

## 6th Sunday after Pentecost July 21, 2019

Proper 11(16) or 5th Sunday after Trinity

Year C – the Gospel of Luke

**Lutheran**

# Living the ^ Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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<http://roadtoemmauspbcblogspot.com/2014/06/luke-1025-37.html>

### Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 536 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 366

“One thing’s needful; Lord, this treasure”

There is a significant difference in the verses, both in number and content. Both hymnals list the same author, Johann H Schroeder, and translator, Frances E. Cox. This hymn is also an example of one that was not kept in the [Lutheran Book of Worship](#) and was restored in [Lutheran Worship](#) for final inclusion in the [Lutheran Service Book](#). It is included in [Christian Worship](#) (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, WELS) but only has three verses.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1XnQLubH-k> Congregational singing and verses from LSB. [Lutheran TV - Hymns from the LSB](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN0zyf4BJE> From TLH with piano. [Andrew Remillard](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-s3O4ELWPo> Played on a harp and a violin. Try to match the words to the appropriate hymnal. [Bethany Johnson](#)

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001  
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**O.T.**– “Is anything too hard for the LORD?”

**Psalm** – “Wait for the LORD; be strong”

**Epistle** – And you... he has now reconciled... in order to present you holy and blameless...”

**Gospel** – “...*but one thing is necessary...*”

**Genesis 18:1-10a(10b-14); Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Amos 8:1-12 or Genesis 18:1-10a (Next week: Genesis 18: (17-19) 20-33; RCL, Hosea 1:2-10 or Genesis 18: 20-32)**

*“...The first thing we may wonder about when reading this passage is why Abraham is so eager to see these strangers. He is sitting under a tree, hot (it is the heat of the day, verse 1), and likely pondering how it will be possible for Sarah and him to have a child to have a child, as God has just rather ridiculously promised in the previous chapter (17:16). At the end of that chapter Abraham had fulfilled his part of the covenant by having his whole household, including himself, circumcised (17:26-27). Perhaps he is still recovering from the circumcision--even minor surgery is serious at ninety-nine! ...*

*Abraham has received a seemingly impossible promise, but his animated efforts on behalf of these strangers under adverse conditions suggest that he still trusts that God can and will do the impossible. He is eager to show hospitality, for its own sake perhaps, in contrast to the inhabitants of Sodom in the next chapter, but also because he refuses to succumb to a cynical or jaundiced view of his world and his place in it. Abraham certainly does not imagine what is in store down the road (chapter 22), but he continues to believe that God will make good on God's word...”*

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=649](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=649) [Jacqueline E. Lapsley](#) Associate Professor of Old Testament, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J.

18 And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks<sup>[a]</sup> of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth <sup>3</sup> and said, “O Lord,<sup>[b]</sup> if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, <sup>5</sup> while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” <sup>6</sup> And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick! Three seahs<sup>[c]</sup> of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.” <sup>7</sup> And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. <sup>8</sup> Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

<sup>9</sup> They said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “She is in the tent.”

<sup>10</sup> The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” *And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.*

<sup>11</sup> *Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?” <sup>13</sup> The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard<sup>[d]</sup> for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”*

- a. [Genesis 18:1](#) Or *terebinths*
- b. [Genesis 18:3](#) Or *My lord*
- c. [Genesis 18:6](#) A *seah* was about 7 quarts or 7.3 liters
- d. [Genesis 18:14](#) Or *wonderful*

“Genesis 18 occupies the place of the First Lesson for the next two weeks.

This week we find Abraham and Sarah encountered by the three mysterious travelers under the trees at Mamre. Next week, we listen-in to Abraham’s appeal for the sparing of wicked Sodom. Preachers and their hearers would benefit from spending these two weeks dwelling in this narrative, which is abundant with fodder for the imagination of faith.

Particular to this week’s pericope boundaries, the reading ought to be extended through Genesis 18:15. (*Does that tempt you to look it up?*)

### Textual horizons

“The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre ... ” (Genesis 18:1, NRSV)

At least two things are critical here in this first bit of the pericope -- a bit that functions like a section heading. The encounter under the terebinths of Mamre is between Yhwh and

Abraham. While there is great debate and significant mystery about how to understand Abraham's three visitors, the text frames the encounter as an encounter with Yhwh.

