away; that is, He had turned His back, to indicate that Sarah did not believe until she was reproached. (Luther)

great trees. See note on 12:6. (CSB)

The terebinths may have been a larger grove near Hebron, which Mamre allowed Abraham to put to use for encamping in their shade. (Leupold)

Mamre. See note on 13:18. (CSB)

Here, too, as in 14:13, appears to be the Amorite who stood on a friendly footing with Abraham. Knowing what we do of Abraham, we conclude that this Amorite must have been of a nobler sort than the average run of his tribe. (Leupold)

SITTING AT THE ENTRANCE OF HIS TENT –During the hottest part of the day, the time of siesta, Abraham was sitting in the shade at the door of his tent. Perhaps he had dozed off, or perhaps he was deep in thought about the wondrous promise he had received from God. (PBC)

the heat of the day. Early afternoon. (CSB)

18:2 *three men.*† At least two of the “men” were angels (see 19:1; see also note on 16:7). The third was the angel of the Lord or the Lord himself (see vv. 1, 13, 17, 20, 26, 33; see especially v. 22). (CSB)

The Lord (the Son of God) and two angels appear in human form. Cyril of Jerusalem: “What strange thing do we announce in saying that God was made man, when (you Jews) yourselves say that Abraham received the Lord as a guest?” (NPNF2 7:76). (TLSB)

STANDING –The custom of the day required a traveler to stand at some distance from a nomad’s tent and wait to be invited in. (PBC)

Hebron was on the main north-south road that runs along the ridge of the Judean hills, and occasionally there were travelers who needed food. The custom of the day required a traveler to stand at some distance from a nomad’s tent and wait to be invited in. (PBC)

hurried. The story in vv. 2–8 illustrates Near Eastern hospitality in several ways: 1. Abraham gave prompt attention to the needs of his guests (vv. 2, 6–7). 2. He bowed low to the ground (v. 2). 3. He politely addressed one of his guests as “my lord” and called himself “your servant” (vv. 3, 5), a common way of speaking when addressing a superior (see, e.g., 19:2, 18–19). 4. He acted as if it would be a favor to him if they allowed him to serve them (vv. 3–5). 5. He asked that water be brought to wash their feet (see v. 4), an act of courtesy to refresh a traveler in a hot, dusty climate (see 19:2; 24:32; 43:24). 6. He prepared a lavish meal for them (vv. 5–8; a similar lavish offering was presented to a divine messenger in Jdg 6:18–19; 13:15–16). 7. He stood nearby (v. 8), assuming the posture of a servant (see v. 22), to meet their every wish. Heb 13:2 is probably a reference to vv. 2–8 and 19:1–3. (CSB)

18:3 MY LORD – This was the polite thing to do and he also lowered his role to that of a servant.

YOUR SERVANT – Expressions of humility were normal, but Abraham recognized he had a special guest. (TLSB)

18:4 At this lazy hour of the day Abraham's household was suddenly transformed into a beehive of activity. Moses describes meal preparations that must have taken several hours. (PBC)

WATER BE BROUGHT – This was a great relief to anyone traveling in this dusty and hot desert region. Not mentioned here but also a part of Near Eastern hospitality was to offer oil that would be poured on the head to bring relief from the heat.

WASH YOUR FEET – First step of proper hospitality. Because there were few inns, people placed high importance on hospitality. Neglect or mistreatment of travelers was regarded as a great social evil. Ambrose: "A man ought therefore to be hospitable, kind, upright, not desirous of what belongs to another...Such is the favor in which hospitality stands with God, that not even the draught of cold water shall fall of getting a reward. You see that Abraham, in looking for guests, received God Himself to entertain" (NPNF2 10:59-60). (TLSB)

18:5 LET ME GET YOU SOMETHING TO EAT – This and the other items mentioned in verses 3 and 4 were the fundamental courtesies afforded any traveler. This was a lavish meal and compares somewhat to the meal prepared for the Prodigal Son.

