

Proper 11, Year C
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St. James, Wheat Ridge

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“Tell me rest of the story”
“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”
“Your Place in God’s Band”

Have you ever noticed the message that is displayed on
a church sign that you drive by every day?

Intrigued by a catchy message the reader
might come to church the next Sunday.

The message displayed this morning at St. James says:

“The world is changed by your example not your opinion.”

We just heard a story about Martha, Mary and Jesus.
Travel with me as three signs point the way.

Sign #1 “Tell me the rest of the story”

The Gospel reading assigned for this Sunday comes from the Gospel of Luke.
It’s a short reading.....only five verses.

Martha and Mary are familiar characters from the Bible.

In this morning’s Gospel reading
Martha, Mary and Jesus are the main characters.
Their brother Lazarus was not mentioned.

There are two stories in John’s Gospel
that teach us more about Martha, Mary and their
younger brother Lazarus.

We learn that Jesus cared deeply about his friends from Bethany.
Jesus wept when he was told that Lazarus had died.

During a banquet that Martha hosted for Jesus,
Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with expensive oil.
Mary knew that Jesus and his disciples were
traveling to Jerusalem where Jesus would die.
Mary anointed his feet preparing him for burial...

Jesus, Martha, Mary and Lazarus were close friends.
They cared about each other....
and responded to each other’s needs.

Martha freely spoke to Jesus and she challenged his actions.
Jesus also challenged her actions.

Hearing their stories helps us know who they were...

Sign #2: “Guess who’s coming to dinner”

“While Jesus and his disciples were traveling,
Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha
welcomed him as a guest.”

I wonder if Jesus’ disciples also came to dinner?

If they did come that could be the reason
why Martha was so busy
bustling around, anxious...preoccupied...

It’s understandable that Martha
would be concerned about getting everything
“just right” when Jesus came to visit.

From early paintings of this scene:
Some artists painted three people.
Martha, Mary and Jesus.

Other painters included Jesus’ disciples along with
Martha, Mary and Jesus in their paintings.
Martha was trying to throw a Big party.

I don’t have the answer to that question
“Guess who’s coming to dinner....”

Recognizing that Jesus, Martha and Mary were
close friends we know that Jesus’ response to
Martha’s complaining that Mary wasn’t helping
was made with love.

Martha, Martha, “get focused...relax...”

There is a time to work- (to be a do-er.)
There is a time to pray and (to “be” with the Lord.)
The two roles compliment each other.

Another thought about today’s lesson:

It’s been suggested that this story is about RADICAL Hospitality.

A woman, Martha was **the head of the household**.
She welcomed Jesus into **her home**....

Normally it was **the male member** of a family
who invited travelers into **his home**.

Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet...**was a disciple**.

No respectable Rabbi would have gone into a house
with two women....without a proper invitation.

No respectable Rabbi would have allowed **a woman**
to be a disciple sitting at his feet...
but there was Mary silently listening.

Jesus said that
“the Kingdom of God has come near...”

Martha and Mary’s world as they knew it was changing....
the interactions between men
and women were changing, too.

Sigh #3: YOUR PLACE IN GOD’S BAND:

This week I found a story that I believe
captures the meaning of this Gospel lesson.

“Your place in God’s band” is a chapter in Max Lucado’s book:

Cast of Characters: *Common People in the Hand of an Uncommon God*
(published in Nashville by Thomas Nelson 2008)

Max Lucado is a well known “inspiration writer.”
He writes books for people who don’t read books.

His best-selling books have sold 100 million copies across 54 languages worldwide.

I loved this story because like Max:
I played “tuba” in the marching band when I was at Lakewood High School.
Many many, years ago...
I carried and tried to play a sousaphone...it would be hard to carry a tuba.

His spin on today’s Gospel lesson: made me smile and it reminds us that
we each have gifts to share with one another.

THE READING:

Two of my teenage years were spent carrying a tuba in my high school marching band. My mom wanted me to learn to read music, and the choir was full while the band was a tuba-tooter short, so I signed up. Not necessarily what you would describe as a call from God, but it wasn’t a wasted experience either...

I learned to paint white shoe polish on school buses.

I learned that when you don’t know your music, you need to put your lips to the horn and pretend you do, rather than play and remove all doubt.

(Been there....done that!)

And I learned some facts about harmony that I’ll pass on to you.

I marched next to the bass-drum player. What a great sound.

BOOM...BOOM....BOOM.... Deep, thundering sounds. At the right measure in the right music, there is nothing better than the sound of a bass drum....boom, boom, boom.

And at the end of my flank marched the flute section. Oh, how their music soared, lifting, rising into the clouds.

Ahead of me, at the front of my line, was our first-chair trumpet. A band member through and through. While some guys shot hoops and others drove hot rods, he played the trumpet. And it showed. Put him on the fifty yard line and let him blow. He could raise the spirit. He could raise the flag. He could have raised the roof on the stadium if we'd had one.

*Flutes and trumpets sound very different.
The flute whispers. The trumpet shouts.
The flue comforts. The trumpet bugles.*

There's nothing like a trumpet-in limited dosages.

A person can only be blasted at for so long. After a while you need to hear something softer. Something sweeter. You need to hear a little flute. But even the sound of the flute can go flat if there is no rhythm or cadence. That's why you also need the drum.

But who wants the drum all by itself. Ever seen a band made up of bass drums? Would you attend a concert of a hundred drums? Probably not. But what band would want to be without a bass drum or flute or trumpet?

*The soft flute
 needs the brash trumpet
 needs the steady drum
 needs the soft flute....
 needs the brash trumpet...*

Get the idea: the operative word is need. They need each other.

What I saw two decades ago in the band, I see today in the church. We need each other. Not all of us play the same instrument. Some believers are lofty and others are solid. Some keep the pace while others lead the band.

*Not all of us make the same sound.
 Some are soft and others are loud.*

Some play the drums like Martha.

Some play the flute like Mary.

And others sound the trumpet like Lazarus.”

Remember

Every community needs the particular gifts that we bring to the community.

Marthas keep things going...she played the bass drum.

Mary praised the Lord. She played the flute.

*If you are a Martha: a doer:
be strengthened God needs your service.*

*If you are a Mary, be encouraged.
God receives your worship.*

**Together we can make music that will be magical...
Music that will transform the world.**