**Messy Church – July 2020**

**Homes**

All the people we read about in the bible must have lived somewhere – sometimes it was a tent, as we learnt about Abraham last month, sometimes it was in a village or small town, and sometimes in a city. This month we are going to look at some of these permanent homes, and some of the stories that took place in them.

The first story, Mary and Martha, appears in the celebration, rather than with the activity.

Use the pictures supplied.

The stories are:

1. Luke 10: 38 – 42
2. Luke 11: 5 – 8
3. Luke 5: 17 – 26
4. Luke 7: 1 – 10
5. Matthew 13: 55
6. 1 Kings 17: 8 – 24

**Stories and Activities**

1. **Cooking outside**

Mary and Martha lived with their brother Lazarus in a village outside Jerusalem, called Bethany. As far as we know, none of the family were married, and they were counted among the friends of Jesus who did not travel with him. There are a number of stories in the New Testament which include members of the family, this one is an occasion when Jesus came for a meal. (The story is in the celebration).

Cooking was done outside, in Palestine. Villages were just a small group of houses surrounded by fields. The role of the village was to provide the nearest town – or perhaps city – with the food that could not be produced in a town. Bethany would have produced food to be sold in Jerusalem. The village would have been built on the poorest soil, so as not to waste good farmland or animal pasture. The women would have cooked together, in an open space near all the houses.

Bread was baked every day, and might be cooked in a shared clay oven, or over a fire pit shared by all the houses.

Meat was cooked over an open fire on a spit, or boiled in a pot with water. Again, quite often these facilities were shared – if one family was roasting a sheep, all the families in the village would share it.

Do you have a barbeque in your garden? How long does it take to cook sausages on it? Remember to count the time it takes to heat up the barbeque. Have you tried cooking toast on a barbeque?

Do you go camping? How do you cook then? Guides used to toast marshmallows on sticks around their campfires – and bake potatoes wrapped in tin foil in the ashes afterwards!

1. **What does your house look like?**

In an ordinary house at the time of Jesus, there would have been one room! The cooking, as we have already seen, was done outside, and if the weather was dry – as it frequently was, eating was outside as well. At night, everyone slept on a raised platform at one end of the room, as in the story Jesus told people, about the neighbour who had a visitor arrive very late: Luke, chapter 11, verses 5 – 8.

The rest of the floor would have been occupied by the jars of oil kept for cooking and lighting, the tools that the man of the house needed for his job, and the family animals – perhaps the milk goat or sheep and their babies, or some chickens. This would probably not be the case in towns, but in villages, yes.

Count the number of rooms in your house. Do you have separate rooms for cooking, sleeping and playing with your toys?

**3. What is your house made of?**

The walls of houses in Palestine were built of stone and mud brick, with wooden door frames and doors. There may or may not have been window frames, but there wouldn’t have been glass in them – they might have had wooden shutters, just to keep out the worst of the weather.

The roofs would have been made of wooden planks, covered with layers of thin twigs, straw, and earth, more straw and then wet clay. Then the whole thing would be rolled to make a strong weatherproof surface. An outside staircase led to the roof, which families used for drying corn and fruit, for the children to play on, and perhaps as a place to eat and sleep, particularly in towns, and when the weather was hot.

In the story of the paralysed man whose friends brought him to Jesus, the friends took him up the outside staircase, and pulled the roof covering apart to lower him inside (Luke, chapter 5, verses 17 – 26). Afterwards, the house owner would have had to repair his roof!

What is your house made of? Look at the types of materials – bricks, concrete, tiles, wood or pvc window frames, glass in the windows, wooden floors – maybe upstairs for this, our downstairs floors are concrete.

Try making bricks out of clay. See how long it takes to dry them properly.

**4. Roman houses**

One day when Jesus was walking through a town called Capernaum, a Roman officer sent a messenger to ask Jesus to heal his servant who was ill. He didn’t want Jesus to come to his house, and he believed that Jesus could make his servant better from a distance. Jesus was very impressed with him, and healed his servant without going to the house.

As a Roman officer, the man wouldn’t have lived in a house like the ones we have been talking about. It was probably built in or near the town his soldiers lived in, which in this case would have been outside Capernaum. It is likely that it would have been more fancy than ordinary Jewish houses. Many Roman houses were decorated with mosaic pictures on their floors. Mosaic pictures were made with tiny coloured tiles glued to the underfloor. They were smooth and cool to walk on, and could be very expensive to make.