ESV has "morsel of bread." – Abraham described his hospitality as meager, typical of humble Near Eastern manners. (TLSB)

Moses describes meal preparations that must have taken several hours. (PBC)

That extraordinary praise of hospitality which appears in the Letter to the Hebrews (13:2) had its origin in this passage. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." There is hospitality wherever the church is. For the church, if I may say so, always has a common treasury, inasmuch as it has the command (Matt. 5:42): "Give to him who begs from you." And we must all serve the church and take care of it, not only by teaching but also by showing kindness and giving assistance, so that at the same time both the spirit and the flesh may find refreshment in the church. (Luther)

But especially the strangers whose lot is rather hard should be received in a kindly manner, for Christ's utterance on the Last Day against the inhospitable is clear (Matt. 25:35): "I was a foreigner or a stranger and you did not receive Me." Also (Matt. 25:40): "Whatever you did to the least of Mine, you did to Me." What greater praise can there be for this virtue than that those who are hospitable are not receiving a human being but are receiving the Son of God Himself? On the other hand, what is more hideous than

inhospitality? By it you shut out from your house, not a human being but the Son of God, who suffered and died for you on the cross. Are you not willing to give Him the cost of one day's support or so much space of your dwelling that He may lie down with you? What punishments do you suppose will follow this inhumanity or cruelty? Therefore let those who want to be true members of the church remember to practice hospitality, to which we are encouraged not only by the example of the saintly patriarch but by very important testimonies of Scripture. (Luther)

18:6 QUICK – Even though it was very hot Abraham mobilizes his household for activities that will take several hours.

THREE SEAHS – Extremely large amount for only three men. (TLSB)

This was more than a bushel! There would surely be no shortage of bread at that meal. (PBC)

This simple food offered will be presented in lavish abundance. What is left over can be disposed of with ease by the servants of so large an establishment as the one Abraham had. (Leupold)

bread. A plural word referring to round, thin loaves. (CSB)

ESV has “cakes.” Round, unleavened cakes (resembling pancakes) hastily baked on hot stones or on a metal “camp oven” that could heat up rapidly. (TLSB)

In the Orient bread is never prepared at any other time than immediately before it is eaten. (Leupold)

18:7 TENDER CALF – The style of roasting is described by some as taking smaller portions and roasting them individually on skewers or small spits. Among people who ate meat but rarely such a dish is especially delectable. (Leupold)

18:8 CURDS, MILK, CALF – This is a description, not of a royal banquet but of one that is truly divine. And if one were a dialectician or a rhetorician, there would be rich material with which to occupy oneself. Nor must these words be glanced at indifferently, since it is certain that these events are not recorded by the Holy Spirit without a purpose; they are recorded for our sakes. (Luther)

Curds are what we would call cottage cheese. (PBC)

THEY ATE – What condescending love those two words describe! The three guests ate Sarah's fresh bread and that tender veal. The scene reminds us of what Jesus did when he appeared to his doubting disciples a week after his resurrection. When those frightened men imagined they were seeing a ghost Jesus lovingly asked for something to eat and actually ate a piece of broiled fish. He was showing them there was no barrier blocking their fellowship with God. (PBC)

What a staggering thought! Abraham and Jesus' disciples were to realize, and you and I are, too, that the almighty God wants to share our company as a friend. It is this down-to-earth, seeking, caring love of the Lord which melts down cold and stubborn human hearts and wins them over to Himself. WE long for fellowship like that which took place under the great tree at Hebron. And God promises that we can look forward to an intimate fellowship with Him when we eat and drink at the feast of the Lamb. (PBC)

After Abraham realizes that these three guests want to stay, he joyfully hastens into the tent and prepares a banquet. For he is sure that in these three guests he is receiving God Himself. It is faith, therefore, that makes him so eager and ready. (Luther)

STOOD UNDER A TREE – He assumed the posture of a servant who would be near by ready to render whatever service was needed. Much like a waiter at a fine restaurant.

Abraham honored his guests by waiting on them rather than sitting with them. (TLSB)

18:9 WHERE IS SARAH – Just this simply question had a great deal of meaning to Abraham as who his guest might be: (1) Only people in authority would ask about the lady of the household, (2) This man knew the name change that Sarah had undergone and since this visit was about Sarah it probably had a specific purpose. (PBC)

This time, Sarah had to hear the promise “from the mouth of God Himself” (Luther AE 3:176). (TLSB)

IN THE TENT – Women may have eaten separately, after the men, a custom still observed in some Near Eastern cultures. (TLSB)

18:10 See 17:21. Paul quotes this promise of Isaac's birth (see v. 14) in Ro 9:9 and relates it to Abraham's spiritual offspring (see Ro 9:7–8). (CSB)

18:11 OLD AND WELLL ADVANCED YEARS – Sarah could no longer conceive children. (TLSB)

18:12 *laughed*. In disbelief, as also Abraham had at first (see note on 17:17). (CSB)

Of having her own child. Though she laughed in doubt, she later believed. Cf Heb 11:11. (TLSB)

Abraham had laughed too (17:17) in a moment of unbelief but had soon turned and begun to rejoice. Sarah's laugh was an expression of unbelief, but when confronted, too repented. It is interesting that Isaac means “he laughs” (21:3) (Cf Heb. 11:11)

18:13 WHY DID SARAH LAUGH – Imagine the astounding nature of this revelation to Sarah: her secret thoughts have been correctly read; the very motive she had referred to, namely that she had grown old, is also displayed to her. (Leupold)

18:14 *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* The answer is no, for Sarah as well as for her descendants Mary and Elizabeth (see Lk 1:34–37). Nothing within God’s will, including creation (see Jer 32:17) and redemption (see Mt 19:25–26), is impossible for him. (CSB)

Tertullian: “For a barren woman to have a child against nature was no difficulty with God; nor was it for a virgin to conceive” (ANF 3:605).

Numbers 11:23 “The Lord answered Moses, ‘Is the Lord’s arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true to you.’” (Moses was worried about feeding the Israelites in the desert.)

Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.” (This is the context of Jeremiah buying a field which was a symbol of belief that God’s people would come back and resettle Israel.)

Epistle – Colossians 1:21-29

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

1:21 YOU – Believers who were alienated from God (Eph 4:18), which was manifested externally in evil deeds. (TLSB)

WERE ALIENATED... WERE ENEMIES – ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ - “Alienated” (ἀπηλλοτριωμένους, perfect passive participle of ἀπαλλοτριόω) describes a broken relationship, such as of spouses in a broken marriage or of parents and children from one another. The periphrastic construction with the two participles ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους denotes that alienation from God is the continual state of those without Christ. In the NT, ἐχθρός is used mostly, if not exclusively, to describe one who hates rather than one who is hated Hence those without Christ are “hostile” toward God. (CC p. 66)

Isaiah 59:2 “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you.”

Ephesians 2:12 “remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope and without God in the world.”

1:22 HAS RECONCILED YOU – The past tense indicates that this reconciliation is completed in Christ’s work. Reconciliation is not something Christ has started and we need to complete. (TLSB)

BY CHRIST’S PHYSICAL BODY – The false teachers taught that salvation came through knowledge. Paul emphasized that salvation came from God specifically through the incarnation, through Jesus’ physical life and death (cf 1Tm 2:5; 1Jn 4:2). (TLSB)

death. Christ’s death. (CSB)

FREE FROM ACCUSATION – Un-accused, free of charges. Paul has in mind the whole picture of life with God: our justification (declared righteousness, forgiveness; Rm 3:23–26), our baptismal life on earth (sanctification; Rm 6–7), and our ultimate glorification (life in heaven; Rm 8). (TLSB)

1:23 IF YOU CONTINUE – Faith in Christ must continue, just as it began—by hearing the Gospel (Jn 8:31–32; Rm 10:17). (TLSB)

every creature. † Hyperbole. See note on v. 6. (CSB)

Jesus promised that the Gospel would be proclaimed to all the world (Mt 24:14). Earlier, Paul said the Gospel had come to all the world (v. 6). These are figures of speech that show the universal scope of the Gospel. This was in contrast to the message of the false teachers, that their secret knowledge was for a select few. (TLSB)

SERVANT – ESV “minister” – Paul is completely bound in his service to the Gospel for the sake of the Church (v 25). (TLSB)

