

**“House to Home”**

*“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house” (Luke 10:38).*

Last week, Pastor Eggold used a very apt illustration with the D.I.Y. projects found on HGTV. He highlighted the reality that we all have this innate desire to do things ourselves even when it comes to fixing our broken relationship with God. Yet, like so many of us often fail to match the D.I.Y. projects we see on HGTV, all of us always fail to mend our relationship with God on our own. Jesus is the One who must first show us mercy and mend our relationship with God so that we might be enabled to show mercy and mend our relationships with our neighbor.

This week, I think it’s useful to borrow from that HGTV illustration again. Along with trying to help everyday people learn ways to fix things on their property, this program also attempts to show people how to make a house a home. This desire to turn one’s living space into something that is personal, comfortable and enjoyable fuels the content that is delivered to you and me. Whatever are the latest trends and styles that personalize and familiarize a space are shared and promoted.

Now, it isn’t only HGTV that capitalizes on this passion of turning a house into a home. Instagram, Pinterest, Etsy, etc. also highlight ways others have discovered to make their living space, personal, comfortable and enjoyable. From having the right décor, to maximizing the space that’s there to tips and tricks for hosting the perfect event, so much is available to us to achieve the goal of making a house a home.

Ultimately though, all these resources for changing a house into a home usually distill down to another popular saying, “Home is where the heart is.” For a house to become a home it isn’t only a matter of materials and styles, it really needs specific qualities and characteristics. While physical items can help highlight and enhance certain qualities and characteristics, it’s the attitude and traits of the people within the living space that matter even more. The most ornate and cozy looking house can quickly be overshadowed by the cold and guarded personalities of those in the house. The opposite is also true, the plainest and neutral looking house can be quickly overlooked by the warmth and care of the personalities in the home.

And for Christians, it’s important to go deeper into this idea. Yes, this concept home is where the heart is, can be helpful in thinking about how a house becomes a home. But truly for believers in Jesus, a house turns into a home, when the home is where Jesus is. While this may seem obvious or even more so, cliché to us, this isn’t merely covering our walls with Christian décor. Having Bible verses and crosses on our walls, while nice to do, isn’t the primary thing I’m getting at.

For Christians, a house becomes a home, when the home is where Jesus serves first. As wonderful as it is to fill our living spaces with quality Christian art, the bigger key is when the home is the place where our ears and hearts are regularly filled with Jesus’ words and work. Any of us can disguise our houses as Christian homes by the physical things we display. While we might impress each other with those disguises, our God isn’t as easily swayed by our displays.

Yes, we may have spaces in our house that suggest our hearts’ desire is to serve Jesus, but our internet history and streaming history show that we’re more interested in serving our selves. Bible verses may cover areas of our houses, yet our Bibles sit on the shelf covered with years of dust or unused on our devices since we first downloaded them. Perhaps crosses show up in our houses, but our words and actions betray our unwillingness to mercifully forgive and make sacrifices for others we live with.

I have no doubt that most of us want our houses to be Christian homes, but all of us fall into the trap of forcing this to happen without Christ serving first. Truly, I believe we want our living

spaces to be places where God is welcomed, but our thoughts and actions reveal our sinful struggles with this. And faced with this reality and hypocrisy, I'm not suggesting that we give up in despair and purge our living spaces of all our Christian art. No, I do urge us to humbly and honestly confess our failures to the Lord, to recognize that the priorities in our houses haven't been to have Jesus serve first and that we need His forgiveness, mercy and love to truly make our house a Christian home.

Our own challenges in creating a Christian home are mirrored by our Gospel reading this weekend. In five brief verses, we witness Martha and Mary's house transformed into a Christian home. The simple details of this account help us understand that this transformation isn't made by the things displayed in the home. Neither is this change brought about by the good intentions of the host, Martha. This shift is brought about by Jesus Himself the good portion for that home and all our homes. Jesus truly makes a Christian home by serving that home, and our homes, first.

Through His teaching, Jesus served Martha and Mary's home. As we hear with Mary, Jesus' words are to be savored. They are the good portion. The authority and purpose of His words aren't to be weaponized to get others to do our will. As Martha learned, Jesus' words are to fill and sustain those who hear them with God's purpose for this life not merely to be cherry-picked for our own purpose. So too, with our Christian homes, Jesus' words are important and treasured because they help us to know His purpose and will for this life not the wills and purposes we or this world have in mind.

Realizing that Jesus' words have such value for our life, we encourage those in our homes to be nourished and fed by God's Word. As Jesus reminded Martha, Mary's choice to listen and absorb His teaching wasn't something that should be discouraged. Rather this opportunity to sit at Jesus's feet and learn is something that should be prioritized. So too in our own homes, we seek to sit at Jesus' feet individually and as a family to learn and grow. We set aside times in the morning or in the evening or at mealtime to be served by Jesus through His word.

When Jesus serves first, the distractions, anxieties and troubles of work in this world are put into better perspective. Like Jesus guides Martha to know and understand, work in the home and outside of the home isn't motivated primarily by earthly expectations. Instead, our work this side of heaven is a living sacrifice and prayer to the God who has already given us eternity. We work in the home and outside of the home not simply with the purpose of getting things in this life, we work because God can use this work to serve, care and even teach our neighbor the tremendous hope of heaven we have in Jesus.

Friends in Christ, our Lord and Savior has brought you into His home today. Here in His home, He has served you with His Word and gifts, the good portion. His forgiveness has restored your soul. His promises bring you life both now and for eternity. His mercy replenishes your heart so that you might love and show mercy to those around you. He has welcomed you into His home so that you might have a foretaste of the heavenly home He is preparing for you and all those who trust in Him.

As we leave His home, He goes with us. He comes into our living spaces so that we might continue to sit at His feet and take in His teaching. He comes to our living rooms to bless and direct our conversations and actions according to His good will and purpose. He comes to our bedrooms to protect and restore our places of rest. He comes to our kitchens to give us our daily bread and nourish our bodies. He comes to renew, restore and revive us to mercifully serve as He has served us. He comes to make our house a home. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan