

Pentecost 8  
July 18, 2010  
Genesis 18:1-10a / Luke 10:38-42  
First Lutheran, Temple

### Children's Sermon—"Focus on Jesus"

I love my digital camera for taking pictures—maybe you saw me taking pictures this week at day camp—I took lots of pictures, and I put them on Facebook, and Cindy made a slide show, so everyone can see what we did this past week.

I brought my camera with me this morning and I would like to take a picture. Who would like me to take their picture? OK...now smile! (*Hold the camera facing myself*) All right! I'm sure I got a good picture of \_\_\_\_\_. You don't think so? Why not? Oh, I had the camera focused on ME instead of \_\_\_\_! Well, let's try it again! (*This time focus on child*) Let's see—yes! It's a beautiful picture!

When taking pictures, it's very important to make sure you are focused on the right thing. I was pretty foolish to try to take a picture of \_\_\_\_ with the camera focused on me, wasn't I? In our daily lives, it is important that we focus on the right thing, too. Sometimes, we forget what is important and we focus on all the wrong things. That is what our Bible lesson teaches us today.

One day, Jesus went to visit in the home of 2 sisters, Mary and Martha. They welcomed him into their home, and immediately Martha went to work to get a nice dinner on the table. She was careful to add all the right spices; she took out her best dishes and linens and set a beautiful table; she swept the floor one more time; she checked the meat to make sure it was roasting perfectly. She wanted to make

sure everything was just right. But then she noticed that she wasn't getting any help from her sister—her sister was just sitting close to Jesus and listening to him. Martha went right up to Jesus and complained about the situation—“Make her help me!” she said to Jesus.

But you know what Jesus said to her? He said to settle down—that Mary was doing just the right thing, listening to him. Martha had made the same mistake I made with my camera—she was focusing on herself rather than Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, was totally focused on Jesus, and after all, isn't that what really matters?

Let's pray. Dear Jesus, we love you lots, and we know you love us even more. Help us to keep our focus on you each and every day. Amen.

### Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. For the prayer, please turn to page 331 at the front of the worship book, and pray with me with prayer at the top of the page, entitled “Daily Work”. *God our Creator, you have given us work to do and call us to use our talents for the good of all. Guide us as we work, and teach us to live in the Spirit who made us your sons and daughters, in the love that made us sisters and brothers, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*

It's so easy to lose our focus, isn't it? To get distracted by the things that keep us busy—and of course, they are very important. Sometimes we get distracted when we are caring for someone that we love who is sick... by the busy schedules of our children... by our work... But sometimes we just get distracted by those things that our culture tells us

are important: TV programs, following a sports team, soap operas (on TV or in the work-place or family!), Facebook, Twitter, texting and constant communication, a hobby or leisure activity... The hard-working Martha was distracted by getting dinner on the table—that doesn't seem so bad to me! Yet Jesus' point was that it is important to have a balance in our lives.

Sit, listen, absorb Jesus' words, focus on him...these are "the better things" for which Jesus praised Mary. Yet in the verses immediately preceding these in Luke 10, is the parable of the Good Samaritan, a story in which Jesus reminds us that we are to care for our neighbors as Jesus himself cares for us—with utmost love and compassion. That familiar story begs us to go and do for others. Now in the story of Mary and Martha, Jesus balances the playing field: as important as *going, doing, and serving*, is *resting, listening, and finding peace in the presence of Jesus*.

We've just had an incredible week of Day Camp here at First Lutheran, and I want to thank publicly those who took part in the camp. Cindy Rackel, along with Rebecca Marbach and Jessica Frye, taught 17 pre-schoolers. My hat's off to them! You should have seen them, with their art projects, marching all 17 to the bathroom, lining up for this and that, telling the Bible stories on a 3-year-old level. And those little ones brought more food for the canned-food drive than any other village. Wow! Those children were treated to the promises of Jesus on the most basic level. The foundation of their faith is being well-established.

Gloria and Jodi were here every day, stationed in the kitchen. They poured cups of water—and mopped it up when it was spilled on the floor. They distributed snacks and mid-day lunch. They were the go-to ones for anything that

went wrong. Then there were the nurses: Edna, Carol, Caroline, Lorraine, Diann, Vernell, ever-ready with band-aids and comfort. Other moms took off a day or two from work to be here to help with the special projects. The Briarwood staff—including our own Troy and Bethany—were in charge of Bible study, arts and crafts, games, worship, and the sing-along round-ups for 50 children, ages 5-10. They were supported by our incredible youth: Logan, Johnathan, Luke, Jimmy, Andrea, Elisabeth, Julia, RC, Nic, Brandon, Megan. I am so proud of our kids! They were out there, keeping the children in line, and pumping them up to sing and do all the activities. They did a fantastic job! One of our youth, Brandon, 1 Briarwood counselor, and I took the 8 middle-school kids all around the community in the church-van to learn about civic responsibility and how to serve in a variety of ways. Finally, there were many in the congregation who hosted the 6 Briarwood counselors for meals and for housing, others who brought lunch in for all the staff at noon, and who brought in snacks throughout the week. It was an intensely *busy* week here.

And I have to tell you—there was not much *resting* going on! But there was *listening* (maybe not the way we adults “listen”, but listening nevertheless!), and there was a discovery of *Jesus’ peace and promises, Jesus’ love and forgiveness and joy*—in everything that was done and said. God used us as instruments for God’s Word to be shared; God’s peace and love and joy was modeled through the silly songs and antics that made the children laugh—and think about God in a whole new way, focusing on Jesus.

The preacher of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes said that “...for everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven...” (Ecc. 3). There is a time to go, do, and serve...and a time to rest, listen, and find peace.

There are many in our community, and even in our own families who need to hear the Word of love and forgiveness and joy that Jesus promises. This past week we all worked hard to make that happen! Today it's time to rest awhile, recharge our batteries, soak in God's love and mercy, feast on the meal of forgiveness and joy. Jesus loves us so much—and depends on us to bring his Word to others. But Jesus also loves us and wants us to trust him to find rest and comfort and peace in his strong arms. So let him carry your burdens for awhile. Let him teach you to discover his peace. Amen.