A second important bit of this is the location of this encounter. Abraham is reclining beneath the terebinths of Mamre.<sup>1</sup> Recall for a moment the significance of this place, which among other things was place where Abram built an altar to the Lord after the covenant was renewed.<sup>2</sup> There is a tradition, cited by Josephus, that the terebinth at Mamre is as old as the world itself, and another tradition that this place, where Abraham was circumcised, is the spot upon which the altar in the Temple of the Lord would eventually stand.<sup>3</sup> What unfolds under and around the terebinths of Mamre unfolds in a holy place...

As this gesture of hospitality reaches a crescendo, the travelers speak. They ask after Sarah, knowing her name and relation, presumably without meeting her... With the opening words of Genesis 18:1 spilling now forward, it is at this point when the reader's left eyebrow might just rise up a bit questioning who these visitors are. The verbs shift from plural to singular, as one of the visitors states that next year, when this visitor wanders through again, Sarah will have a child... With left eyebrow still raised, the reader now hears explicitly: "The Lord said to Abraham ... " The identity of this particular visitor is revealed. Yhwh. To be sure, this raises far more questions than it answers, but it calls out from the page for us to explore.

The episode comes to a conclusion with Sarah's denial of her laughter at the promise's absurdity. Abraham remains silent at this point. Both are passive. The Lord, however, hurls a question into the midst of the narrative, which echoes throughout the whole of Genesis 18, and orients the whole: "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14, NRSV)

**Herein is the key to the narrative. It is about what Yhwh does / is capable of doing.**

So that we have the mood of this question relatively straight, the Hebrew verb *pala'* presents a range of nuanced possibilities, from being difficult to being wondrous to being extraordinary. Perhaps the latter, extraordinary, is worth employing. The Lord asks, "Is anything too extraordinary for the Lord?" The Lord promises to do something extra-ordinary and by means of this question invites trust that it will be so -- something so absurdly outside of ordinary that it invites Sarah's laughter.

### **Homiletical horizons**

...Back to the text. Given that this mysterious encounter is an "appearance of the Lord" (v.1) and that the question comes from the Lord (v.13f), the presumed answer is no. There is nothing too outside-the-ordinary for the Lord.

Against the soundscape of Abraham's silence and Sarah's incredulous laughter, the Lord's extraordinary promise rings through... It does, however, confirm yet again that in the midst of humanity's capacity for messing things up God remains faithful.

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### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew *'elon* is commonly misrepresented as "oak" in English translations. More properly it is a terebinth (*Pistacia palaestina*), a shrub-like tree with red foliage and berries.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 13:18. Mamre is also the place that provides an orientation for the burials of Sarah, Abraham, and Isaac.

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2934](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2934) [Samuel Giere](#) Associate Professor of Homiletics and Biblical Interpretation, Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

**Psalm 27:(1-6), 7-14; RCL, Psalm 52 or Psalm 15 (Psalm 138;RCL, Psalm 85 or Psalm 138)**

*“The poet first sounds forth his sure confidence in his God, [Psa 27:1-3](#), and his love of communion with him, [Psa 27:4-6](#). He then betakes himself to prayer, [Psa 27:7-12](#), and concludes with an acknowledgment of the sustaining power of faith in his own case, and an exhortation to others to follow his example...*

- [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon\\_charles/tod/ps027.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon_charles/tod/ps027.cfm) C. H. Spurgeon

### **The LORD Is My Light and My Salvation Of David.**

27 The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold<sup>[a]</sup> of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

<sup>2</sup> When evildoers assail me  
to eat up my flesh,  
my adversaries and foes,  
it is they who stumble and fall.

<sup>3</sup> Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me,  
yet<sup>[b]</sup> I will be confident.

<sup>4</sup> One thing have I asked of the LORD,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD  
and to inquire<sup>[c]</sup> in his temple.

<sup>5</sup> For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will lift me high upon a rock.

