



## SUNDAY SERMON

# When Jesus Comes to Your House

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If Jesus showed up at your house, what would you do? If the Lord Yahweh opened the flap of your tent, how would you respond? In these stories, God is on the move, God is on a mission, God comes to Abraham and Sarah, to Martha and to Mary, and in so doing invites them, calls them into God's mission of love. Abraham, Sarah, Martha and Mary were each faithful in their own way in their own day. By implication, these stories present an invitation and call to each of us: and you, they suggest: what will you do? How will you respond?

When the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day, Abraham hastens to offer lavish hospitality. There is a sense of urgent responsiveness in Abraham as he invites the three men to take their ease, calls Sarah to make cakes, selects a choice calf for his servants to prepare. While it is true that Abraham and Sarah were simply following the custom of the day among their nomad contemporaries – a custom still practiced among the Bedouin, it is also true that showing hospitality to strangers is a means of opening one's own heart, assuming a posture of receptivity. Thus, through their hospitality, Abraham and Sarah have opened themselves, readied themselves, to receive God's startling, life-changing word: you will conceive and bear a son.

In the verses that follow our text today we'll read that upon hearing this announcement Sarah laughed. Abraham was ninety-nine years old at the time and she not much younger. She laughed in disbelief, yet the Lord responds, "is anything too hard or too wonderful for God?" Keep that question in mind these days: "is anything too hard or too wonderful for God?" And when Sarah does indeed conceive and bear a son – Isaac, we are reminded that even when we are not faithful, God is faithful to God's promise; God will do what God intends; God's word and God's love will not be thwarted.

While Abraham and Sarah's hospitality is central to their exchange with God, the hospitality offered to Jesus, particularly by Martha, seems to be more of a distraction.

Indulge me a moment and imagine this story not of two sisters, Martha and Mary, but two brothers – Max and Matthew (per David Lose). How do we hear this text if we remove from it and are not all caught up in the overlay of patriarchal expectations about women's roles in housekeeping and hospitality and contemplative quietude – overlays that have been used time and again not to properly honor but rather to denigrate women in the life of the church. In most of Jesus' encounters with men, we don't give a gendered interpretation – with the blind man, or the rich man, or the one who wants to bury his father.

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### DATE

Pentecost 6  
Sunday, July 21, 2019

### PREACHER

The Rev. Ledlie Laughlin

Genesis 18:1-10  
Luke 10:38-42

So if – just for the moment – its Max and Matthew, and Jesus has shown up for a visit, the one is sitting at Jesus' feet: he's taking in every word, the wisdom shared, the grace radiating out from Jesus' very presence. Isn't this a "story about timing and priorities, about circumstances and contexts which demand different behaviors"?

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. There's an urgency to Jesus' teaching, to his presence as the embodiment of sacrificial love, being given so that all may have life and have it in abundance.

While the one brother is sitting rapt, soaking it all in, the other is... busying himself in the other room, no doubt doing necessary things. I don't know about you, but I grieve those times when I've been overly focused on practical matters and missed the party, missed the opportunity to be with someone special, to really show up and be present in that moment – which is the only thing each of us has: this moment and the opportunity to show up. Especially if Jesus is teaching in our living room!

So Jesus says to that one in the kitchen: "Max, Matthew, whoever... Pay attention; these are not ordinary times: my mission, my love, is for you too; come on; don't miss out; you're part of this."

Even those closest to Jesus misunderstood so much of what was about to happen. Jesus keeps telling his disciples – then and now – to pay attention, to watch God's surprising, unsettling revelation unfold. Let it challenge our assumptions about God, about ourselves, and about how we relate to one another.

The truth is that it's important that these characters are women, women identified not - as was as the custom - in relation to someone else: as someone's wife, or daughter, or sister; rather identified by name. Mary, I need you to share in my teaching to embody my love, and Martha, I need you to put down whatever else you're doing because I need you too. I am building the realm of God in God's love and it will not be realized until you're part of it, until every single person is part of it. The whole message is one of inclusion; no one left out.

The news these days makes me exceedingly sad. I love America. I love the idea of America. I know that America is and always has been flawed, a human enterprise, an experiment still in the making as we seek to embody *E pluribus unum*; "out of many, one". We have a long way to go. Right now, with the vitriol and malice we are falling far short of our own good intentions.

When Jesus shows up at our house and calls upon each one of us to participate in God's mission and God's love, Jesus will remind us that at the end of the day, it all comes down to how we treat one another. Said Jesus, "come, inherit the kingdom; remember when I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, when I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' For, every time you have done these things for someone in his or her hour of need, for one of the least of these who are members of my family, so you did it to me.'

God is on the move. God is always on the move, with a mission of love. How will you respond? Now is the time to remember that even when we fall short, when we are less than faithful, God is faithful, God will use us for love. Even if the news evokes anger or despair, now is the time for hope, abiding hope, fierce and courageous hope, made manifest in our lives, in the ways we treat the people we meet today, tomorrow, and next week – whoever they are, wherever they came from, whatever they look like, whoever they love, whatever God they worship. Now is the time, in our own way in our own day, for each of us to say yes to God.