

**A SERMON FOR JULY 17, 2022**  
**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, PROPER 11**

It may seem that the lesson the Gospel reading today is trying to teach us is about hospitality, but perhaps there is something more our Lord wants us to take from this reading. Let me read verse 41 again to see if there is something we can discover in this lesson that will help us in our daily lives now, in the year 2022, for that is the purpose of hearing the Gospel every time we come together for Eucharist. Verse 41 - *Jesus said, "Martha, Martha. You are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing." Luke 10:41* He could have added, "and hospitality is not that thing." Nevertheless, *recalling* the hospitality theme, allow me to tell you about some hospitality that was available closer to home here in Glenside in an earlier time.

The Benjamin Franklin Hotel opened in 1925 as part of the preparations for the Sesquicentennial celebration of the birth of our nation in 1776. Named after a signer of the Declaration of Independence, the hotel was designed by the most prominent architect of the Gilded Age, Horace Trumbauer. The hotel stood 222' high, had 18 floors and 1200 spacious rooms, each with a grand view of historic Independence Hall. It was the largest hotel in the city of Philadelphia, then the third most populous city in the country.

The Ben Franklin was home to presidents, kings, other dignitaries and the wealthiest of the Gilded Age. It became known the world over for its gracious hospitality. Every amenity was lavishly present in the finest hotel the industry had to offer. Multiple restaurants graced the lower floors. One, the Georgian Room, was the gathering place each day for pampered guests who sat on needlepoint-upholstered armchairs, at dazzling white linen tablecloths, set with fine china, crystal glassware and Sterling silver dinnerware. Memorable seven course meals were served by an all-male wait staff decked out in formal attire. A string quartet played quietly throughout the dinner hour each evening. The experience at the Ben Franklin was a delight to the eyes, a comfort to the body and pleasing to the palette. This was hospitality at its finest at this magnificent, welcoming, and friendly four-star hotel.

Our Lord Jesus never set foot inside a four-star hotel in his life. It may be that he had not forgotten his family's unpleasant experience with hotels at the time of his birth, when there was no room for him nor his parents at the inn. In fact, on many nights, Jesus slept under the stars as he traveled over the country, about the size of New Jersey. During his public ministry, Jesus depended on friends, followers, and wealthy women disciples to provide a place of hospitality for him and his entourage of disciples each night.

And so it was that on a particular day, Jesus was invited to stay with his friend, Martha, who lived in Bethany, a small village just over the hill, a short distance from Jerusalem. When his entourage arrived, Martha's sister Mary joined Jesus and the disciples in the living room where Jesus was relaxing. Martha was left to stay in the kitchen to make preparations for a meal for the guests and to make other arrangements needed to make Jesus comfortable during his overnight stay. Frenzied activity of meal preparation developed, and with it, Martha became "distracted." The Greek word used means literally 'to tear out one's hair.' She was so distracted; she could offer no hospitality at all. There was no time to spend with Jesus and her other guests, no time to listen to Jesus' teaching, and no time to enjoy his company. She was so worried that she was not a good hostess and was so frustrated by her sister's inattention to her duties as co-host, that she became *rude*. Charging into the crowd of visitors, she interrupted Jesus and said - "Don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?" She became demanding, "Tell her then to help me!" She uses the imperative-"*You* tell her to help me." She was at her wits end with frustration. She was ready to scream – and to tear out her hair.

Jesus replied quietly, "Martha. Martha. You are worried and distracted by many things. There is need of only one thing. Listen to me. Listen to what I want you to hear. Your sister has chosen to listen to me. And that is good. So come! Sit here by my side. Join me and listen."

Jesus says these things to the Martha in each one of us; the part in you and me that is the *busy doer*, the *worrier*, the *distracted one*. The one that keeps us on the go-go-go life style merry-go-round. Jesus says, "*STOP!*" He bids us come, sit, and listen. He says, 'Listen to me in the Words of Scripture. Listen to me in silence and meditation. Listen to me in study and reflection. Listen to me in prayer and

contemplation. You may ask, "Is it possible that Jesus *can* talk to me? That Jesus *wants* to talk to me?" "Will talk to me?" "That's not possible, is it?" you say. However, the last words of our Genesis reading this morning should answer your question - "Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Gen. 18:14a Jesus bids you to make room for him in your life - spend time in gracious hospitality with him as if he were your guest. Jesus is inviting you to come into fellowship with him. Jesus is telling you to take rest with him.

Jesus is saying to leave the kitchen for a while. The dishes can wait!

*Amen.*