Look in the picture file to see some pictures of mosaic floors.

To make a mosaic picture of your own, you will need: paper of different colours to make the tiles, a paper base, glue, scissors, pencils to draw the design.

Draw the picture you want to make, on the plain paper base. Work out where each colour should go, and cut small pieces of your coloured paper to fill in the shapes. Glue them down firmly.

**5. Working**

In the towns, many people in Palestine worked at home. Farmers couldn’t – but they might have kept their basic tools there – the seed baskets and scythes and sickles for arable farmers, their shepherd’s crooks for animal farmers. They might have a barn for big things, like the plough, and the equipment to harness the ox to the plough.

Craftsmen like Joseph, Jesus’ dad, who was a carpenter, might work at home. Among the pictures is one of a potter working outside his house. At night, he would take the wheel inside, to keep it safe. Carpenters would keep their tools – saws, chisels, hammers – inside, but they might have a storeroom built onto the house for wood. In wet weather, they might work just inside the house, where they could see what they were doing.

Mums might have worked spinning wool – they would have had tools and raw materials at home as well.

Can your parents work from home? During the coronavirus epidemic, many people have worked from home, rather than go into an office to work.

Lots of jobs cannot be done from home. Try to make a list of jobs that could be done at home today, or a list of jobs that cannot be done from home.

What would it be like to have your house full of the tools your parents needed for their work?

**6. Extra room needed!**

If you lived in a town or city where people visited, you might build a room on the flat roof of your house, so people could rent it, adding to your income. In the bible, there are a number of times these “upper rooms” are mentioned, in both the Old and New Testament.

Elijah the prophet, during a drought in Israel, went to live in a town called Zarephath, near Sidon, in what is now Lebanon. He lived in an upper room, separate from where the lady of the house and her son lived.

You can read the story of how Elijah met her, and what happened next, in 1 Kings chapter 17, verses 8 – 24.

You will need: two cardboard boxes of different sizes (or card to build two box shapes), card for the staircase, paint, glue, scissors.

Cut out door and window holes in the larger box, to make the downstairs room. If you want, you can make the sleeping platform inside. Make a staircase to go up the outside to the roof.

Use the smaller box to make the upper room. Cut a doorway in it. Glue it to the larger box so that the doorway can be reached from the staircase.

Paint your house.

Celebration

Start your celebration with Praise him on the trumpet

<https://youtu.be/d8yxHMmA65g>

This is a nice song to get into a praise mood.

Mary and Martha lived with their brother Lazarus in a village called Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem. We don’t know how Jesus met the family, but he stayed with them from time to time, and counted them among his friends, although none of them travelled with him.

On one occasion, Jesus arrived for a meal. Martha was really busy outside getting it all ready, but Mary was inside, listening to Jesus talk with the friends who had come with him. You can imagine how cross Martha got, thinking that Mary should be helping her, not just sitting inside. (It was generally thought that women should do the housework, including the cooking, and not spend their time listening to the men talk about politics, or religion, or anything “important”.) Eventually, Martha was so cross that she went into the house, and asked Jesus to tell Mary to go outside and help. Jesus was very kind to her, but he told her that cooking and housework was not always the most important thing, and that on this occasion, Mary had made the better choice, and he wouldn’t tell her to give it up.

A version of the story told by Tina is available on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/k_eLWOy49DY>

As a lot of the activities have looked at the way houses were built in Jesus’ day, and as Jesus told a story about two builders, one of whom built on sand, singing Don’t build your house on the sandy land

<https://youtu.be/L-hFN7GWt6c> seems like a good idea

In our prayer time we think about choices.

Dear Father God, help me to choose the right things. Let me know what I should do, and when. Amen

Our last song is an action song, but it’s also about our actions. I reach up high

<https://youtu.be/6AMAERfmMoU>

The words tell you what the actions are.

Enjoy our celebration.

Then have tea or a treat if it isn’t tea time!

If you send me pictures of anything you do, I will share them on the Church Facebook page (if you want to send pictures that you don’t want shared, just tell me. I’ll only share the one’s you’re happy to share.)

Harlington Messy Church Team

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw>