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**Title:** Journey to Jerusalem: Hearing

**Date:** March 16 & 17, 2019

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**Scripture:** [Luke 10:25-42](#)

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Let's begin by letting your imagination run free. I want you to picture yourself, your personality, your identity, and your character....picture yourself, who you really are, as a house. I know that might sound strange but, just go with it. If you were a house, what would you look like? Would you be a palatial mansion, with a finely manicured lawn

and on a lot with a stunning view? Or would you be a rustic cabin, tucked away in the woods, a quiet refuge? Maybe you'd be a beach house with a porch looking out over the ocean? Or a castle, with moats and turret, protected and safe? Picture a house, that might look like you because, it is you, your identity, your personality, your character.

Now zone in on the front door of that house. I suppose that requires more imagination. What type of door would a house that looks like you have? Would it be secure and strong, heavily bolted? Or would it be something lighter, with windows lights which allowed the world to see in? What sort of notification mechanism would the door on your house have to get your attention? A clanking knocker or a doorbell?

Picture someone at your door, the door of the house that is really you. They are pushing the doorbell or knocking on the door. If you open the door, who would they find inside? Who lives in you?

I'm not sure about you, but I've met people who gave me the distinct impression that if I went inside the "house" of their lives, I wouldn't find anyone home. Or if I went inside their house, they would be so cluttered with junk that there wouldn't be any room for anyone. Or some whose houses are great and impressive on the outside, but once I entered everything would be artificial. Who lives in you?"<sup>1</sup>

That's at the heart of our stories today about discipleship, about following Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem. It's about people and their character and personality traits, about who they are and who lives in them.

Last week, as we began our Lenten journey, there was a hint that this would be an issue, that character and spiritual formation was going to come up. We also got the impression that the bar was going to be set high. In fact, it almost sounded as if Jesus didn't want many disciples. Jesus was so determined to fulfill his mission, so clear about his destiny, that he almost had "tunnel vision." "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51) <sup>2</sup> So when people came up asking to go with him, to follow him, Jesus said: "Foxes have holes and birds have a nest but he didn't have a permanent place to lay his head." That's not very inviting. It sounds as if he is calling his followers to be homeless. There may have been times, I suppose, where that was the case. Jesus and his disciples were camping out. But there are clearly times when they experienced the generosity of others.

Immediately after he says this, he sends 70 disciples out as missionaries to the community and he didn't say, "Sleep in the alleys or on the benches in the parks." He said, "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ... Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house....eat what is set before you." (Luke 10:5-8) I think my father had this passage memorized, at least that last line. "Eat what is set before you." I know that when visiting someone's home, even if they served worms wiggling around on the plate, I was to "eat what was set before me." It is the only way to be gracious when someone hosts you. I thought Dad was just being authoritarian. It's biblical. Eat what is set before you. It comes from the picture of disciples going to a home, knocking on the door and someone letting them in. Of course, when there, they would naturally look around to see "who lives in this home?"

We have a picture of Jesus doing this as well. It comes just a little later after the 35 pairs of disciples come back and tell Jesus that they have been very successful in their mission. Jesus and his disciples make their way to a home and go to the door. We will learn later that probably no home in all of Israel is more valuable to him than this home. Jesus will spend some of the last days of his life in this home. But for all we know, this is the first time that Jesus knocks on the door and Martha lets him in. That's not surprising. It is the home of Martha and Mary, but Martha is the active hostess. She wants to show Jesus and his disciples her hospitality. That's what she wants them to see when they enter the house and ask, "Who lives in here?"

I don't know if you've ever thought about the huge challenge that Martha embraced when she invited Jesus in. Suddenly, Jesus has come for dinner. That's a challenge, just in and of that itself. But it likely wasn't just Jesus.

Martha was suddenly hosting a dinner party of at least fifteen, Jesus, his disciples, his sister Mary and herself. Sixteen if Lazarus is around.

I don't know about you but that would be a big challenge for me, and just about any cook. But some people have the knack of taking what's in the refrigerator, whatever is leftover or in the pantry, throwing it all together and suddenly, miraculously, there is a meal. Martha's this kind of chef and if she is honest, she hopes that when Jesus starts answering that question, "who lives here", he'll recognize Martha as the hostess with the mostest, an iron chef and miracle worker, able to take a little and turn it into a five-course, gourmet meal in less than an hour.

