

Text: Luke 10:38-42

³⁸As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" ⁴¹"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴²but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

**Theme: The One Thing Needful**

While we were in Germany a month ago, we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary with my wife's family one Saturday evening. Much to our surprise we had a very special guest. Our friend Dr. Wilhelm Weber from S. Africa just happened to be in Lachendorf that day to visit his son. He was the equivalent of the best man at our wedding. Because he lives in S. Africa, and we are in Milwaukee, we don't see him much at all. He and his son joined us for dinner that evening. When you have a special friend or important person visit you, what is the one thing needful? It is simply to enjoy that person's company. Today, I would like to look at how that applies to our Lord when He visits us with His grace and mercy.

I. It is tempting to concentrate on how we can serve our Lord.

Even Abraham was guilty of that in our Old Testament reading. (Gen 18:1-10) The book of Hebrews commends him for his hospitality when God Himself and two angels arrived at his tent. But it is interesting how overboard Abraham went. He saw these three men walking toward him in the heat of the day. He ran to them, bowed before them and said, "*Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on.*" He invited them to take a little break, wash up, and he would bring a little bread. What did Abraham do? He ran to his wife and ordered her to quickly get 20 quarts of flour and bake bread. He selected the best calf of his herd, gave it to a servant, and told him to prepare it. He also brought curds and milk. While the men ate this feast, Abraham stood by like a servant. He ended up working the entire time, rather than spending time with the Lord and His angels who had come to him.

Martha did the same thing in our text. She welcomed Jesus into her home. If you have Jesus in your house, you need to give Him something special, just like Abraham did 2000 years earlier. She was busy with all the preparations for the meal. Maybe she had to feed the disciples and several of Jesus other followers in addition to our Lord. She had taken on a monumental task. You can imagine that she was a nervous wreck!

We are often tempted in the same way. We love Jesus. We want to serve him. What Martha did, she did out of love for Jesus. We love our Lord, but sometimes we get so preoccupied with what we want

to do for Him, that we are remiss in receiving the wonderful gifts that He has come to bring us. Our faith becomes more of a burden than joy and peace. We feel that if we are not doing something for Jesus, we are lazy Christians. Sometimes we feel as if we spend half of our life at church doing things. We might even begin to wonder how the church would function without us. We feel that we always need to be busy for Jesus.

The problem is that then our faith eventually becomes a burden. God had come to Abraham with some very good news. But Abraham was so busy with all of the preparations, that it took a long time until he finally heard it, and when his wife heard it, she laughed. Martha became extremely frustrated. Suddenly she noticed her sister, who was simply sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to Him. She was so angry, that she complained to Jesus, "*Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?*" Jesus answer surprised her. He said, "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things...*"

Does it ever seem to you that your faith is a burden, and your brothers and sisters in Christ are getting you upset? Then it might be that its time for a break. It is good to serve the Lord with gladness, but when the gladness part seems to be disappearing, the key is not to do more. It is to spend more time with the Lord and receive His gifts.

II. The one thing needful is that we enjoy our Lord's presence among us.

God came to Abraham to give Abraham much more than anything that Abraham could ever do for Him. Abraham gave the Lord a great meal, but God came with the news that within a year, Abraham's wife would bear the son of the promise. Abraham had waited 24 years for this child. Now it was finally coming to pass! That was wonderful news.

Jesus came with His Word of peace to Mary and Martha. Mary had been hanging on every word that Jesus said. Soon Martha would also join them. That word of Christ would refresh their souls and give them hope and peace in any trial that would come. When their brother Lazarus would die in John 11, it is Martha who would meet the Lord and show the peace that she had found in the words of Jesus. She said, "*I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.*" She expressed the confidence that Lazarus would rise on the last day. She found peace in this confession of her faith, "*I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.*" She found this peace in Christ, even before He raised her brother, because she learned the one thing needful and enjoyed our Lord's presence while He was there.

I would like to give you to examples of how we need that interaction with our Lord today. A few months ago our Lord called Helen Klug from this life. When we planned the funeral, her daughter brought Helen's Bible. She forgot it in my office. I'd like to show this Bible to you. It is worn out. The cover is tape together. The pages are worn. There are notes throughout her Bible. It's a Bible that has been used a lot! For me personally, I am blessed through much of my work in the congregation. But over the years, I have learned that there is a big difference between preaching and sermon and hearing one or doing a Bible class and being a part of one. I have found it to be very refreshing to be a part of a Bible study at another Lutheran Church where I am just one of the guys. Whenever I go to Germany on vacation, I always find myself refreshed in the faith, simply by attending the services in my wife's home congregation.

It is so important for each one of us to be like Mary and sit at Jesus' feet as we are refreshed by His Word and Sacrament. When God's Word refreshes us, it helps us to serve the Lord with gladness again. It helps us to find peace and hope in those times of trouble, as when Mary and Martha lost their brother. It gives us the comfort of our forgiveness when we lose our temper as Martha did or when we commit other sins. God's Word fills our hearts with that wonderful peace that passes all understanding because through His Word and Supper Christ also comes to be with us.

Imagine if Jesus came to your house today? What would you do? Would you cook and clean and be distracted by many things or would you simply enjoy our Lord's presence. Jesus does come to you and me in His Word and Supper. Don't be so busy for Him, that you miss the joy of His presence. Take time to be with Him. Pray, listen to His Word, and delight in His Supper, and you will find the one thing needful.

Amen.

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