

Scripture Reading:

Luke 10:38-42 “Now it happened as they went that [Jesus] entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."”

Sitting at the Feet of Jesus''

This morning we continue our journey through the Gospel of Luke seeking to learn two simple lessons:

- To learn more about setting the proper **PRIORITIES** in our Christian walk
- **AND** making sure that we have the one thing that is needful: What is called the “good part” ... Sitting at the feet of Jesus?

As we consider how Luke has structured his orderly account we see that there is more to setting proper priorities than just the lesson that Jesus teaches Martha this week. We must not miss the contrast from last week, where the focus was on real service, being a good neighbor and Jesus commanding that we go and do likewise.

- Now, Martha is busy serving and Jesus tells her that Mary is the one doing the right thing.

I do not think that Luke wants us to miss the point of the contrast here, because he has gone out of his way, under the Spirit’s direction of course, to place these two accounts right next to each other. The question from the lawyer comes after our Lord’s reminds His followers that their names are written in the Book of Life from all Eternity, something that Jesus rejoices over, as should we!

- This happened as Jesus makes His final journey to Jerusalem to be there at His appointed time
- John’s Gospel will tell us what happened near the end of that trip at Mary & Martha’s home in Bethany when their brother Lazarus is taken ill and dies.

Here, after the lesson of the Good Samaritan, Luke takes us back to an earlier visit to that same home to make this important contrast...

- Luke uses what happened during that visit to contrast the priorities of service and busyness with the priorities of rest and instruction.

These two priorities are of necessity in tension and we must learn to keep them in balance in the Christian life. We have often used the example of the two cliffs: *[explain this]* We hear about the pendulum swinging to far one way or the other.

- I believe this type of tension is what Luke is dealing with here and it is something that we learn to understand and apply as we mature in the faith.

My favorite example to illustrate what I mean, is found in Proverbs chapter 25 where verses 4 & 5 appear to contradict each other:

- Verse 4: “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him.”
- Verse 5: “Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.”

So if someone asks whether you should answer a fool you would have a “proof” text to answer either way!

- As we grow in wisdom and knowledge we learn when it is time to avoid the fool lest we appear like him and when we must confront the fool lest his foolishness corrupt us or others

This is a VERY different matter from what the Bible often presents as the two paths: Life and death

- We see these paths over & over in the opening chapters of Proverbs

The Path of Life: 4:10 “Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. 11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble.”

-- Contrasted with --

The path of death: 4:14 “Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. 16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. ”

- It is VERY important that we understand the difference between the cliffs or pendulum and these paths.

IF you are on the wrong path, it does not matter if you are in the middle or even if you wonder off one side or the other:

- You are going in the WRONG direction!
- You must repent & change direction – Not make adjustments

As those on the path of life, we must still be careful to stay in the center and not to wonder too far to the left or right lest we leave that path!

- **That is what Jesus means when He tells His followers that He came to give life, & to give that life abundantly!**

Such is the case as Jesus instructed our lawyer last week and now we will see it with Martha this week.

- **Both are responding to God's gracious offer of eternal life and Jesus is helping them to understand the way in which they are to enjoy that life!**

Last week we saw the importance of service and this week we see being busy with service can be a hindrance to what Jesus calls 'the good part.'

- **So we want to consider what it means to sit at the feet of Jesus and why it is so important that we participate in this "good part."**
- **At the same time we must remember that we cannot pass by that injured man that God puts in our path because we are rushing to get to the Bible Study on time!**

We have taken the time to understand the proper context of this important text because if we fail to do so, we can learn all the wrong lessons as did many in church history. So Luke takes us to a time where Jesus journeyed to Bethany just outside of Jerusalem where Martha, Mary and Lazarus lived about two miles from Jerusalem. This is where Jesus would later raise Lazarus as He approached Jerusalem this final time.

At first glance, this appears to be a good account to illustrate what was just taught with the story of the Good Samaritan... Jesus enters a certain village and a woman named Martha welcomes Him into her house and begins to serve Him!

- **Who better to be a good neighbor to than Jesus Himself!**

But as we said last week, if we spent all of our time searching out those who are in need of help we would soon be exhausted physically, financially and as we will see here even Spiritually.

- **We must be on the right path AND we are called to walk rightly on that path!**

Yes, Jesus had come into the home and yes Jesus is going to need dinner and a place to rest... But right now we see that Mary has taken a seat at His feet to listen to what Jesus has to say!

It says in verse 40 that Martha was "distracted with much serving."

- ⇒ **Is serving others a bad thing?**
- ⇒ **Is serving Jesus a bad thing?**

One of the questions Linda and I like to ask young people is, “can it be a sin to read your Bible?” Well, the answer is yes if you are supposed to be studying for a history test the next day or your mother just told you to clean up your room!

- It can be wrong to be doing ANYTHING if that is not what Jesus wants us to be doing!
- SO, how do we know what Jesus wants us to be doing: Well that will bring us to the “good part” that Mary had chosen

Before we get to the “good part” we must notice the progression of what happened to Martha: As a warning!

- Martha was distracted...
distracted by good things
- This led to questioning Jesus
- This in turn led to her telling Jesus what He should be doing...

Martha was distracted from hearing Jesus with much serving... a good thing in and of itself.

- As J.C. Ryle rightly comments on this verse, “We may go down to the pit of hell from the very midst of lawful things.”
- All of the ‘good works’ of Scribes & Pharisees or in modern times the Mormons would be a very good examples here.
- However, Mr. Ryle makes a mistake that I believe Luke wants us to avoid with his placement of these two lessons together... Ryle go on to refer to these lawful things as “poison” which implies they are bad in and of themselves: When such is not the case.

Service is NOT wrong and in fact Jesus has just said we are to “go and do likewise” after showing the sacrificial service of the good Samaritan.

- Martha’s problem was that she allowed those needs to distract her from what Jesus wanted her to do
- She should have joined her sister in listening to the teaching that Jesus was giving and at the appropriate time they all would have arisen and made the necessary preparations for dinner.
- Instead, Martha gets so involved in what SHE is doing that she comes to Jesus questioning His love and presuming to tell HIM what needs to be done: “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?
[remember the Disciples who came to Jesus in the boat asking a similar question?]

- Jesus tells us very plainly, if you love me keep my commandments, and yet here we have Martha commanding Jesus: “Therefore tell her to help me.”
- Another reason I believe these two accounts are intended to be parallel lessons, is that we now see Jesus have the same patience with Martha that He demonstrated with the lawyer who came questioning what He had taught:
- “Martha, Martha” He says gently, “you are worried and troubled about many things.”... How many of us need to hear Jesus gently tell us the same thing?

Martha was troubled about many things, good things, not sinful things, BUT she was not doing what Jesus wanted her to be doing at that time!

- This brings us back to that critical question:
- How are we to know what Jesus wants us to be doing?

We are back to learning to be mature & doing the VERY thing, ‘the good part’ Mary is commending for doing.

- Sitting at the feet of Jesus!

Jesus is not going to drop by for dinner and give a lecture at your house this week!

- So how does this apply in the 21st Century?
- What is the ‘good part’ today that Jesus would remind us not to miss?
- Three areas to consider... HONESTLY and this is for consideration by ALL of us...

First we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, ... our Lord’s Day priorities!

This includes our time and our money: We are called to set apart one day in seven for the Lord and we are called on to honor God with His tithe: The **first** fruit of our labors.

- IF we don’t have the Lord’s Day as the top priority of our lives each week, then we are being distracted, even if it is by good things in and of themselves!

Whether you miss the Covenant Renewal Service and your day of rest because you decided it was a beautiful day to play a double round of golf or because you did not think through how you scheduled the family vacation, the result is the same: Distraction and a loss of the good part Jesus wants us to have!

With finances we can offer many reasons for failing to give God His tithe: Some selfish [*it is my money*] and some reasonable, [*we don’t even have enough in the budget for groceries!*] but that is why it is commanded to be from the **first** fruits:

- Just as Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, willing to worry about dinner after she had taken in the good part.

It is the same with our finances: If we obey God at the beginning, He will take care of all those details later on. If we think we have a better plan, then we will surely hear Jesus say to us, “you are worried and troubled about many things.”

Second are we present at the other times when Jesus teaches US...

➤ **Quiet time for the study of God’s Word: *[be specific]***

When do we do it?

Minimum: Psalms & Proverbs and reading through the Bible

-- What is our reading list?

-- Last book you read?

-- Next book you plan to read?

-- Couples, what are you studying together?

Family devotions:

-- Are they consistent?

-- Are they Biblical?

AND finally, in our modern age of cell phones, pagers, text messages, TV, the Internet, movies, videos, XM radio and IPODS comes perhaps the key test of whether we are a Martha or a Mary... Are we comfortable with silence?

Is it OK to be alone with Jesus...

Obviously this includes prayer which we will consider at great length next week...

But I am here asking whether we are able to just rest and be quiet... This can be over a morning cup of coffee, while we are walking somewhere or driving alone and out on the porch taking in what happened that day...

➤ **IF we must have something going on, or playing, even as just background noise, then it is likely that we are much more taken up with distractions than with the good part that Jesus offers!**

These are important priorities...

➤ **Priorities we must LEARN as young people**

➤ **Priorities we must PRACTICE as busy adults**

➤ **Priorities we must REMEMBER in our old age!**

The wisdom of Proverbs is given to young men, but it applies to all of us for all of our lives, IF we are willing to sit at the feet of Jesus who is Wisdom personified...

Picture Mary who chose the good part that would not be taken away, sitting at the feet of Jesus as we hear these familiar words from Proverbs 4:20 “My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. 21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; 22 For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. 23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. 26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”

In a few moments we will gather at this Table as those who have chosen the right path, the path of life.”

The lessons Jesus has given us today are especially hard lessons for many of us as we live in a very busy time... We might ask how it can be relevant. Just as the early readers of Luke’s Gospel would have struggled with learning ANY lesson that was presented with a woman as the example! BUT Luke wants us to remember that Jesus has come to save His people from their sins!

That we as forgiven sinners now make up His body the Church And that through His Church He will fill the whole earth with His Kingdom.

- **There is always a LOT of work to be done, but we must first focus on hearing Jesus so that we have the right orders to carry out!**

Let us pray this week that we will hear the words of Jesus, not turning to the right or to the left, but learn to be right where Jesus wants us!

Communion Meditation:

Psalm 66:13: "I will go into Your house with burnt offerings; I will pay You my vows, 14 Which my lips have uttered And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble. 15 I will offer You burnt sacrifices of fat animals, With the sweet aroma of rams; I will offer bulls with goats.

16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, And I will declare what He has done for my soul. 17 I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue. 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear. 19 But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, Nor His mercy from me!”