1:15–23 How can we sinners be sure that Christ’s work reconciles us to God? Paul says we have this assurance because of who Christ is: the image of the invisible God, the Creator, the one who is preeminent over all things. What else would you look to for assurance? To an angel? To yourself? No, look to God Himself in Christ. • “Through Jesus’ blood and merit I am at peace with God. What, then, can daunt my spirit, However dark my road? My courage shall not fail me, For God is on my side; Though hell itself assail me, Its rage I may deride.” Amen. (*LSB* 746:1) (TLSB)

Paul’s Labor for the Church

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone

perfect in Christ. ²⁹ **To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.**

1:24 *what was suffered.* By Paul. By preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, he experienced all kinds of affliction, but here he was probably referring especially to his imprisonment. (CSB)

Christ's sufferings for our salvation are complete (vv 20, 22; 2:9–15). All Christians suffer with Christ (2Tm 3:12; Rm 8:17) as part of their service to Christ. Baptism connects us to Christ—both to His sufferings and to His salvation (Col 2:12; Rm 6:3–8; Php 3:10). Paul gladly accepted suffering for the sake of the Gospel (Php 2:17) and believed that it brought benefits to the Church (2Co 1:5–7; 4:10–12; Eph 3:13). (TLSB)

fill up ... what is still lacking. Does not mean that there was a deficiency in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Rather, it means that Paul suffered afflictions because he was preaching the good news of Christ's atonement. Christ suffered on the cross to atone for sin, and Paul filled up Christ's afflictions by experiencing the added sufferings necessary to carry this good news to a lost world. (CSB)

CHRIST'S AFFLICTIONS – Christ's sufferings alone have redemptive value, and those redemptive sufferings were fulfilled completely and finished at his death on the cross.

THE CHURCH – Christ describes himself as continuing to suffer when the church, his body, is persecuted. These are the (non-redemptive) sufferings which are “still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions,” which Paul (and other servants of the Servant) must endure for the sake of the Gospel.

1:25 COMMISSION GOD GAVE ME – Gk *oikonomia*, “management,” “plan,” from which Eng “economy” derives. Paul uses this word to describe God's overall plan of salvation as He guides history (Eph 1:10) and also the management plan entrusted to individual ministers of the Word (1Co 9:17). (TLSB)

to present ... the word of God in its fullness. † The meaning may be that the word of God is brought to completion, i.e., to its intended purpose, only when it is proclaimed (cf. Isa 55:11). Paul's commission to bring the word to completion, therefore, required him to make the word of God heard in Colosse as well as elsewhere. See Ro 15:19 for a similar statement. Or “fullness” may parallel the Great Commission: “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20). (CSB)

Could refer to the completeness of the Gospel message in contrast to the claim of the false teachers, who taught that it was deficient. Cf Mt 28:19–20. (TLSB)

1:26 *mystery.* The purpose of God, unknown to man except by revelation. This word was a popular, pagan religious term, used in the mystery religions to refer to secret information available only to an exclusive group of people. Paul changes that meaning radically by always combining it with words such as “disclosed” (here), “made known” (Eph 1:9), “make plain”

(Eph 3:9) and “revelation” (Ro 16:25). The Christian mystery is not secret knowledge for a few. It is a revelation of divine truths—once hidden but now openly proclaimed. (CSB)

1:27 *Gentiles ... Christ in you.* The mystery is the fact that Christ indwells Gentiles, for it had not been previously revealed that the Gentiles would be admitted to the church on equal terms with Israel (see note on Eph 3:6). (CSB)

The mystery is not only about Christ coming to this world but also about Christ coming personally to each individual. Through Word and Sacrament, Christ is in us (Rm 8:10). (TLSB)

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God.”

Indicates the Law and Gospel outline of the Christian message. (TLSB)

perfect. † Employed by the mystery religions and the Gnostics to describe those who had become possessors of the secrets or knowledge boasted of by the particular religion (see Introduction to 1 John: Gnosticism). But in Christ every believer is one of the perfect, as a result of God’s grace and Jesus’ atonement. (CSB)

Literally, “perfect, complete.” Only by virtue of our Baptism into Christ can we be what God wants us to be. (TLSB)

1:29 Literally, “His working that is working in me.” Cf 2:12; Php 4:13. The power for faith and salvation, as well as the power to live by faith, comes from God. (TLSB)

1:24–29 All people suffer because of the fallen nature of the world. But Christians are called to a special form of suffering for the sake of Christ: rejection, ridicule, and persecution. No one likes suffering. Nevertheless, the tears of Christian suffering reflect the glory of the cross of Christ. Remember how God used Christ’s sufferings to save us. He will also use our sufferings to bring Christ’s saving work to others who have no hope. • “In suffering be Thy love my peace, In weakness be Thy love my pow’r; And when the storms of life shall cease, O Jesus, in that final hour, Be Thou my rod and staff and guide, And draw me safely to Thy side!” Amen. (LSB 683:4) (TLSB)

GOSPEL – 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. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ 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, ⁴² but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

10:38 THEY – ESV – The makeup of the group accompanying Jesus is unspecified, though it certainly included the Twelve. (TLSB)

DISCIPLES – This includes both the 12 and the 70 (two) as well as the women mentioned in 8:1-3 and most likely others. (CC p. 456)

ON THEIR WAY – Jesus ministry followed a pattern of travel that relied on people's hospitality as here at the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. In Luke 19:6 Zacchaeus is the host. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

This story of hospitality shown to Jesus, the wandering missionary, illustrates things said in the reports of the mission of the seventy (-two) (10:1–24) and the Twelve (9:1–6) and points to the source of *mercy* of which the story of the Good Samaritan spoke (10:25–37). The hearer is reminded that Jesus continues the meandering style of ministry he began in 9:51 (see 9:52–56), as he journeys to Jerusalem. As a traveler whose mission is to preach the kingdom of God and to heal, he would be seeking out places of hospitality, houses in which to abide (cf. 9:4; 10:5–7). (CC p. 457)

Matthew 8:20 “Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have hole and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’”

a village. Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, was the home of Mary and Martha (Jn 12:1–3). (CSB)

ἐἰς κώμην τινά—We know from Jn 11:1 and 12:1–3 that Mary and Martha live in Bethany, which is closer to Jerusalem than to Galilee. It seems that in Luke's journey narrative, Jesus has quickly moved from Galilee (9:50) through Samaria (9:52 ff.) to the outskirts of Jerusalem. However, a later incident will take place on the border area of Galilee and Samaria (17:11). It is not certain whether Luke's order is chronological or thematic. (CC p. 456)

MARTHA OPENED HER HOME – Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν—Luke uses the same word for Zacchaeus' welcome of Jesus into his home (19:6) where hospitality is shown. What is unusual here is that a woman welcomes Jesus into her home, and that Jesus accepts her hospitality. (CC p. 465)

Though ... women could attend synagogue, learn, and even be learned if their husbands or masters were rabbis, for a rabbi to come into a woman's house and teach her specifically is unheard of. ... Thus, not only the role Mary assumes, but also the task Jesus performs in this story is in contrast to what was expected of a Jewish man and woman (B. Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984] 101).

G. Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 44, discusses Mary and Martha as marginalized members of Jewish society. (CC p. 456)

Martha received Jesus as a guest and showed hospitality. (TLSB)

10:39 SAT AT JESUS' FEET – Normal position for student learning from a rabbi. (TLSB)

Augustine says, “She sat at the feet of our Head. The more lowly she sat, the more amply did she receive. For the water flows together to the low hollows of the valley, runs down from the risings of the hill.” (*NPNF* 1 6:430). Aug: “The one was arranging many things, the other had her eyes upon the One. Both occupations were good” (*NPNF* 1 6:427). (TLSB)

παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου—Others in Luke’s gospel who sit at the feet of Jesus with rapt attention are the sinful woman who anointed Jesus’ feet (7:38) and the man from whom he cast out a legion of demons (8:35). (CC p. 456)

LISTENING TO WHAT HE SAID – akouen – An imperfect meaning “kept on listening.” Matthew 28:20, too, reminds us that our learning is to be very intensive and continuous. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ—The imperfect ἤκουεν gives the sense of continuous listening, i.e., “kept on listening.” On ἀκούω as a term for catechumens, see comments at 5:1; the Sermon on the Plain (6:27, 47, 49); the parable of the sower (8:8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18); and Jesus’ discussion of the new kinship (8:21). (CC pp. 456-457)