<sup>6</sup> And now my head shall be lifted up  
 above my enemies all around me,  
 and I will offer in his tent  
 sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
 I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

<sup>7</sup> Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;  
 be gracious to me and answer me!

<sup>8</sup> You have said, “Seek<sup>[d]</sup> my face.”

My heart says to you,  
 “Your face, LORD, do I seek.”<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Hide not your face from me.  
 Turn not your servant away in anger,  
 O you who have been my help.  
 Cast me not off; forsake me not,  
 O God of my salvation!

<sup>10</sup> For my father and my mother have forsaken me,  
 but the LORD will take me in.

<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O LORD,  
 and lead me on a level path  
 because of my enemies.

<sup>12</sup> Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;  
 for false witnesses have risen against me,  
 and they breathe out violence.

<sup>13</sup> I believe that I shall look<sup>[f]</sup> upon the goodness of the LORD  
 in the land of the living!

<sup>14</sup> Wait for the LORD;  
 be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
 wait for the LORD!

- a. [Psalm 27:1](#) Or *refuge*
- b. [Psalm 27:3](#) Or *in this*
- c. [Psalm 27:4](#) Or *meditate*
- d. [Psalm 27:8](#) The command (*seek*) is addressed to more than one person
- e. [Psalm 27:8](#) The meaning of the Hebrew verse is uncertain
- f. [Psalm 27:13](#) Other Hebrew manuscripts *Oh! Had I not believed that I would look*

**“Verse 1 Light... salvation... strength—** “The triple shield against sundry terrors, as sufficient to ward them off.”—*Calvin.*” Whedon's Commentary on the Bible

“We have in this Psalm the blessed effects most fully described of strong confidence and faith in God. The happiness of communion with God is also very beautifully set forth, and the certainty of God answering prayer.” [Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary/ Psalms](#)

“It is apparent from the body of this Psalm, that David was not yet fully delivered from the trouble which his enemies gave him, both by their slanders and other ways. But whether it belong to that history which is reeorded 2 Samuel 21:15-17, as the Jews conceive, whom some others follow, is wholly uncertain, and not necessary for us to know.

David declareth that God is his only comfort and confidence in all danger, Psalms 27:1-3. His hearty desire to be in the house of God, Psalms 27:4. The advantage of it, Psalms 24:5,6. He prayeth for the light of God’s face, and his salvation, Psalms 27:7-12; and from experience others to wait upon him, Psalms 27:13,14....” Matthew Poole's English Annotations on the Holy Bible.

➤ <https://www.studylight.org/commentary/psalms/27-1.html>

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“...A personal note: Psalm 27 is a favorite psalm of my own. The first verse alone -- “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?” -- has helped me get through many a long night of the soul. When I was a teenager I developed bone cancer, which took both of my legs. As I came through the dark days of cancer, I grew in my trust of God. I never got my legs back, of course. But I learned that God, my light and salvation, is with me always.

When preaching the psalms of trust, be sure to emphasize that these psalms are perfectly clear on how dangerous and deadly life can be. But also that they are words of trust from those who been there before, who’ve had the bottom drop out, but who “cried to the Lord” and were saved.”

➤ [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2506](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2506)  
*Rolf Jacobson* Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminar, Saint Paul, Minn

**Colossians 1:21-29; RCL, Colossians 1:15-28 (Colossians 2:6-15 (16-19); RCL, Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19))**

*“...Enemies of God. That's what we once were. How could justice be satisfied to reconcile us to God? How can we keep our new relationship with him? **Parts: A.** How severe our alienation was!. **B.** How costly his sacrifice!. **C.** How vital to stand firm on the Gospel!...”*  
*(continued after the reading)*

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation<sup>[a]</sup> under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

### **Paul's Ministry to the Church**

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, <sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden

for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

- a. [Colossians 1:23](#) *Or to every creature*

### **A. How severe our alienation was!**

"What's the difference between the Hutu and the Tutsi? They are both Central African ethnic groups. Their physical appearance is similar. They both speak the same languages and share the same culture. The religion of both groups is overwhelming Christian, predominately Roman Catholic. They frequently intermarry.

