

“One Thing Is Needed”

(Luke 10:38-42 – Pentecost 9 – August 10, 2025)

Luke 10:38-42 – ³⁸Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. ⁴⁰But 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.” ⁴¹And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. ⁴²But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Dear fellow Redeemed in Christ Jesus:

Do you ever have times when there are so many things that must be done, that you feel overwhelmed? Maybe you are trying to meet a certain deadline, and the “to do” list just seems to be growing. Or you are trying to meet certain expectations, and satisfying them seems impossible. In such times it is easy to feel like Martha: “*worried and troubled about many things.*” We can go on anxiously wearing ourselves out in all the details, finding no rest for our bodies and minds.

When we become so focused on what we must do, how easily we can take our eyes off our Savior. Like Martha, we can become distracted so that it feels like we have no time just to stop and sit at Jesus’ feet to hear His Word. Therefore, we need the reminder Jesus gives: **“One Thing Is Needed.”** Like Martha, let us learn to **1) Leave distracting cares behind, 2) Listen to Jesus’ words of eternal life, and 3) Receive the rest and strength your soul needs.**

1) Leave distracting cares behind

First, let us learn to leave distracting cares behind. For Martha, there was plenty on the “to do” list. She and her sister Mary had received Jesus as a guest in their home, and she wanted to make sure she served Him properly. So as soon as He was comfortably seated, she raced off to do all that was on her mind, all that had to get done to prepare food for a meal, and so on.

There was nothing wrong with Martha wanting to serve her special guest. Wanting to serve the Lord is a response that flows from a heart of faith. But while focusing so much on what she needed to do to serve Jesus, it did not occur to Martha that the main reason He had come to her home was to serve her and Mary. Jesus was there to serve them what was most important – the food for eternal life in His Word.

Many things filled Martha's mind as she focused on her service. It says: "*Martha was distracted with much serving.*" The wording pictures her being pulled from many sides by all that had to get done, so that she was not letting Jesus serve her.

Is this how we are at times when so much is on our minds? Do we begin and end the day, letting cares and distractions on every side pull us away from opening the Bible and listening to the Lord's words of eternal life? Do we let all our earthly concerns keep us from lifting our souls in prayer, forgetting that in Jesus we have access to the very throne of God's grace, who wants to help us in every need? Are we distracted this way at times even in church, thinking of all we want to do out in the world, so that even as Jesus comes among us to speak His Word to us, our hearts and minds may be elsewhere?

The danger is not just that we may wear ourselves out physically and emotionally with all the worries of life. There is a far greater spiritual danger in that, when we get so distracted by the temporal cares of this world, we are pulled away from Jesus and His eternal-life giving Word. Faith comes by hearing His Word (Romans 10:17). If we put other things first, faith suffers. How many souls has Satan drawn away from the Savior, if only because it seemed there were too many people to see, places to go, and things to do – and just not enough time to stop and sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to the one thing needed in His words of eternal life? How many have been led down that restless path of worldly pursuits, into a restless eternity apart from the Lord?

Our loving Savior wants to give true rest to our souls in His words of forgiveness and eternal life! So when He sees us begin to wander in other paths, He lovingly calls us back to Himself.

We see this in Martha's case. In her restless state, Martha noticed that her sister Mary simply "*sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word*" – apparently not interested in serving the Lord! This frustrated Martha. She was sure that Jesus would agree with her about what was most important, as she said: "*Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.*"

Jesus' response must have surprised her: "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.*" Jesus was telling her: "Why don't you just stop and sit down for a minute and listen. All that really needs to be done will get done. Most importantly, you need rest too for your weary soul! Come and hear My words of salvation and eternal life."

2) Listen to Jesus' words of eternal life

In response to the Lord's loving reminder, let us leave distracting cares behind and focus on the one thing needed. Let us take our eyes off ourselves and all we must do, and simply

sit at Jesus' feet to hear His saving Word. Let Him serve you, for as He says: "*the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28). That was the all-important message Jesus brought to the home of Martha and Mary. That is the all-important message of salvation Jesus wants to serve you and me today. Let us rest our souls in His words of eternal life.

