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Sermon

September 20th, the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. AMEN. Our sermon text for this morning comes from Luke, chapter 10, beginning at verse 38:

As they went on their way, Jesus came into a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who was sitting at the Lord's feet and was listening to his word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her serving. She came over and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me." 41 The Lord answered and told her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but one thing is needed. In fact, Mary has chosen that better part, which will not be taken away from her."

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

Do you ever get distracted sometimes? If you're like me, the answer to this question is NO. Not only do I get distracted *sometimes*, I get distracted ALL the time! I think we all can relate to the feeling of being distracted. There are more distractions today than ever. When I looked up the meaning of the word "Distracted", there were two definitions I got. #1 "having the attention diverted", which is a pretty simple description, and #2 "rendered incapable of behaving, reacting, etc., in a normal manner, as by worry, remorse, or the like; irrational; disturbed." I thought that the second definition was much more complex and complete. But as I analyzed different examples of that definition, I realized that was simply having my attention diverted from my sermon study... As I said, I get distracted all the time.

Distractions are not always bad, per se. There are such things as "welcomed distractions". Sometimes, it can be good to have your attention diverted. But, I suppose, it really depends on what your attention is on in the first place. If you are focused on something positive or important, then you wouldn't want to be distracted. On the other hand, if your focus was on something negative or something you could do

nothing about, then a distraction could be a welcomed relief.

This then begs a question, and it is a question that our text this morning answers. What should we be focused on? What should hold our attention? Jesus really simplifies it for us. He said, "one thing is needed". He doesn't exactly say it, but we know exactly what He is talking about by faith. The one thing that is needed is qualified as something **"which will not be taken away"**. Therefore, let us here today do what Mary did so many years ago. Let us all come and sit at Jesus' Feet. Don't get distracted. Leave all anxiety and care behind, and don't let those things divert your focus. Instead, focus on what Mary did that day, the better part, and Hear His Word! - MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR STRENGTH AND OUR REDEEMER, AMEN!!!-

As they went on their way, Jesus came into a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

This is a pretty standard description of the situation. We know what this village was, namely Bethany, a

mere 2 miles away from Jerusalem. We also know more about this family that lived here. Both of the women mentioned in this text already had believing faith in Jesus. Their brother was one Lazarus, who is not mentioned in this text, but would be a central figure in another text.

What's remarkable about this event is that this wasn't normal. That is, it wasn't normal at the time. No rabbi would go to the house of a woman, or man even, to teach them. The student would come to the rabbi. But Jesus did not follow such traditions. He came primarily to seek and save the lost. A house call was never out of the ordinary for the Son of Man. He would often visit and stay with all sorts of people. Jesus would explain it like this, **"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."** (Luk 9:58)

But Martha knew how big of a deal this was. We are not told explicitly how many people came with Jesus. Presumably, at least the 12 were with Him here, if not more. Martha knew that it would be on her to get the house ready, prepare the meal, and serve the Savior and whoever else was with him. This, no doubt, caused great Martha to feel a great amount of pressure.

What are your practices when company comes over? I always remember how my family acted when we expected guests. I remember my siblings and I always groaning when company was imminent. Why? We were always commanded to clean our rooms and our house. No matter how familiar the company was, the instructions were given. I remember pleading once, "It's only so-and-so, they don't care how clean our house is!" That argument always fell on deaf ears.

If only "so-and-so" warranted a clean room and house, how much more so would the prospect of the Son of God coming cause? You could see why Martha would be anxious. But how did her sister Mary handle it? **She had a sister named Mary, who was sitting at the Lord's feet and was listening to his word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her serving.**

What makes this text so relatable is just how much we can identify with Martha here. She was the older sister, and she took this hosting responsibility

seriously. To her point of view, her sister Mary wasn't doing anything. She was just sitting there, lost in the Words of Jesus. She should be helping out! Why is it fair that Martha does all the work? Isn't her complaint valid here? After all, it would be a lot to host and feed presumably dozens of people. Wouldn't we act similarly?

