

## ***“Many Things and One Thing”***

Today’s Gospel reading is short and sweet – and I’m not really spoiling anything when I tell you now – that the Lord is speaking to us about going to Church so we can hear His Word. But, as is often the case, the Lord’s Word is more than we imagine --- so, on to the text we go.

St. Luke tells us that Martha had a sister called Mary “who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to His teaching” – “But Martha was distracted with much serving.” When the text says that Mary “sat” at the Lord’s feet – it could be translated as Mary “was seated” at the Lord’s feet (in a passive sense) – OR – Mary “sat herself” at the Lord’s feet.

On the other hand, Martha is not seated at all – she’s up and about – “distracted with much serving.” Martha was busy – too busy to sit.

Where do you find yourself seated on Sunday mornings? In bed? At a baseball or soccer tournament? On the golf course? WHERE you are – where you spend your time – says a lot about what is most important in your life.

It has been said that you can determine your false gods by looking at your checkbook and see where you’re spending your money. I don’t know how many people use checks today – but where we spend our money gives insight into our priorities.

Today, time is probably seen as a greater commodity, or treasure than money. Where you spend your time – gives insight into what is running your life.

Martha is just like us. She’s busy. She’s running from one thing to another. She’s exhausted. She’s “anxious and troubled about many things.” And just like us – the issue at hand is not TIME, or how full the calendar is – it’s about God, and who is the god of your life.

Did you notice how Martha was being the god of her own life? Rather than sitting at the feet of the one true God – she’s busy doing other things. Rather than God being busy doing something for her – she thinks it’s more important to do something for God.

Now, she has a great example with Abraham in the Old Testament. When the Lord comes to his tent – he gets busy caring for the needs of his guests. He brings water for them to wash – he feeds them – and he stands at the ready to serve the Lord.

But more important than hospitality – more important than our service to the Lord – the one thing necessary is to sit at the Lord's feet and listen to His Word. However, along with Abraham and Sarah and Martha – we laugh at the Lord and His Word.

NO, I HAVE to be busy doing this – what I'm doing is important! The Lord and my sister should take note of my service! The Lord should commend me! My sister should get busy helping me!

Do you see the foolishness in that? We pretend that our work is more important than the Divine's service – that our service is what really matters – as if, the Lord needs and depends on us. And then we drag our loved ones away from the Lord and what is necessary in order to join us in our self-appointed worship.

And to show even more how Martha is playing God – she ends up accusing God of not caring about her – and then telling God what to do. Jesus, "do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."

Folks, you ARE busy – too busy – you are "distracted with much serving." You put yourself in the driver's seat, as if everything depends upon you. And when you are "anxious and troubled about many things" you might even blame the Lord and try to tell Him how things should be.

And yet, you KNOW that the one thing necessary is to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His Word. You KNOW you should be in church. You know how I know that? I can't tell you how many times people see me and feel like they need to explain why they were not in church last week.

There is a guilt about not worshipping God by receiving from Him – but rather than repent – we make excuses. We offer justifications. "My son had a baseball tournament last weekend and I HAVE to do this for my child." In other words – "God, look at how busy I am serving – you should commend me for loving my child in this way."

Loving and serving your children is great – but it's not the one thing necessary.

If sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His Word is the one thing necessary – what, do you suppose, the devil will do about that? You are “anxious and troubled about many things” – literally, pulled in all directions – being pulled by the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh – away from Jesus and His Word.

The devil uses the world to do his work – ratcheting up the busy-ness of your life so that you don’t even pay attention to what is going on, and just keep running from one thing to the next.

The devil uses your flesh to keep you from Jesus – your exhausted body which worships sleep – and your troubled mind that is convinced that God will be pleased by all your efforts, and laughs at the idea of simply sitting and receiving His gifts.

Jesus has entered this village today so that you might have “the good portion.” He strips away all of your false gods and repents you. As He says in the Epistle reading: “You, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him ...”

All of the things that you put before God will be stripped away one day – but “the good portion” He gives to those who hear and believe His Word – will not be taken away.

It is NECESSARY that you hear of God’s love for you – that you receive His forgiveness – which brings to you His eternal life and salvation. So, the Lord has seated you here at His feet today and washes away your sin, making you holy – setting you free from the guilt and shame and sin that weighs you down – feeding you with His Bread of Life – and yes, leading you in holy living.

Dearly beloved, the Lord calls you to be a creature, a child of God, not God – to hear His Word, not tell Him what to do – to receive from the Him, not give Him what you think He needs. In so doing, “the good portion” of His forgiveness, life and salvation are yours – and it will not be taken away from you. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.