

“There Is Only One Thing That Is Necessary”

Luke 10:38-42

Martha is distracted, encumbered, burdened by her serving. The word is diakonia, which is the church’s word for good works and serving others. We use this in the logo of the LCMS “Mercy, Witness, Life Together.” Some of the logos aren’t in English and they say “Diakonia.” Mercy, like the Good Samaritan showed mercy to the man on the roadside.

Martha was encumbered, burdened, distracted, dragged away by her works of service – her diakonia, the epitome of doing the right thing. She has a guest in her home. She has to provide the meal.

And she is being dragged away from Jesus’ words by justifying herself that she is doing work and service that is necessary and expected. And she begins to judge not only her sister, but she casts judgment on Jesus and the value of hearing His words. “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?”

Oh, how we love to justify being distracted or dragged away from hearing the Word of God. There is work around the house that needs to get done. Sunday morning is the only free time I have to do it. Saturday is the only night we can stay out late. Sunday morning is the only day I am not required to wake up early. The kids have a tournament out of town, and it is necessary that we are there.

Jesus says, “there is only one thing that is necessary.” And our culture has sought to justify all of the good works like spending time with you family, working hard, being industrious, striving to excel in sports and school, maximizing the gifts that God has given us so that we can better ourselves and our families. We create schedules that consume all of our time.

When you are signing up for the activities that fill your days, remember that there is only one thing that is necessary. We come to hear the Word of God because this is what the people of God do, and I need to hear the Gospel every day, because in my sinfulness, I forget about it every day. We come to the Lord’s Table because Jesus says, “Take; eat; this is My body . . . this is My blood . . . do this in remembrance of Me,” and I need the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation offered here.

Stepping aside from Mary and Martha for a moment, when I read Luke’s Gospel, as we are going to read through much of it in our Gospel readings throughout this summer and fall, we are going to continue hearing how the Word of the Lord grows. Luke is telling a story. He is telling THE story. In the days of Caesar Augustus when Quirinius was governor of Syria, the Christ was born. I am not telling you this so that we can celebrate Christmas in July. Luke goes to great detail to tell us that the Christ came into the world as the child of Mary. And we celebrate that – mightily; with trees and lights and gifts.

And it is right that we make a big deal about God being born as a baby. It was necessary. The reality that the Son of God became human, is

incarnate (that is, He took on flesh) is at the heart of the story. John tells us very simply, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.”

The Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, lives in and around real people like Mary and Martha, in real communities, in the real ancient world. There is a mountain of evidence both inside and outside of Scripture that proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that a man named Jesus of Nazareth lived and died during the days when Pontius Pilate was governor in Judea. Even those who hate Christ and His Church cannot deny this. There is no credible historical scenario where Jesus of Nazareth did not die on a cross and a few days later there was an empty tomb in Jerusalem. The only question is: “How did it get empty?”

We come here today because we know the answer: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! We are Easter people. The resurrection of the body and life everlasting is our goal. And in Luke’s Gospel, all of the story is going to be leading the reader to the cross and the empty tomb; then He walks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus (real people), and He speaks the Word of God beginning with Moses and all the prophets, and after He departed they marveled at how their hearts burned within them as He opened their minds to the Scriptures and they heard His words. And He became known to them when He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples.

Then Jesus appears to the eleven in the Upper Room and says, “Touch Me and see that I have flesh and bones.” Jesus has a body. He

has hands; He has feet. He is human before and after the resurrection. He even eats with them. And then, in His body, He ascends into heaven. And now He comes to us, in His body, in the breaking of the bread.

In the coming weeks we are going to hear more parables and teachings of Jesus. We actually won't witness a miracle in our Gospel readings until Labor Day weekend. And some of these words of Jesus we will hear are so familiar that we almost forget to listen to what they really mean.

This week, we hear of Mary and Martha who had welcomed Jesus into their home. And He ate with them. And Mary sat at Jesus' feet and "heard His words." I know the English translation says, "listened to His teaching." But the Greek is so plain even I can read it without the help of a dictionary.

Literally, she "heard the Word of Him." How is Jesus revealed? Just like at Emmaus, we hear the Word of Him. Paul reminds us, "Faith comes by hearing." The Eternal Son of God became human. He took on flesh and blood so that He could be nailed to a cross and take away the guilt of your sin. And He now comes to you in flesh and blood in the miraculous union and communion of the Sacrament.

With all of the troubles, burdens, and distractions of this sinful world, there is only one thing that is necessary – the eternal Word of God. The one and only thing that we will take out of this life. As Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. Amen.