Yet all their similarities did not stop bloodshed and war between them, culminating in the Rwanda Genocide. An estimated 800,000 people were killed in 100 days starting April 6, 1994...Although the killing stopped over a decade and half ago, the reconciliation is far from complete...

Such is the story among people who can be so much alike and yet so hostile toward each other. And we're no different when you consider our own national history: two wars against England, our mother country; the Civil War with brother against brother; two world wars against Germany, the nationality from which more Americans trace their ancestry than from any other.

If such hostility can exist between those who are so similar, how much more so between those who are vastly different! But that, dear friends, is exactly what the situation was between us and God. We were completely alien, totally other than God. He is good; we were evil. He is light; we were darkness. He is love; we were hateful. He is life; we were death. He is giving; we were selfish. He is holy; we were sinners...

And so also, no matter how beneficial or good our actions appeared to be in the eyes of others, all our acts were wicked in God's sight. Our entire behavior was evil. For our inner being, our mind and soul, was hostile toward God. Like water flowing from a contaminated well, all our actions that flowed from our heart and mind were polluted. They brought us death and hell...

### **B. How costly his sacrifice!**

Our attempts at building peace with God never come close to reconciliation. In the end, looking to our attempts alienates us farther away from him, since it blinds us to what he has done.

And what has our God done for you, dear friend? "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" (Colossians 1:22 NIV). What we could not accomplish, our God, Jesus Christ accomplished for us. He reconciled you in his body of flesh through his death. Yes, you, who were so alienated from God, so distant, you, who were his enemies hostile toward him in your mind and actions -- yes, you are the ones whom he has reconciled.

### **C. How vital to stand firm on the Gospel!**

Christ reconciled you to present you as holy. Now we certainly don't want to lose this. We don't want to return to being alienated and enemies of God. So the Apostle Paul urges us to keep our faith firmly established on the foundation of the Gospel, the Good News of what Jesus has done for us to save us from sin and death...

But how do you know this Gospel? Paul explains, "This is the gospel that you heard" (Colossians 1:23 NIV). You've learned it from faithfully parents, pastors and teachers. You've experienced the joy of the peace and reconciliation it brings to your heart. Stand firm on it.

But how do you know that you were not deceived by your parents or pastors about this Gospel? Paul continues, "This is the gospel . . . that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23 NIV). It was not just your parents or a pastor in Hancock that taught this message. Rather throughout the world and throughout history, this Gospel of Jesus, our Reconciler, has gone out to all creation. Stand firm on it."

- <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/christ-reconciled-you-to-present-you-as-holy-gregg-bitter-sermon-on-peace-149148?page=3&wc=800>  
Preached on July 25, 2010, for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, at St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, Hancock, MN. By Pastor Gregg Bitter.

### **Luke 10:38-42; RCL, the same reading (Luke 11:1-13; RCL, the same reading )**

*"Several years ago a church in our area was named Saints Martha and Mary, because, as the developer said, it was going to take both Marys and Marthas for the new church to grow...*

*Only five verses long, this story has fueled divisiveness and resentment, pitting women with different vocations in the church against each other. And it has prompted many attempts to justify Jesus' actions. His affirmation of one woman's choice and criticism of the other seems out of character, especially because Jesus consistently emphasizes service and hospitality. What is the justification for his dismissal of Martha's attention to the care of her guests?"*

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=625](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=625) *Marilyn Salmon* Professor of New Testament, United Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN

## **"The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 10th Chapter"**

### **Martha and Mary**

<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, *"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary.<sup>[b]</sup> Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

- a. [Luke 10:38](#) Greek *he*
- b. [Luke 10:42](#) Some manuscripts *few things are necessary, or only one*

“The design and structure of Luke's story about Jesus' visit in the home of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) is straightforward, and it is told in a linear fashion.

- Martha extends hospitality to Jesus (38).
- Mary listens to Jesus' teachings (39).
- Martha attends to the duties of hospitality (40a).
- Martha complains that Mary has neglected the duties of hospitality (40b).
- Martha asks Jesus to instruct Mary to help her (40c).
- Jesus responds that Mary has chosen the better activity (41-42).

