

Pentecost 9 7/21/19
Luke 10:38-42 11C

GOSPEL LESSON, 10TH CHAPTER OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

“You go, and do likewise.” Do you remember those words? Those are the words of our Lord Christ from last Sunday's Gospel, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Sin had left us as that wounded, dying traveler by the side of the road, completely unable to save ourselves. So, Christ came to be our Good Samaritan, to save us from sin, death, and hell. As Christ served us as our Good Samaritan, now, living in Him, we are a Good Samaritan to our neighbor.

Which brings us to our lesson for this week. In the lives of Martha and Mary, we learn the “how,” how is it that we are able to be a Good Samaritan to our neighbor. The one thing necessary for us, Dear Saints of God, is to be in the Word, because it is through His Word that God does in His work in you.

In our lesson, Jesus is really teaching us the 3rd Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” In his Little Catechism, Luther reminds us that that this means, “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.”

Which is exactly what Mary was doing. Both Martha and Mary wanted to honor their Lord and both went about it in their own way. Martha labored in the kitchen, preparing an elaborate meal. With so many irons in the fire, she was at her wits' end. She was even upset with her sister for not helping!

Mary sat at our Lord's feet, listening to Him, His Word, His teaching.

Martha was so busy with making sure dinner was perfect, she forgot the reason for Jesus' visit. Martha was anxiously preparing bread while the very Bread of Life was in her house. The preparation of the meal became the center and focus of her life. Martha's life was way off center. Instead of commending her for her zeal and concern, rebuked her: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary."

"One thing is necessary." Dear Saints of God, that one thing necessary is for us to hear and learn the Word of God, so that God may work His work in us through His Word. Let me be clear on this: Jesus wasn't belittling Martha's work nor discouraging her desire to serve. But, her problem was that she allowed earthly things, earthly concerns, to have priority over hearing and learning the Word of God.

We all have earthly commitments and obligations. We have our daily labors to pursue, our vocations to fulfill. We honor and glorify God in our daily lives when we fulfill those vocations where He has planted us. We have families and obligations in our daily lives -- buying groceries, cooking meals, laundry, chauffeuring kids to little league and swimming lessons, and the list goes on and on. There is so much around the house that demands our attention -- the lawn, the upkeep, our own families. After all that, we try to make time for ourselves -- go for a walk, read a good book, or watch the sun set on a beautiful summer evening. All these have their place; all are important. But, is there a little Martha in you? The problem for us is that we allow these parts of our earthly lives to have priority over hearing and learning the Word of God.

It was earthly concern that kept Martha from God. She allowed her sinful heart to rule the day and confuse her priorities. It happens to us

every time we fear, love, and trust in anything more than God. It happens to us when we see our work, the vocation to which God has called us, as only a dollar sign. It happens to us when we place earthly achievements and pleasures ahead of our concern for our life in heaven. If we are too busy to hear and learn God's Word, then we are busier than we should be and have our priorities all mixed up.

Too bad about Ole and Swen, huh? You heard what happened, right? Ole and Swen opened a restaurant. They sold food, good food, and made money, a lot of money. As business grew, they learned that if they didn't eat any of their food, they would be able to sell more of it and make even more money. They also learned that if they didn't take the time to eat any of their food, they would have more time to sell food and make more and 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.

Dear Saints of God, when we are too busy to be in God's Word, when we just don't have time to hear and learn God's Word, we are only harming ourselves. We are not allowing God to do His work in us. So, it is in our daily lives that we become like Martha, frazzled, at our wit's end, "stressed out". We leave ourselves weak -- spiritually weak -- and become easy prey for the attacks of the evil foe. We have no strength to bear our crosses and follow Jesus. We become lost, lonely sheep, scared in the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death.

The one thing necessary is to hear and learn God's Word. Through His Word, Jesus gives us ... Jesus. Jesus was born, suffered, mocked, beaten, scorned, nailed to the cross and died. He endured all of that, even

dying your death, for your sin, including your sin of not hearing, not learning, not trusting, not believing God's Word, so that you would be forgiven. Paul says it this way in our Epistle, "He [Jesus] has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him (Col 1:22)."

And, He rose to life again the 3rd day to do for you what He did for Mary and Martha. As Jesus came to the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, He comes to you, Dear Child of God, this hour. He comes with His love, His forgiveness, His life, His salvation, His comfort, His strength. He does that in the Word that is preached, that is read, that is sung; that is combined with water of Holy Baptism; that is wrapped up with the bread and the wine. He gives you all that you need in order to do what is it He has given you to do.

This is all so neatly and nicely taught us in our Post-Communion prayer:

"We give thanks to You, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another".

In the words of Jesus, "Go and do likewise." Do what it is your God has given you to do. Don't worry and stew and fret, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not trust on your own human reason and senses (cf. Pro 3:5). Keep no record of wrongs, but forgive your neighbor, as God has forgiven you in Christ Jesus. Don't gossip and slander our neighbor; rather, talk to our neighbor who has hurt you, offended you -- and "talking" does not mean posting on social media, or texting, or emailing. Put the best construction on our neighbor's actions and ways. Be content with the life and stuff that God in His wisdom has given you.

In His grace, God gives us His Holy Spirit so that we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life according to it, going and doing likewise to our neighbor, as Christ has done to us.