

LUKE 10:28-42
JESUS COMES TO YOUR HOUSE

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.

But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

The "ADVENT" of Jesus means "Jesus arrives at" or "Jesus comes to"—a destination, a certain place. Last Wednesday we saw how John in his Gospel said that Jesus, Who made this world, "came to" His own, but His own did not receive Him. To those who did receive Him, He gave the right to become the sons of God!"

Today, from Luke, we see a particular advent of Jesus—His arrival at—the house of Mary and Martha. Mary and Martha were sisters. The Gospel of John tells us that their brother was Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead after four days. John also tells us Mary and Martha lived in Bethany, a few miles from Jerusalem. In today's text, Luke simply says Jesus *entered a certain village*. Jesus made it a point to visit not just the cities but also the villages. He was a shepherd to all, even little communities from which farmers and shepherds would go out to their fields and pastures every day. No one was, or is, too insignificant for the Savior and His love. He is interested in each one of you--even though some folks might consider West River less than ideal.

In this village Jesus met a certain woman named Martha. Perhaps He met her at the well, or the market, or came to the door. Actually, it seems Jesus knew the sisters already. *Martha welcomed Him into her house*. It's right to welcome the Son of God into your home! At Advent and Christmas we remember birth at Bethlehem and welcome Him to this earth. Even better, we welcome him into our hearts and homes. Christmas is not just a public celebration at church or at a gathering. It is also a very personal celebration, in the heart. Does "in the heart" mean it's best not to have a Christmas tree at home, or candles or decorations? Hardly. Such serve as helpful aids, leading us to consider Jesus' birth on earth as special and wonderful. They are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Bible. But do not make the displays and decorations into your Christmas! Welcome Jesus into your heart. He is the Savior from your sins. It is not wise nor safe to ignore Him, when He stands at the heart's door and knocks. Do not send Him on His way.

Luke speaks of Martha's sister Mary and of her reception of Jesus. Perhaps Mary was not "at the door" when Jesus arrived; but in short order she was in His presence, at His feet, listening to His Word. It was common for students to be seated on the floor around a teacher. That still happens today. Such is a display of humility—"I am not the teacher, you are"; and a matter of respect—"I look up to you for leadership and instruction." Mary was listening to Jesus' Word. Was He simply instructing her how to treat other people, how to make use of opportunities in life, how to be thrifty with money? Was He teaching her things like the sayings of Confucius? I think not.

Without a doubt He was giving her the big picture. Luke wrote already in the previous chapter that *When the time had come for Him [Jesus] to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,* Jesus was already preparing to die for the sins of the world. That's why He had come! That's what He shared with His students. Although many didn't understand, like the disciples, like Peter who said "No way, Lord" and Jesus replied, "Get behind Me, Satan!"; Mary "got it"! How do we know? At a later gathering she anointed Jesus' feet with precious, aromatic oil. Judas immediately said it was a waste. But Mary knew why she had done it, and Jesus knew that she knew. Jesus said she had done this for His burial. Such things Mary learned listening to Jesus' Word, "sitting at His feet." When you receive Jesus and Christmas, into your schedules and into your celebrations of 25th of December, lay everything else aside and listen to His Word, His Good News. Ponder the reality of the message, that He has come for your deliverance because by your own doing you are separated from the Father, dirty with sin, and unacceptable. BUT Jesus laid aside His honor and has come to earth as God and man, to clean you up, and welcome you to His home and welcome you into His heart. This is receiving Jesus at Christmas! It's bound up in the Word!

Martha, on the other hand, was such a “do-er” and a “worker.” Martha was *distracted with much serving*. We can imagine all that she was doing. Preparing food, preparing the guest room, etc. We can’t say that she didn’t love Jesus, but she did have priorities turned around. For her, Jesus’ Advent to her house meant all the things she did for Jesus, rather than all the things Jesus came to do for her! Is that your Christmas—the things YOU do? Such a Christmas is self-centered—What I do—Not what Jesus did, and does, for me. Martha here even suggests that she is right and Jesus wrong! *She approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.”* In other words, “Lord, you’re distracting Mary from what she should be doing for You. Lord, You need to be alert and tell her to help me!” Do you ever try to tell God what He should do to give you a good Christmas? Or do you ever tell God what He shouldn’t be doing which is giving you a bad Christmas?

What makes Christmas “good” or “bad”? What’s the worst Christmas you’ve ever had? Stuck in a snowdrift, laboring in a snowstorm to care for God’s cattle—yes, God’s cattle? Sick in bed, delirious from fever, a throw-up bucket at arm’s length? Or, not one present that you really wanted, or maybe not one present at all? And what was the best Christmas you ever had? Just the opposite?—impressive presents, large gatherings, food, drink, fresh snow, weather pleasant to be outdoors? Does all this sound like Martha’s reception of Jesus? It’s all about things, and things that revolve around “me.”

And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” One thing is needed. The celebration of His arrival—His Advent, His birth—really revolves around one thing. “Christ has come to save me from the ‘broiler’ of hell. Christ was ‘torched’ on the cross in my place under the Father’s own wrath—*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!* He unbelievably rose on the third day, untarnished in His glory, to save me from the things that I do and have done—rebellious things against God. I am forgiven for Jesus sake, that is, in Jesus’ blood!” EXHALE! That is the power of Advent and Christmas. It comes from sitting at Jesus’ feet hearing His Word, which pours that message into your heart. This message is the one thing NEEDED—truly needed—forgiveness and eternal life in Him. It shall never be taken away!

Imagine, a seven-year-old unhappily separated from family and celebrating a birthday. Even though birthday presents are mailed, it would still a bummer. Then imagine that same child a month later reunited with family! Even if there’s not one present, which day is the better day, the happiest day always remembered? To share the love of family surpasses presents. Likewise at Christmas. Not that I am saying that “family love” is what makes Christmas—even though there is a saying that so implies: “It’s not what’s under the tree, but who’s around the tree.” It sounds good, but the real sweet spot is missing—Jesus! Christmas is not about earthly family love, but about the family love that the heavenly Father has for you through the Son! To have a Martha-celebration with the trappings, and festivities, and distractions—busily separated from your Heavenly Father’s love and acceptance in Jesus, is really quite an empty Christmas. On the other hand, to celebrate a Mary’s Christmas, to soak-in the love of Jesus and the Father and the Spirit, Who welcome you and keep you in tender love for eternity, that’s Christmas! That is the one thing needful.

Advent and Christmas are not about what you are doing to celebrate the Savior’s arrival, but about what He has arrived to do for YOU! Forgiveness and eternal life are yours! “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich!” (II Corinthians 8:9). “Behold, I bring you Good Tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David, A Savior, who is Christ the Lord!” (Luke 2:10-11). Celebrate Christmas with joy with your family, but do not separate it from the refreshing message of salvation for you in Christ!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---