

Rev Ken Wratten
 July 21, 2019 – 6 Pentecost
 St. Luke's Church
 Genesis 18:1-10a
 Psalm 15
 Colossians 1:15-28
 Luke 10:38-42

Abraham was visited by three men: angels? Trinity?
 Mays: Who may be present, before the Presence?
 The supreme divinity and full humanity of Christ-mature faith
 Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things.

For a lot of years I was hooked on photography. I spent weekends developing 35mm slides by floating chemicals in the bathtub, to keep their temperature controlled. When we went on family vacation trips, I carried my camera bag. When I went to Europe and South America on business; when Candace lived in an Isolette for the first month of her life; and when we went sailing – I had my camera bag with me. It took years for me to realize that I was missing things because I was so absorbed in taking the picture; adjusting the depth of field; making sure the shutter speed was fast enough; checking the composition; and making sure there were no distracting objects in the field of view. But when I saw the developed photos I was usually disappointed that they almost never captured what I had seen or felt; they only gave a 2-dimensional window into where I had been. I decided that – for me - taking pictures was distracting me from appreciating the things I was doing. Now I carry this iPhone camera, and occasionally take a picture. This was a lesson for me about managing my distractions.

In today's lesson from Genesis, Abraham saw three strangers near his camp. He knew how important it was to his faith that he show hospitality to strangers. So he invited them to stay; to rest, accept some cool water to wash with, and enjoy a 5-star meal. Then his guests gave a blessing for Abraham and his wife Sarah, that they would have a son within a year. Abraham kept his attention on the values of his faith, let his comfort and security be threatened by opening himself to these strangers - and he attended to angels of God. Through this encounter, Abraham stayed focused on God.

Paul tells the Colossians that he proclaimed Christ to them so that they might become "mature in Christ". Paul said, "For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that [Christ] powerfully inspires within me." It was Paul's passion that we grow in maturity in our faith. The faith of the church in Colossae was being threatened by people trying to add elements of Judaism, Greek philosophy, and pagan deities. They were questioning how Jesus could be fully human and divine, because being human = being physical = evil. They began to include worship of other gods, to cover all the bases. Paul explained that mature faith is believing that Jesus is the visible – physical – image of God; and Jesus is all that anybody needs. Paul challenged them to not let other people distract them from God.

Examples: Jesus Seminar; humanism (life centered on human interests); hedonism (pleasure is main goal of life).

The Gospel story of Martha and Mary is the other half of the previous story in Luke, the story of the Good Samaritan. That parable illustrated the importance of loving our neighbor by serving them beyond expectations. The Martha-Mary story illustrates the need to also prioritize loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, even to the point of ignoring social custom. Martha was so busy providing hospitality that she was not listening to Jesus' teaching.

Jesus said (John 6:63) **The very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.**

Jesus' gentle rebuke to Martha was urging her to accept Mary's priority to listen intently to God's Word. Jesus told Martha "there is need of only one thing." That thing is God's Word. So how do we live by God's Word in our day-to-day living?

1. We accept the authority of God's Word; (Richard Hooker) revealed in the Bible, through tradition (2166 BC – 2019 AD), and through reason (HS living in us).
2. We digest the truth of God's Word; make it our own; hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. (Proper 28 Collect) dog eared Bible
3. We apply its principles. Walk the walk. (The Christian Ideal)

We are not to let life distract us from God.

Example; sports; work; "good works".

Our Scripture lessons today warn us to guard against letting our own comfort distract us from God; letting other people distract us from God; or letting life distract us from God. Please join me in prayer;

Lord, we give thanks for your Word, and for Jesus who taught your message with the power of down to earth understanding. Guide us in our study, inspire us in our understanding, bless us in our attempts to live our lives according to your plan. Help us to find the focus in faith like Abraham; the passion for mature faith like Paul; and balance between Martha's faithful service, and Mary's longing to live in your presence. Amen.