Within the larger travel narrative (Luke 9-19), such stories as this revolve around the act of traveling and feature elements that are representative of the ancient Mediterranean custom of either hospitality or inhospitality...

The passage turns on the meaning of the “one thing.” The “one thing” in Jesus' logic is the “best part” which Mary has chosen. And what is that? According to Jesus, hearing the word of God's messenger is the one thing needed, not providing for his physical needs (also Luke 8:15, 21). Thus, however important hospitality is in Luke as a social context for the spread of the Christian message, it is even more important to have followers who attend to Jesus' messengers. The saying is less a condemnation of Martha's frenzied activity and more a commendation of Mary's posture as a disciple...

But there is another motif running alongside the theme of hospitality. Yes, Martha, the host, has busied herself with caring for her guest, and she exemplifies ideal hospitality. In the subsequent history of interpretation, Martha also represents the *vita active*, the active life. Mary, on the other hand, represents the *vita contemplativa*, the contemplative life. She sits at the feet of Jesus as a student and listens to him teach. Both the active life and the contemplative life are needed; to choose one over the other can create a false dichotomy. Ambrose observed: “Virtue does not have a single form. In the example of Martha and Mary, there is added the busy devotion of the one and the pious attention of the other to the Word of God.”<sup>5</sup> Still, Christ gently reminds Martha (and Luke's audience), that Mary's is “the better part,” because actions -- even acts of Christian charity and hospitality -- if they are to be sustained, always follow being; that is, what we do flows naturally from who we are.”

- [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2917](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2917) [Mikeal C. Parsons](#) Professor and Kidd L. and Buna Hitchcock Macon Chair of Religion, Baylor University, Waco, Texas

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“Few things are easier than taking a portion of Scripture, isolating it from its original context, and then using this now rarified, out-of-context pericope to serve as some universal statement. This brief lection from Luke 10:38-42 is a classic example. How many times hasn't this gospel snippet been used to prove that hearing the word of God is just generally more important than doing and being busy? “The one thing needful” is a phrase lifted out of this story and often used as a symbol of the importance of listening over doing.

The story itself is quite spare. Thus, and not surprisingly, many commentators and interpreters over the years have rushed in to turn Martha and Mary into mere tropes,

metaphors that stand for any number of things. Is this a story on the value of contemplation over a deeds-based ministry? Is this a story grinding an axe to address the role of women in ministry in Luke's day? Can this story be used as a proof text for those who have traditionally been suspicious of certain kinds of social activism in the church?

In truth, it is difficult to say... Jesus has just told the Parable of the Good Samaritan which had the bottom line of "Go and *do* likewise." So how can Jesus pivot from advocating an active ministry of mercy and neighborliness to looking askance at a person who is *doing* a lot vis-à-vis someone who is content to do nothing but sit and listen?...

Probably the only mistake we can make with this incident is to make it an either-or scenario. Given its placement in Luke, this story can at best highlight one kingdom value among others. The question, therefore, is not to ask whether this passage advises us just generally as to whether it is better to listen than to serve, to be contemplative or to be active but rather the question is: in the larger kingdom scheme of things, what do we learn from this passage? What particular aspect of life before the face of God is being addressed here?

Approached this way, perhaps those who suggest that hospitality is a theme here are on to something. How do we receive Jesus? What do we think is Jesus' first priority when he, as it were, comes into a person's home? ...We're not certain just what all Martha was up to—this story is spare in its details. We're likewise not sure what Jesus was saying to Mary—not a syllable of Jesus' discourse is preserved for us.

But this much is clear: service is important. Jesus deserved to be served and have a meal dished up for him—even a very nice meal was not something Jesus would have sniffed at... And again, earlier in this very chapter Jesus told his followers to eat whatever was set before them, be it lavish or simple. Presumably on this evening, Jesus did this: he gratefully ate what Martha set down on the table before him.

