

“Necessary”

You know what it’s like when you have guests at your house. There’s all the preparation – washing sheets and making beds – fixing food and setting tables – cleaning up, and cleaning some more.

Just imagine that it’s Jesus who walks through the front door. Your to-do list is now superseded by His desires. Some things you thought were necessary, have now become optional. You welcome Him into your home and ask, “how can I serve you?”

Today, Jesus tells us what He desires – and contrary to our natural instincts – He says that He has not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. We as Lutherans confess this Christian truth in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession – where we say – “It is by faith that God wants to be worshiped, namely, that we receive from Him what He promises and offers.” (Ap AC IV, 114.49)

In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ desires that we would be like Mary here in our text – that we would sit at His feet and hear His Word. Why? Why is this the “one thing [that] is necessary”? Because “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17) – and there is salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12).

Jesus Christ comes into our presence – into the midst of us – in order to serve. He promises to be with us always, even unto the end of the age (Matt. 28:20) – but more specifically, He promises – “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I among them.”

To hear God’s Word is to hear the living voice of Christ – the resurrected and living Christ who is present in our midst today. Earlier in St. Luke’s Gospel He promises those He sent out to preach His Word – “Whoever hears you, hears me ...” (Luke 10:16).

Jesus Christ is present here – not to be served – but to redeem you. This very day He forgives all your sin – resurrects you to a new life – and saves you eternally. That’s what is necessary – for you to sit at His feet, to hear His living voice – that He might lead you to repentance ... and faith ... and in holy living.

Martha welcomes Jesus into her home – and then is “distracted with much serving.” You know how that goes. As the host, you put your guests first – you attend to their needs – you serve them. However, that is not how it is to be with the Lord.

Again, our fallen sinful nature thinks – “He’s God” – He deserves to be waited on hand and foot, and I sacrifice everything to serve His every need. And that’s true – that HE IS GOD – and you are not, you are His creature. Yet we live as if we were God – as if our thoughts are His thoughts and our ways are His ways.

It’s called the Divine Service because the Divine One serves – but, are you too distracted to receive? He has come to baptize, to wash away sins – but will you make baptism a service you render to God? He has come – but will you sit at His feet and listen – will you hear and believe – will you live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord?

Just as Jesus walked into the house of Martha and Mary – so the flesh and blood, crucified-risen-and-ascended Lord Jesus enters into this house today. You cannot see Him – but He is truly present, just as He has promised.

But we are so easily distracted. We are distracted by the world and our flesh which tell us that other things are necessary – going to the baseball tournament, going fishing, playing golf – or just spending a quiet morning at home with no alarm clock to set – no make-up to put on – no kids to wrangle just rest and relax.

The Daro family knows what it’s like to be distracted by many things – getting ready to have guests over to their house – preparing a meal for the baptismal dinner – getting up and getting themselves and Brylee ready for church. It’s not easy.

There are many things to be “anxious and troubled about” – but what is necessary? Parents are faced with a lot of choices and decisions as they seek to serve their children – to provide them with the necessities of life. But Jesus is here to tell us what is “the good portion” – the “one thing [that] is necessary” – and that is to sit at His feet, hearing His Word, and receiving His gifts.

“It is by faith that God wants to be worshiped, namely, that we receive from Him what He promises and offers.” (Ap AC IV, 114.49)

The Lord has come to serve you – to give you His gifts – and so you can be sure that the devil will do all within his power to thwart you from receiving this “good portion.” He distracts you with the desires of your own flesh – with the beckoning call of the world – and even when you come to church, with this distracted notion that you are here to serve God – rather than, God has come to serve you.

He does not need your service, your gifts – but you need His. Brylee needs His washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3) – Gage and Jordan need His forgiving Word, and the light that shows them where they are to go. We poor sinners need His Body and Blood for our life and salvation.

The Lord does not need your service – but your neighbor does. He needs your consolation, your help with projects, your parenting advice – and the relief from the anxiety and troubles of life, as you direct them to Jesus and His redemption, His rest and His peace.

The one thing necessary is Jesus Christ who has served you with His forgiveness, life and salvation – and just as He promises to be with you always – so this “good portion” 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.