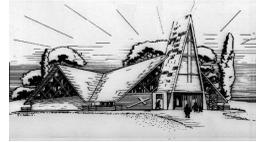




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 11C)

The One Thing necessary!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 10,38-42:

• **ESV 38** Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

• **39** And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

• **40** But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."

• **41** But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,

• **42** but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that we will truly listen attentively and hear Jesus speaking to each and everyone of us.*

Amen.

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

• Martha and Mary. Martha- anxious and troubled about many things! Mary- who sat at the Lord's feet and received Jesus' teaching. The OT reading for today keeps us from making the wrong assumption of the lesson Jesus is teaching.

• Abraham receives a visit from God. Three men visit him. Does Abraham just remain seated to only listen to God? No, he jumps up and hastily prepares the best meal he can organise in such a short time. He works his best to serve and show respect to his divine visitors!

• So, we cannot say, to do something for God is not a good thing, as if Martha shouldn't have served Jesus with food and other things to make Him feel welcome. We should not draw from this passage that serving meals at church or doing things for the congregation is not important or not God wanted.

• Furthermore, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which we find in the Gospel of

Luke right before the sermon passage for today, it is very clear that Jesus is neither against diaconic work, that is social ministries, of His members. He explicitly said, *“you go and do likewise”* [37]. Jesus wants His church to help wherever we can in society.

- What Jesus is saying is, that Mary had chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her! And that was listening to Jesus, learning from Him. She was listening to the LORD. If He speaks it is best to listen! If Jesus speaks, come sit and listen! Don't fiddle in the kitchen or in the garage although you might do it for Him.
- When the LORD speaks drop all else and listen. Focus your attention on what He has to say. And this Word is just as important for us in our days than it was in Martha and Mary's days. There is a huge movement in the church of today which keeps telling people that it is more important to do social work than going to church.
- 'Going to church is for the hypocrites', many proclaim in our days. Its all about what we do as Christians, they say. So, many people don't go to church, but they would instead engage in social work, assuming that they are the genuine Christians because they supposedly do what God wants of us!
- However, is this true in the light of what Jesus speaks? No. The best part is to listen to Jesus if He speaks.
- Where does He speak? Jesus makes it very clear that He speaks through the Word of His disciples [10,16]! If His preachers preach His Word it is Him speaking through them! If the Word of Jesus is preached we hear the LORD speaking to us just as Mary was hearing Jesus speak on that day. Jesus speaks in His Service.
- This is what many people don't believe any more. If people would realise and believe the Word of Christ in this regard, again, the churches, where His Word is proclaimed, would be full again. Therefore, when He speaks we do good to listen. Then all the other things can wait for a while. Then it is time to sit in front of Him, yes, for sure, take a rest from your work too, and listen to Him. He has Words that give you Life, that restore your soul! Jesus says, that is the best portion.

- The Epistle reading of Colossians reveals to us the enormous abundance and wealth of Christ's teaching. Paul calls it God's mystery. But it is a revealed mystery. God proclaims it through Christ speaking through His called ministers to us. It is filled to the brim with God's Glory: which is Christ in you (plural)! Christ amongst you! The living glorious Christ is amongst you. The hope of glory. In Christ God's Glory is not a hopeless case for us, but a reality.
- Jesus teaches so that we will understand and be filled with assurance, with certainty, that we participate in His fullness. In Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. The fullness of God dwells in Jesus' Body. As we are baptised into Christ we participate in the fullness of God! We are baptised into Him and He comes into us and dwells amongst us.
- That is what God does by speaking through Jesus through His disciples! Do you really want to fiddle in the kitchen whilst this Word-Action happens in the service, whilst God's Word is creating and building His Body. No. Its absurd! How can doing social work ever be more important than going to a service where Jesus is really present? It is absurd! Where Jesus' Word is preached, in His name, by His called and ordained servants, God's mystery happens.
- Yes, you can and you are experiencing God's mystery whilst you listen to Jesus' Word spoken into your ears! This is where we may speak of experiencing the divine! Jesus transfers us from the world of darkness into His kingdom of Grace and redemption. He forgives us our sins and teaches us insight so that our certainty grows, that He truly means it like He says!
- Jesus is the ONE who holds the whole universe together. He is the only One who established universal peace between God and His Creation. You cannot understand the world, the universe and heaven unless you listen to Christ. Scientists who refuse to listen to Christ limit themselves tremendously. They might know a lot more details on a specific subject, but in reality they know less about true Life than a small baptised child of God who knows that Christ is Lord of Creation and has saved Him from the devil and that he is a child of the heavenly Father.

- This is what we need to be reminded of, daily, Sunday for Sunday, because many clever people of the world, many philosophers and others try to make the Word of Christ uncertain. There are so many voices even in Christianity which deny that the Bible is God's Word. They claim it doesn't speak to our times anymore, that things have changed so much and therefore the will of God is uncertain.
- But Jesus does not speak to confuse us. He speaks to clarify things, to crucify the wrong minds of our old Adam, by all means yes, and He speaks to make His work of redemption certain. He also speaks to reveal the original intention God had with regard to His first Creation. If something is revealed it is clear. Jesus takes away the shadows. He clearly teaches what is wrong in God's eyes. He clearly teaches what is right and good and healthy in God's mind. He clearly teaches how He gets us sinners into the domain of Grace where we can begin to learn to think, to desire and to do what God wants. What God wants is good for us and for our neighbours and for creation.
- Whilst we are learning all these astonishing things of the will of God and the way He sees things, as we hear Jesus speak, our hearts repent and He makes us holy and blameless. He prepares us to die in peace with God. He makes sure that we are right with God. He cleanses us so that no accusation against us will remain standing on the Last Day.
- That is His Glory with God. He loves to do this for you and with you because He loves to save sinners like you and me. He enjoys it to speak to you and me. He speaks Life into us and Grace over us whilst at the same time evil in us is killed by Him. It is driven out and replaced with His Spirit who gladly listens to Him and longs more and more for the good portion. And so Jesus has the ability to turn us Martha's into Marys who know the One Thing necessary: To sit and listen to the voice of our Lord. The best portion indeed. **Amen.**
- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* (^{ESV} Eph 3,20-21)