

Sunday, July 17th. 2022. Trinity 5

Genesis 18.1-10, Psalm 15, Luke 10.38-42

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

One of the things, which we often do, is offer hospitality to guests. We invite people to our houses for meals, and the preparation takes much longer than actually eating the meal! If you are like me, if somebody is coming, you clean the house as well! You want everything to be perfect, so it can be somewhat stressful. My mum wouldn't put anything out if it wasn't just right.

We also arrange hospitality for during or after meetings, and in church for after the service, something, which we have missed during the last two years. These events bring us together, help us to get to know one another better and allow us to relax.

In the legend of today's first reading, God appears to Abraham in the desert in the guise of three men. Abraham hurries to offer them hospitality. The object of the visit is to predict the birth of a son to Sarah in nine months. All is done with complete courtesy.

The Gospel story is visual and always makes me laugh.

Here, Martha receives Jesus as a guest in her house, and he arrives for a meal. Unfortunately, Martha is run ragged with all the preparations, and Mary doesn't help, but listens at Jesus' feet to his teachings. She acknowledges him as her Lord.

It looks as if Martha has a lot of guests to serve, and this hospitality would be seen as an important duty. No wonder that she complains to Jesus about the inefficiency of Mary.

But Martha doesn't receive the answer, which she was expecting! When Jesus says, 'There is need of only one thing', this may refer to the number of dishes at the meal or it may have a spiritual meaning. The dishes of food represent devotion to the Lord. Not many things are needed, only one dish. Mary has chosen the "good portion", because her "dish" is to hear and obey the word of God.

We may easily identify with Martha. I have a friend, who will say when I start preparing the meal, "Well, I'll watch an André Rieu DVD while you are doing that." And I think, "I'm running a hotel!!!"

We tend to complain if we feel that we are being treated unfairly or feel that our efforts are not appreciated.

Perhaps we have to consider what both Martha and Mary are doing. Mary is totally focussed on what she has been called to do. Martha

seems rather angry and resentful, and so isn't bringing the same focus to what she is doing and doesn't seem to be enjoying it!

For us, there are times when we are extremely busy and maybe stressed. We may even feel virtuous for being busy and think that we are more efficient than anyone else. Do we not need to stop and find some space? When I was at university, the curate from the local church would sometimes come in the afternoon and we would go for a spin in his car. On one occasion, I had an exam the next day. Could I spare the time? I went and then worked much better in the evening from having had a bit of time off and got a good mark! The Martha and Mary story invites us to find some space and allow God to enter it.

Psalm 15 focusses on how we express ourselves in social situations. It means avoiding slander and gossip, valuing other people on the basis of their relationship to God, rather than on how much money they have, keeping our word and not exploiting people or accepting a bribe to gain influence. This loyalty, it says, will be rewarded by prosperity in the community.

Can we, then, find peace and tranquillity among the noise and busyness of life? That is a challenge. If we can, we shall enjoy our work much more, stop worrying about what other people are doing and by focussing on that, find a healthy balance in our lives.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.