So far so good. The problem was not in the fact that Martha served—no word of rebuke would have come her way had she not taken the initiative to ask Jesus to rebuke *Mary* for not lending a hand. It was only then that Martha came in for some criticism. Service is good. Service is lovely, in fact, and is in its own way a "needful thing." Jesus says nothing here to undercut the idea that hospitality and service are noble endeavors and the right thing for also disciples to do. But if and when we elevate that form of hospitality over hearing and pondering the Word of God—if and when we think, therefore, that Jesus himself is more interested in haute cuisine than in the Bread of Heaven that alone gives life—that is when we get into trouble.

This is the "better portion" that Mary had chosen. On this point, however, it may be worth lingering for a moment. In the Greek of verse 42 what Jesus literally says is, "One thing is needed: therefore, Mary has elected the good portion and it will not be taken from her." Most Greek scholars tell us that the adjective *agathon*/"good" can be used as a comparative form in that the actual comparative and superlative forms of Greek adjectives were waning by the time the New Testament was written. The context determines whether to translate *agathon* as "good" or "better" and most scholars agree that the context of Luke 10:42 indicate this should be not just the "good portion" that Mary chose but the "better portion."

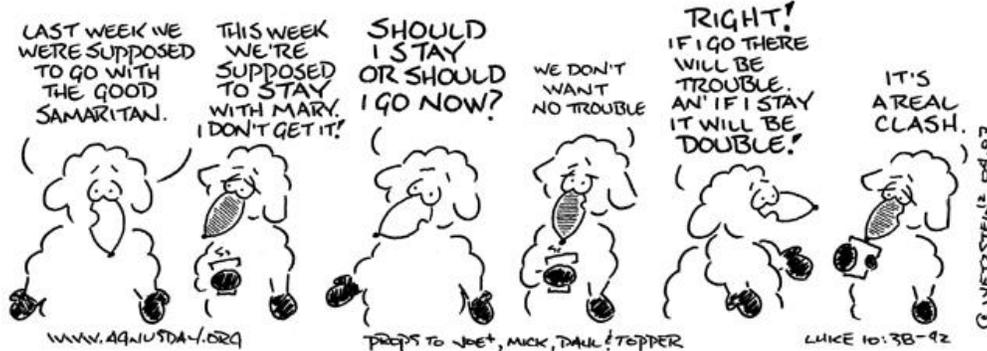
There is some indication that there may also be a bit of a pun being employed here in that "portion" in the Old Testament often referred to a literal food portion at a meal. If so, then Martha's complaint about Mary's lack of help with the meal was answered by Jesus with a pun to say that Mary had seen the true banquet that had been laid before her that evening and

chose to “eat” a portion of that meal, which spiritually speaking is a lot more important than all the portions of a physical meal combined. No matter how good supper had been that evening, the better meal being served was the one falling from Jesus’ lips and being lapped up by Mary as she sat at the Master’s feet. Given the superlative value of Jesus’ spiritual banquet, even a “good portion” would be the “better” portion indeed (if not the best portion of them all!). In this sense, this brief incident could be described as “a tale of two suppers.”

Jesus may or may not be elevating contemplation over service—we need both and generally should not have to choose between one or the other. As Fred Craddock says in his “Interpretation” series commentary, **if we asked Jesus which example we are to follow, the active Good Samaritan or the contemplative Mary, Jesus would probably say “Yes.”**

- [https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-11c/?type=the\\_lectionary\\_gospel](https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-11c/?type=the_lectionary_gospel) Scott Hoezee

### “This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”



“The Department of Demographic Relevance, here at Agnus Day Central, would like to take this opportunity to apologize to all those who didn’t come of age in the late 70’s and early 80’s for today’s strip. It’s like we’re [lost in the supermarket](#) or something. Well [some things you can explain away](#) .

Not sure what in the world we’re talking about? Then click [HERE](#)”

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“When I was a child, one of my family’s common dinner prayers was, “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let this food to us be blessed.”

(My sisters and I liked its brevity and the sing-song nature of the rhyme.) I understood it to be essentially a dinner blessing, so it was not until many years later that I realized the boldness of the first part of the prayer: asking Jesus to come and be our guest. What would that mean to prepare space at our table, in our home, in our lives, into which Jesus could come? What would it mean to receive him with hospitality and generosity?...”

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1727](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1727) [Sara Koenig](#) Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA