

July 20, 2025
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 10:38–42 (Genesis 18:1–10; Colossians 1:21–29)

THE ONE THING NECESSARY.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our Gospel text this morning is an excellent example for all Christian households. Jesus should be the ever-welcome Friend and Guest in every Christian home. He should be included in your morning, bedtime, and mealtime prayers. His gracious presence should be invoked in family devotions and in all the daily affairs of the entire household. Everything that is thought, said, and done by the family should be done in a way that our Lord would be glad to make His home in the midst of such a family.

In our text, Jesus has set His face to go to Jerusalem. (cf: Luke 9:51) He has an appointment with death on Calvary's cross to win the salvation of all mankind. As He went on His way He continued to preach and teach and perform miracles. Upon entering a village, a woman named Martha welcomes Him into her home. She has heard Jesus preaching and teaching before – and believes that He has been sent from God.

Martha's home could be your home. You know what it's like to host guests. There's work to be done. Especially if your guests arrive unannounced. You hurry to straighten things up. There's food to be prepared... a table to be set... snacks and drinks to *serve*. Like you, Martha shows hospitality by completely devoting herself to many things to properly *serve* Jesus.

Martha has a sister named Mary. She also has heard Jesus preaching and teaching. She, too, believes that He has been sent from God. So, she shows hospitality by simply sitting at Jesus' feet eager to hear more of His Word. She sits where Jesus *serves* her with His Word while Martha is distracted with *serving*.

Again, it could be your home when one person of the household believes that “*this*” is the priority and another person believes “*that*” is the priority. For Mary and Martha it's the difference between “*hearing the Word of Christ,*” and “*being distracted with much serving.*” While our English translation says that Martha is “*distracted,*” in the original language the word translated here as “*distracted*” can also be translated as: “*be pulled away... be dragged away.*” (BDAG 804) So the text literally says that Martha is being *dragged* away from Jesus because she is focused on *serving* Him.

Of course, what Martha is doing is not *wrong* or *bad* in and of itself. She's doing a good work. It's good, right, and salutary that she wishes to *serve* her Lord. We see a picture of this in our Old Testament lesson. (cf: Genesis 18:1–10) The pre-Incarnate Christ and two angels appear to

Abraham outside his tent. The Lord is bringing good news, that Sarah, in her old age, will bear a child whose descendants will become a great nation. And from that nation would come the Messiah. (cf: Genesis 18:18) Abraham greets the trio with hospitality and he and Sarah get to work with much *servicing*. Nothing but abundance and the best for their guests. And this is how Martha feels having Jesus visiting her house. Nothing but the finest and highest faithful *service* for her Lord. But being distracted in her *service*, she misses the point of why Jesus came into her home in the first place. She gets *dragged* away from Jesus. He came not to be *served* but to *serve*. (cf: Matthew 20:28) And that is where you and I are just like Martha.

Like Martha, you've heard the Gospel and believe. Christ *has* come to you and *continues* to come to you in Word and Sacrament to *serve* you unto everlasting life. And because you're a child of God, you want to *serve* Him in all you do – *serving* and loving your neighbor as you ought. But many times you end up *serving* when you should be *being served*. You're *distracted* and *pulled* away when you should be sitting at our Lord's feet and *receiving*. Like Martha you're anxious and get *pulled away* because there's so much to do, and you have limited time and energy to do it. In the midst of your chaos the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh deceive you so that you're *dragged away* and lose sight of what is most important. They deceive you so that you redefine in your mind what it means to *receive* your Savior and *serve* your Lord.

Even though everything Martha is doing is out of love for Jesus, jealousy overwhelms her. Mary is not helping but sitting at Jesus' feet, listening and learning. Martha wants to listen but there is work to be done. That is the problem with the Old Adam. The sinful nature always wants to get the work done before taking time to listen to Jesus. But there's always more work to be done. And, sure, that work is on your priority list. You have to provide for your family and help with homework, clean the house, cook the meals, and mow the lawn. There's always a neighbor who needs help with something. Like Martha you become distracted and anxious with many things, *pulled* in many different directions – while at the same time, your sinful nature is *dragging* you away from the feet of Jesus.

