

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, 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. We are 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 the Commandment is not about worshipping on a certain day of that week, but "we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." In his hymn on the Ten Commandments, Luther says it very simply with these words, "And put aside the work you do, so that God may work in you" [LSB 581:4]

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 in us, because it is through His Word that God does His work in us.

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 swimming lessons, and the list goes on and on. There is so much around the house that demands our -- the lawn, the garden, 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. We do well to remember our Lord's words, "*For what does it profit a man to*

gain the whole world and forfeit his life” (Mk 8:36)? Again, our Lord says, “Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (Jn 6:27). In less than a tick of the watch second hand, it can all be taken away, and then what have we? What will sustain us? At the hour of death, what will be our comfort?

It was an 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.

Let me ask you a question: When you are too busy to be in God’s Word, when you just don’t have time to hear and learn God’s Word, who are you are hurting? You are only hurting **yourself**. You are not allowing God to do His work in you, so that He can do His work through you; so that you cannot go and live as a Good Samaritan to your neighbor.

How often is it in our daily lives that we find ourselves like Martha -- frazzled, at our wit’s end, “stressed out”. When we are not hearing and learning God’s Word, 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, frightened in the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death.

The Good News of the Christian faith is that upon the cross, Jesus won forgiveness for the sins of all the world, including our sins against the 3rd Commandment. And, we must ever remember how it is that He

distributes that forgiveness. He distributes that forgiveness through His Word -- the spoken Word of the absolution and the visible Word of the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

God gives us many ways to enjoy life and have fun in His good creation, especially in the lazy, hazy days of summer – vacations, family reunions, tending flowers and gardens, boating on the lake. These all have their place, like Martha cooking a meal, in life. But, they cannot take priority over hearing and learning God's Word, because none of these things **give** and **strengthen** faith. God's Word does. "*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ,*" the Bible teaches us (Ro 10:17).

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.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.