

Pentecost 9 [Pr 11] 7/17/16
Luke 10:38-42 C

“MARTHA, MARTHA, YOU ARE ANXIOUS AND TROUBLED ABOUT MANY THINGS, BUT ONE THING IS NECESSARY”.

Not to trivialize the work of the Synod Convention, but perhaps the most important thing we did was to have “Franklin Furr” moments. I suppose I should set the stage by pointing out that we met from 8 AM – Noon, then from 1:30 – until 6:00, with no scheduled breaks, which meant a lot of sitting. So, early on, a delegate named Franklin Furr, complete with cowboy hat and slow, southern drawl, went to a floor microphone and beseeched the chairman, to at least allow us to stand and stretch. It seems our dear brother Franklin had a history of blood clots and the unintended consequence of sitting so long was to greatly increase one’s chance of blood clots. So, at various times, the chair would call for us to have a “Franklin Furr” moment.

An unintended consequence is what happened to Martha in our Gospel lesson. She “was distracted with much serving”. She was busy providing the daily bread for Jesus, and the unintended consequence was that she forgot the one thing needful – to hear and learn the Word.

That every happen to you? We get so caught up in the here and now, the busy-ness of the moment, that forget the one thing – to hear and learn the Word.

I. As you read through the narrative of Luke’s Gospel, the Evangelist goes directly from our Gospel lesson last Sunday, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, to Jesus entering the home of Martha and Mary. The closing words of last Sunday’s Gospel were the words of Jesus, “You go, and do likewise”. Now, this week, Martha seems to be doing just that, showing her

love for her neighbor by providing for the needs of her neighbor. Meanwhile, Mary sits at Jesus' feet.

It appears that there is some type of contradiction here, an inconsistency. Martha does, and it seems she is wrong for doing it. In contrast, Mary does nothing and it seems she does the right thing. Dear Saints of God, neither Martha nor Mary is wrong. Both are doing what needs to be done. But, we learn this Sunday that we cannot get so busy that we forget to hear and learn the word of God.

What is the 3rd Commandment? What does this mean? The 3rd Commandment is "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy". What does this mean? "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it". The 3rd Commandment is not about worshipping on a certain day of the week. God is teaching us to honor His Word. Why do we "not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it?" Because ***faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Ro 10)***. Through His Word, God creates, strengthens, and preserves saving faith in Jesus Christ. Through His Word, God does His work in us so that He can do His work through us. You can't serve the Lord, unless He first serves you.

But, we try. Ole and Swen opened a restaurant. They sold their product and made money. As business grew, they learned that if they did not eat any of their product they would be able to sell more of it and make more money. They also learned that if they didn't take the time to eat any of their product, they would have more time to sell their product and make even more money. But, alas, Ole and Swen's restaurant didn't last. When they didn't eat, they grew weaker and weaker until they couldn't even do

any work in their restaurant and, finally, they both died of starvation and their restaurant failed.

There is a lot of Ole and Swen in us. We are busy, busy, busy, so busy we have no time for God's Word. We have to get to work in the morning, so we have no time to begin our day with prayer. Your favorite TV show is coming on, so you have no time to teach God's Word to your children. Sunday, well Sunday, is your only day off during the week, so it's a good day to sleep in. We think we can live a Christian life and be strong in our faith without the Word.

II. The GOOD NEWS of the Gospel is that just as Jesus came to Sarah and Abraham, just as He came to Martha and Mary, so He comes to us. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John writes (Jn 1). The very Son of God took on human flesh and all the sins of the world were laid on Him. He was crucified, killed, for those sins. He died the death our sin demanded. Then, God the Father raised Him to life again, bringing life and immortality to light. This Jesus did so that we would have the forgiveness of our sins, and where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation.

It is through the Word that He makes the forgiveness He won on the cross, your forgiveness for your sins against the 3rd Commandment and all of God's Commandments. Remember the words of the Rev. Dr. Luther:

"We treat forgiveness of sins in two ways. First how it is achieved and won. Second, how it is distributed and given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. But he has not distributed or given it on the cross...He has distributed and given it **through the Word.**"

"The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life," Jesus says.

III. That's why Mary "sat at Jesus' feet and kept hearing His Word." Yes, that's the way it literally works. Hearing and learning the Word is not a momentary or once-for-all event. It is a discipline, and, throughout our

earthly sojourn, it must be regular, continual, persistent. We typically think of the word “disciple” as being a student, but, literally, the word “disciple” means, “hearer”. To be a disciple is to be a hearer of the Word.

In this restless age in which we live, we are ever led away from the Word. We become bored with it. After all, we've heard it before. We turn a deaf ear to God's Word. Or, we edit God's Word to suit our fancy; we just ignore those parts of God's Word that we don't like. Yes, yes, we love John 3:16. But, if Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13, “[love] keeps no record of wrongs,” do not sit well with us, we just ignore them.

When everything seems to be going right; when we are blessed with food and drink and all that we need to support this body and life; when family and friends and possessions are secure, then we begin to lose our interest in God. The Word of God seems so unnecessary, because we think we have everything we need.

Then, troubles come. When the anxieties of earthly life have piled up on us; when everything is going wrong, and the weight of the world is on our shoulders, then we begin to feel that God has abandoned us. His Word seems so powerless to help us.

It is the devil who draws us away from the Word. It is the Father of all lies who causes us to doubt the power and the promises of God's Word. We must ever remember the words of Luther, we must look for God where He has promised to be found – His Word.

That's what Jesus Himself did. When the Son of God was tempted by the evil foe, Jesus relied solely of the Word, “It is written”.

In the hearing and learning of His Word, Jesus breathes His eternal life into us. In the new birth of water and the Word, we have just witnessed Jesus breathe new life in Billy, just as He did for you, Dear Child in your

baptism. In the eating and drinking of our Lord's own body and blood, the words "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins" give us the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Through His Word -- to be clear, the spoken Word and the visible Word of the Sacraments -- God plants the seeds of faith within us that they may grow and produce a bountiful harvest of the fruits of the Spirit, so that we may be Christ to our neighbor; we may "Go, and do likewise," as Jesus has done for us.

Saints of God, whenever we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we learn in our Small Catechism that "God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity." Through His Word, God brings us to faith and preserves us in that faith, doing His work in us so that He can do His work through us.