Sister Mary is a humble learner, sitting at the feet of her Lord and Teacher, listening to His every word. Jesus speaks, and she silently soaks in everything she hears. But to Martha, it seems that Mary is selfish. She's not helping. In your anxiety and trouble, like Martha, you too have times when you get fed up and frustrated and complain to God, asking why, in His infinite wisdom has chosen to give you such a heavy load – why are the others not doing more to pull their share of the load? Just as Jesus calls Martha to repentance, He calls you tenderly saying:

“[Christian, Christian], *you are anxious and troubled about many things,* ⁴² *but one thing is necessary.*” (Luke 10:41–42)

Martha and her sister Mary teach us two types of hospitality: those who *serve* and those who *receive*. It is impossible to *serve* God until He has first *served* you. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, so He does not need your praise or your worship. But He loves you and wants to *serve* you with His Gospel Word, and in His Sacraments. Martha has either forgotten or misunderstood why Jesus has come to her house. She needed to stop *doing* and start *listening*... stop *serving* and start *receiving*.

There is but one thing necessary and that is to sit at the feet of Jesus and to *receive*. He has not come to Martha's home to be *served* but to *serve*. He came to teach and proclaim the Gospel, and to make known the heavenly Father, revealing His mercy and forgiveness. Quite likely, Jesus tells them what lies in store for Him in Jerusalem, His innocent suffering and death for the forgiveness of sins for all mankind, and three days later, be raised from the dead for our justification. (cf: Romans 4:25) And today, the One who suffered, died, and was raised, is seated at the right hand of the Father. Through His sacrificial work on your behalf, He has made peace between you and the Father. In the words of St. Paul in our epistle reading:

***"... you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²
[Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present
you holy and blameless and above reproach before [God the Father]."***
(Colossians 1:21–22)

To receive Jesus is to believe His Word and also receive the One who sent Him. (cf: John 13:20) Christ and His Word are inseparable. It's the one thing necessary. It is the good portion. It's the mystery that was hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints in Christ Jesus, the Word become flesh. (cf: John 1:14, Colossians 1:26) Jesus says:

***"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the
mouth of God."*** (Matthew 4:4)

He says:

***"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent
me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death
to life."*** (John 5:24)

He says:

***"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the
truth, and the truth will set you free."*** (John 8:31–32)

This is God's work in Christ Jesus – for you – and He does it right here in the Divine Service. It is God's *service* to you. Your primary posture in the process is that of Mary, not Martha. You come before God as a beggar, a poor miserable sinner in need of His Divine Service. You sit at the feet of your Savior and eagerly listen, passively receiving the blessings of God. His Word is *objective*. Our Lord speaks and you listen – and by the power of the Holy Spirit – His Word bestows exactly what it says: the forgiveness of all your sins, life, and eternal salvation.

Your God given faith planted in you in Baptism receives His precious gifts and then acknowledges those gifts received with eager thankfulness and praise to God the giver of all good things. Much of your anxiety and mine is not only because of your sin, the fear of death, and the devil, but because you choose the wrong portion.

Now, of course it's true that you cannot choose Jesus. You cannot by your own reason or strength believe in Him or come to Him. But while you cannot choose to do anything to save yourself... you can choose to show up where Jesus promises to be so that you can receive the one thing necessary... choosing the good portion... eagerly listening and receiving the lifesaving Gospel of Christ Jesus, for it is the power of God for salvation for all who believe... (cf: Romans 1:16) receiving Jesus Word attached to simple bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins and strengthening you in body and soul unto life everlasting.

Wherever God's Word is purely proclaimed, *that* is where the Holy Spirit calls you to faith, bestows upon you all His gifts, sanctifies, and keeps you in the true faith. Martin Luther once put it this way. He writes:

"A king gives you a castle. If you do not [receive] it, then it is not the king's fault, nor is he guilty of a lie. But you have deceived yourself and the fault is yours. The king certainly gave it." (LW 40, 367)

There is a time to work... a time to *serve* and *love* your neighbor. But there is also a time to sit at the feet of Jesus and be *served* by Him. He did not come to be *served* but to *serve* and give His life as a ransom. (cf: Matthew 20:28) Today and every Lord's Day, He comes to *serve* you right here in Divine Service... in His Word and Sacraments. This is where the King bestows upon you – not a castle – but His entire Kingdom.

Choose the good portion. Choose to be where Jesus promises be – wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, (cf: Matthew 18:20) in His Holy Absolution, in the preaching of His Word, and in the administration of His Sacraments. Choose to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest God's Word. It's the good portion. It's the one thing necessary to deliver you from your anxiety and trouble of the many things that distract and *pull* and *drag* you somewhere other than to the feet of Jesus. It's the good portion, the riches and treasures of heaven, which cannot be taken away from you.

Amen.

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