This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair (John 11:2). Mary symbolically embalmed Jesus for the “day of [His] burial” (John 12:7). Apparently she understood better than the 12 disciples that Christ’s death was imminent. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

10:40 WAS DISTRACTED – periespato – This literally means “she was dragged around.” This could mean that she really wasn’t into doing this but felt obligated. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

περιεσπᾶτο—The literal meaning is “she was dragged around.” This could suggest that Martha would rather not be working. She would rather be “sitting at the feet of the Lord,” like Mary. Martha’s burden is to show hospitality to Jesus. Since she alone is named as the one who “welcomed” Jesus in 10:38, perhaps she had assumed responsibility for showing hospitality. (CC p. 457)

Martha was likely cooking for dozens of people. (TLSB)

DO THE WORK – διακονεῖν—Martha continues the tradition of the women in 8:2–3 (διηκόνουν in 8:3). To serve is a positive action that is part of Luke’s hospitality motif. (CC p. 457)

Martha is not so much a personification of the Law as she is a vivid example of modern Christians trying to juggle all their obligations to God, family, friends, and others. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

DO YOU NOT CARE – Note her implied rebuke and criticism of Jesus. She expected Him to be sensitive to the workload that His arrival created. (TLSB)

TELL HER – In Martha’s eyes, Mary should be helping. This, of course, is a reasonable expectation. (TLSB)

10:41-42 θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, ἐνὸς δὲ ἔστιν χρεία—The reading of P⁴⁵ and P is to be preferred. It preserves the rarer word (θορυβάζω, instead of τυρβάζω) and has internal support because of the proper contrast between Martha’s “many things” (πολλά) and Mary’s “one thing” (ἐνός). Some manuscripts have replaced ἐνός with ὀλίγων: “there is need of a few things.” (Perhaps some scribes thought that this was a reference to the number of dishes at the meal.) Other manuscripts include both, which leads to confusion: “there is need of a few things, of one thing” (cf. B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 153–54; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 452–53; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 894; J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 600). (CC p. 457)

10:41 MARTHA, MARTHA – Jesus here intone a combination of sympathy, sadness, impatience, and even exasperation. The double name signals that Jesus is about to say something important: “Martha, Martha. We’re so near Jerusalem; we’re so near the cross. This is my last journey. How long do you think you will have me with you? Is dinner more important than listening to some of my last words? (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

Jesus’ double address implies tender affection, pity (cf 13:34; 22:31; 2Sm 18:33). (TLSB)

YOU ARE WORRIED – merimnas – This is the same root as used in the parable of the Sower. These worries choke off the faith that had sprung up. Jesus seems to be saying that Martha should not let her worries about hospitality duties get in the way of continuing to learn from him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

10:42 ONE THING IS NEEDFUL – This is the listening to Jesus in his Word. This is not to be taken for granted by even the most ardent Christians. In the parable of the Sower the devil used the worries to take away faith. Many a new Christian who comes into the church with great enthusiasm can quickly be sidetracked and soon lose that faith. It can also happen to long time Christians who have been active and then slowly drift. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα—μερίς can be used of a “portion,” a “serving” of food (cf. Gen 43:34; BAGD 2). This suggests there is a play on words in Jesus’ statement. The best portion of food is the word of Jesus. Cf. also Lk 4:4, quoting Deut 8:3. Since this “good portion” is contrasted with an inferior one, it may be translated as a comparative: “the better portion.” (CC p. 457)

Many choices, decisions, and options are not completely right or wrong, good or bad. Choices often are comparatively good or bad. Martha's service was better than apathy toward the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

As necessary as hospitality was—esp during Jesus' visit—the only thing that remained truly indispensable was the Word of God. Augustine, "One is preferred to many. For one does not come from many, but many from one. The things which were made, are many, he who made them One...She chose that which shall abide forever." (TLSB)

The hearer easily discerns the point of the story: don't be so distracted and concerned about doing good that you neglect what is *most* important, namely, to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear the Word of God. But the hearer also recognizes the problem confronting Martha. Isn't she also doing the proper thing, namely, showing hospitality to the Son of Man, who has no place to lay his head (9:58)? And by receiving Jesus, isn't she receiving him who sent Jesus (10:16)? (CC p. 458)

Martha's dilemma can be highlighted by seeing it in the broader context of the instruction (catechesis) of Luke's gospel. Recall that there are three elements to Jesus' table fellowship: teaching, eating, and the presence of Jesus. One shows hospitality to wandering missionaries in a variety of ways. One certainly provides for them the food that is essential for *table* fellowship. But the most fundamental part of the hospitality shown to wandering missionaries is to receive and hear *the preaching of the kingdom*. Here the parable of the sower is decisive in determining why Mary grasps the one thing needful and Martha does not. For Mary has heard Jesus' word "with a noble and good heart" (8:15), and she is included among Jesus' mother and brothers who "hear the Word of God and do it" (8:21). The hearer could not help but recall the admonition of Jesus in the context of the parable of the sower: "Therefore take care how you hear: 'For he who has, it will be given to him; and he who has not, even what he thinks he has, it will be taken away from him'" (8:18). (CC p. 458)

The one thing needful is the gift that Jesus has come to bring. In the context of the church, it is the catechesis of the church, the Word of God. The catechumen "shows hospitality" when he faithfully receives the Word of God. The catechumen would certainly recognize this in view of Luke's prologue. There Luke promised that the reason for his gospel is "in order that you come to recognize completely the reliability concerning *the words* by which you have been *catechized*" (1:4). The meal with Mary and Martha emphasizes the significance of the catechesis of Jesus within his table fellowship; *his teaching* is the good portion that will not be taken away. (CC pp. 458-459)

The issue here is whether one is first to serve the Lord or first to be served by him. This is really a question of the proper approach to worship. Mary has the right liturgical theology. She sits at the feet of Jesus to receive divine service from him. Instead of trying to serve Jesus first, she allows Jesus first to serve her with his gifts. Hospitality to the Lord is first expressed in faith's passive acceptance of God's Word, where the gifts

of God's kingdom will be found. After receiving the gifts, there will be time for an expression of hospitality in response. But first must come the reception by faith of the preaching of the kingdom. Peter's mother-in-law shows this (4:38–39), as she first receives the gift of healing and then serves Jesus. Conversely, the lawyer claimed he was prepared to do his duty *for* a neighbor, but he had not let Jesus love him as a neighbor. So also "Martha made the mistake of thinking she was the host and Jesus the guest." (CC p. 459)

Recall that Luke was first written for Theophilus, who had been catechized (Lk 1:4). The catechumen now sees the primary importance of his catechesis. The story of Mary and Martha shows that when the kingdom of God is near, one must choose the portion that is "good" in the absolute sense—good above all others. The posture in which one receives Jesus' divine service is not the busyness of human doing, but the stillness of listening to the words of Jesus. Faith is the highest worship. (CC p. 459)

GOOD PORTION – ESV – A clever turn of phrase, since it implicitly compares hearing the Word to eating a meal. (TLSB)

NOT BE TAKEN AWAY – Food comes and goes, and eventually everyone becomes hungry again. The Word of God, however, abides forever. It alone can truly satisfy. (TLSB)

Augustine, " In these two women the lives are figured, the life present, and the life to come, the life of labor, and the life of quiet, the life of sorrow, and the life of blessedness, the life temporal, and the life eternal. (TLSB)

ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς—Contrast 8:12, where the devil *does* take away (αἴρω) the seed of the Word, and 8:18, Jesus' admonition to "take care how you hear," lest what one thinks he has be taken away (αἴρω). Cf. also 12:19–21. (CC p. 457)

In contrast with Jesus' demand for great works in the previous parable (vv 25–37), the story of Mary and Martha shows the importance of faith and rest in Jesus and His Word. Today, we are often so distracted that we neglect what matters most: God's Word and Sacraments. What we can never earn for ourselves, no matter how much we scramble, God freely provides through faith in Jesus Christ. • O Savior, bear my anxieties and remove my distractions, that I may receive Your good portion for me. Amen. (TLSB)