### St. David’s Episcopal Church

### Beam Blossom, Indiana

### Pentecost 6, Proper 11C

### Sermon by the Rev. Kate Wilson

July 17, 2022

### Amos 8, 1-12 Psalm 52 Colossians 1:15-28 Luke 10:38-42

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The time is surely coming, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine on the land: not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wonder for sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, but they shall not find it.

You love evil more than good

And lying more than speaking he tuth.

You love all words that hurt, o you deceitful tongue.

And of course, as Paul said, through Christ, the word of God, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all ceation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created.

Words, words, words. Words that banish, words that hurt, the Word that creates. Then as now, and in our culture, words explode from lips and keyboards throughout the world in seconds. Lies, hate, love, encouragement. Words matter.

And in our Gospel this morning, Jesus visits his friends in Bethany. Lazarus isn’t mentioned in this passage, but Martha and Mary are key. Jesus is visiting them, and the Jewish custom of love your neighbor springs forth through the preparation of a meal to celebrate the visit. I visualized Martha busy in her kitchen, but as I am having my kitchen redone, I visualized her in a modern kitchen with appliances. It is work enough to put together a meal for a stranger and how ever many he has brought with him in a modern kitchen with provisions sitting in the frig or just a short drive away, but of course Martha most likely had a lot of beans to soak and chickens to pluck and dress, and a fire to get just right in the common oven behind their home. Then there was the baking and boiling and tending, the wine to get out, the dishes to wash before use.

I have a sister. If I were doing all that work as she sat at Jesus’s feet like a disciple for heaven’s sake, enrapt in our guest, I too would have been out of joint. My sister’s name, by the way, is Mary and that is right where she would be. Martha may have already waved Mary over to speak privately to her, but Mary was engrossed in Jesus’s words. Martha finally becomes completely distracted by her many tasks, and she breaks.

Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me!

Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need for only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.

Martha: Caboom!

Let us hope that Jesus, as their good friend, takes a little more time to explain his meaning so that Martha doesn’t feel resentful and angry. There is only need for resentment if one thinks that discipleship is made of listening only and not doing. Jesus has just sent out 70 pairs of disciples to do the work of salvation. Discipleship depends upon service as well as on words. Let’s say the conversation continued to include Martha in the inner circle, as Jesus would likely do.

Then we can see the other lessons in this lovely, domestic interaction.

One, there is a tendency from this reading to value the contemplative life over the life of Christian action. Jesus says that Mary has chosen the better part, but he would have missed quite a few meals if everyone sat in silent meditation and rapt listening. Yes, Mary is attending to the Word of God by hearing it and Martha is attending to the word of God by nurturing it.

This reminds me of good, loving church members who are in constant motion, doing. Tending the kitchen, the sanctuary, and the physical plant, creating coffee hour, weeding the gardens, attending meetings ad nauseum, refurbishing what needs repair. It is a sacrifice to be a good giving Christian. It is hard to do it without expecting thanks. It’s like being a mother, isn’t it? So let us thank the men and women who give so much of themselves for St David’s. And there are many who will be first to get a hot meal to a family struck by illness or suffering. But isn’t it also important to accept meals from others when you are in a painful place due to illness or death, or poverty. How can people be good Christians if other good Christians won’t welcome them with their offerings? If we are always welcome to love our neighbors but unwilling to accept the love of our neighbors? The love was meant to be a complete circle, not a single arc.

Mary and Martha together represent a healthy Christian ethic. A community that is firmly rooted in the Word of Christ is best prepared to act in the word of Christ. I community that loves to grow in faith and to make conscious efforts to have all actions bloom from their deep-rooted faith in the Word of Christ is a healthy and joyful community. In education, this is called the action-reflection model of learning. A job is completed and is then the focus of deep introspection. That introspection shapes and guides the next action. It has also been called the reflection-action-reflection-action etc, etc way of living. The goal is to keep Christ central in our doings, so that he is rooted in our beings, bursting forth in all works and all ways.

Words, words, words. And with these words, Thanks be to God.