Presently, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and the cross, to die for the sins of all people – your sins and mine. He was going to the cross for souls weary of fretting about all we had to do to make things right with God – to serve us with His gift of salvation. He was going to the cross for souls weary of all our sins and failures – to serve us with His gift of forgiveness, to count His perfect life to us! He was going to the cross for souls anxious with the threat of death – to serve us with His gift of eternal life.

Jesus came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for us all. That was the message of peace and hope Mary sat listening to at Jesus' feet, her soul just drinking in His words of life like nothing else in the world mattered.

What Mary had chosen would not be taken away. Human works will fail, but Jesus' saving work for us will not. Self-centered hopes will fail, but Christ-centered hope will not. Man-made peace will fail, but the peace Jesus gives us will not.

Come and sit at Jesus' feet. He speaks His words of eternal life to give us peace and hope that cannot be taken away. When pressures and frustrations of life weigh us down, when we are burdened by failures to meet expectations, Jesus says: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... rest for your souls*" (Matthew 11:28-29).

3) Receive the rest and strength your soul needs

When we leave distracting cares behind and listen to Jesus' words of eternal life, we receive the rest and strength our souls need.

We can assume that Martha listened to the words of her Savior that day. She was a woman of faith. She knew what was most important for temporal and eternal life. Surely, she could be thankful for Jesus' loving reminder about the one thing needed.

And we can assume that the rest of that day, having first been served by their Savior's good news of salvation, Martha and Mary did get done all that really needed to get done. Now as they served, they did so with peace in their hearts that surpassed all understanding. Now they could serve with joy and thankfulness to God, who loved them so much that He sent His Son from heaven to serve them with eternal life. Maybe they did not even think about their service, but thoughts of their Savior's goodness filled their hearts and overflowed

in the loving work of their hands. That is what happens when we put first things first and our souls are at rest in the Lord's salvation. Then our daily work is truly done to His glory.

How important it would be for Martha and Mary to let Jesus continue to serve them and strengthen their faith with His words of eternal life – not only that day, but in the days to come. For soon, the sisters would experience heartbreaking trial in the death of their brother Lazarus. At that time, when Jesus returned to their home, He would again speak to Martha about the one thing needed as He stood with her by Lazarus' tomb. Then in her time of grief, Martha's faith would show how it had been strengthened by all those times of sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His words of eternal life. When Jesus assured her, "*Your brother will rise again,*" Martha answered in confident faith and hope: "*I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*" Then Jesus told her: "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live*" (John 11:23-25). And He proved it by raising Lazarus from the dead. Even more so, Jesus proved it by raising Himself from the dead after giving His life on the cross for us.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Let us join Mary and Martha at Jesus' feet, leaving distracting cares behind and listening to His words of eternal life. Our living Savior is here to serve us in His Word and Sacraments. He is here to strengthen our faith for whatever trial may come in life. He is here to fill our hearts with His living hope even beyond death.

So let us rest our souls in our Savior who takes away our burden of sin, as we hear His Word of absolution: "I forgive you, go in peace." Let us rest our souls in our Savior who takes away the burden of worry over how things will work out in life, as we hear His Word of assurance: "I am with you always. I am working all things together for your good in time and eternity." Let us rest our souls in our Savior who takes away the burden of death, as we hear His unfailing promise that nothing can ever separate us from His eternal love.

As we sit at Jesus' feet hearing His words of eternal life, we can sing with the hymn ("*One Thing Needful*"):

Henceforth Thou alone, my Savior, Shalt be all in all to me.
 Search my heart and my behavior, Cast out all hypocrisy.
 Restrain me from wand'ring on pathways unholy,
 And through all life's pilgrimage keep my heart lowly;
 I'll value but slightly earth's treasure and store:
 Thou art the One needful, and mine evermore!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.