But Martha's miracle wasn't going very well. If you've ever been in a kitchen, you could imagine what might have been going wrong. There is a lot to imagine in this story. Maybe the fire wasn't right or she'd burned up the dinner. Maybe something boiled over on the stove and she boiled over. At least we know that because suddenly, Martha is out of the kitchen and storms into the living room where her sister Mary, ...sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying" (Luke 10:39b). Jesus, who knocked on the door and was invited into the house, Jesus who is looking around and asking, "who lives in here" is going to discover a little bit more about this question and at the same time, teach about his disciples. Martha, red-faced because it's hot in the kitchen, and hot because her sister isn't in the kitchen with her, says "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." (Luke 10:40b)

You know what happens. Jesus turns to Martha and says "Chill lady, I only needed a sandwich." Really, that's what he says. You may not have heard it that way but it is what he means when Jesus answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing." (Luke 10:41-42a) Martha's in the kitchen trying to put a five-course meal together when pizza would have done.<sup>3</sup> She was going over the top trying to prove who she was and in the end, she revealed something else about who lived there. A cook with a heart to serve who was perhaps, a little malnourished. I think that's what Jesus sees and why he said, "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42b)

Jesus wasn't faulting Martha for her service. I think that's an important thing to share particularly for all of the Marthas who are here. The cause of Christ needs Marthas. If we didn't have Marthas, nothing much would get done. Worship wouldn't happen. Communion would not be prepared. Mission would never be undertaken and the gospel wouldn't be shared. You have to have people who are willing to serve and that is Martha, through and

through. Jesus isn't faulting Martha for her service even though it sounds a little like he is, so much so that the disciples might have been thinking, "Wait, Jesus, didn't you just tell a story about this?" And he had.

Just before Jesus knocks on the door of their house, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. You know that story; I don't have to tell it to you. What is the basic lesson of the story? Your neighbor is anyone whose need you see and you are in a position to meet it. That's what it means to serve and Martha is serving; being a neighbor. She has the gift of hospitality, sees the needs and is trying to meet it. Martha is being a neighbor and Jesus is not faulting her for that.

What Jesus points out is not the service but the spirit of the service, the motive of her service. Jesus is sizing her up and answering the question, "who lives in her" and realizing that he doesn't. She is serving out of the need for recognition and not out of the hearing God's Word. Good service, done with a bad spirit, doesn't do you any good.<sup>4</sup> Good service done with the wrong motives ultimately is malnourishing.

You can see this by the way she treats her sister. She doesn't tiptoe into the room, wave at Mary and mouth, "Mary, could you help me?" She storms in and embarrasses Mary in front of Jesus and all the disciples. Here in her home is the one who she will eventually say, "Yes Lord, I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God" (John 11:27a), she challenges, "Lord do you not care about me? I'm trying to get this meal together all by myself." "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42b) What was the better thing? Mary sat at Jesus' feet in order to hear his word.

I don't know if the disciples were making the connection. I think Jesus hoped they were. After all, the journey to Jerusalem isn't just about his destiny and sacrifice. It is also about teaching, disciplining his followers. The connection that Mary chooses the better part goes back to that story about the Good Samaritan. The reason Jesus told that story was because a man comes up and asks him a question about eternal life. Jesus asks him what was in the Law. And the man quotes the Shema, which begins with the word "Hear" Hear of Israel, and then, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27) Jesus said, right answer, "do this and you will live."

But the man wanted to justify himself so Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, and points to the priest and a Levite. They were faithful men. They knew the Shema. But they hadn't really heard it because it had no

impact on their actions. Knowing the Bible is important but it isn't the equivalent of truly hearing it, internalizing it while sitting at Jesus' feet. To hear the word is to allow Jesus to come into your home, to live in your house, the house that is you. God's word needs to do something in you before you can do something for others<sup>5</sup> or doing something for others won't be life-giving, nourishing.

Jesus says Mary chose the better part because we must nourish our spirit and soul in order to minister to others. There is a reason the Shema is in the order it is. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, then love your neighbor. If we get them turned around, it can destroy you. It will cause you to burn out because your motives will always be off. Your service will be motivated by obligation, or recognition or self-centered sacrifice, or even trying to earn God's approval. Any and all of that always leads to feeling undervalued or unappreciated. Service that is life-giving comes from first hearing Jesus and allowing him to serve you. Then, your service, your giving, your witnessing, your commitment is motivated because of who lives in you. Is it? Does he?

Who lives in you? That's the question of the day that comes on this second Sunday in Lent as we journey to Jerusalem. Who lives in you? What guides your decisions? What sets the course of your life? What determines the way you think and treat others around you? Who lives in you?

I asked the question at the beginning as an exercise of imagination. What sort of house did you picture and who did you see knocking at your door? Was it Jesus? If you know scripture you know it's not just an imaginary exercise. Rather, it's a promise found in the book of Revelation. One day it will happen. It goes this way. "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." (Revelation 3:20) Wow. Imagine hearing that. You should.

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<sup>1</sup> Greiss, Lee. Who lives in you? Retrieved by subscription @ <https://sermons.com/sermon/who-lives-in-you/1332366>

<sup>2</sup> Matera FJ. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9.51-19.46): A Conflict with Israel. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. 1993;16(51):57-77.

<sup>3</sup> Craddock, Fred. Interpretation: Luke. Pgs 151-152.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, Haddon. "Don't just do something; sit there." Retrieved by subscription @ <https://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2007/october/dontjustdosomethingsitthere.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Robinson.