So what does she do? She tattle-tales on Mary to Jesus. **She came over and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."**

If you grew up with siblings, you know about tattle-telling. It is when one child rats out another to a parent. The one doing the telling, from their perspective, is innocently informing the parent of wrongdoing on their brother or sisters part. To them, they are simply provided information that they think their parents should be made aware of. But of course, there is always more to it than that.

Have you ever done something like this, expecting maybe some kind of reward, and instead gotten chaste for it? It really seems unfair. After all, they were the one who was seemingly doing something wrong. Why should we get in trouble for simply reporting? But really, it is an attempt to justify ourselves somehow against what another child was doing.

Who did wrong in this situation? Was Martha's service wrong? No. Was Mary's quiet study of Jesus wrong? No. Neither one was doing anything wrong. But Jesus could see into the hearts of both. His view of the situation went beyond simple actions. He could see the hearts of both sisters. His correction of Martha shows this: **41 The Lord answered and told her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but one thing is needed.**

We can see the loving correction that Jesus shows Martha simply by addressing her. He says her name repeatedly to correct her error in judgment. By the second "Martha", she would be able to know where He was going with this.

The fact of the matter is that Martha was relatably distracted. Jesus told her that she was upset and worried about many different things. But the problem was that only one thing was truly necessary.

That word for “[distracted] with all her serving” literally translated means “dragged down”. I think that is such an apt description of what distractions truly do to us. They are weights. They drag and slow our progress. There are all kinds of distractions out there. Our attention spans are ever-growing shorter and shorter. It is so easy to become weighed down with other things that do not matter. They can distract us from our jobs, our relationships, and even our mission to make disciples of all nations.

When it comes to Martha here, I think of that second definition of the word distracted. “Rendered incapable of behaving... in a normal manner, as by worry” What was her crime here? Well, nothing that she did. Her problem was with her attitude. She was serving her Lord. This is admirable. But her mistake was supposing that her serving was more important than the one whom she was serving. Martha made the mistake of thinking she was the host and Jesus the guest.

What is this one thing that Jesus is talking about? What is that **one thing needed**? It comes in many different forms for us. In this case, it was the very same words of rebuke that were coming out of Jesus’ mouth. It is quite simply the Word of God. Here, at Martha’s very own home sat the Word of God incarnate. Here was the very mouth from which poured forth the Words of eternal life. But instead of listening to Jesus’ and His Word, Martha was dragged down by other distracting cares and anxiety.

This is relatable because we often find ourselves in similar positions. We prioritize other things above the one thing needed. We might try to defend ourselves in these situations. Aren’t we simply doing what we are supposed to? Isn’t it good to take care of earthly things? Yes, at times. But earthly cares and concerns are never to take preeminence over the Word! Take time for the Word first and foremost, and then go about in your worldly duties. That is why we go to church on Sunday. It is literally the first thing we do each week. Get the one thing needful first, then we can proceed to do the work which is given to us.

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but one thing is needed. In fact, Mary has chosen that better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Jesus uses a kind of a play on words here. Martha was preparing different portions (or parts) of food for the guests. But Jesus was already doling out the portions of the bread of life.

Another childhood memory I have is that of choosing portions. There would be some item of food that both I or my sister or brother would want. The fair way of proceeding often came down to the proposal of “I’ll split it with you...” Whenever this would happen, one of us would split it, and the other would choose which one they wanted first. This system worked well, because if one spilt the item in a way that was uneven, then the chooser who certainly chose that better piece first.

And what about the other sibling here? We don’t get any words from Mary here. Instead, we simply see her getting the Word, sitting at Jesus’ feet in reverence.

Is Jesus and His Word ever a distraction? Yes, but He is never one that drags us down. Instead, He elevates us. He is the most welcomed distraction from the things of this world. We can become so distracted by the various things of this world that we ourselves get distracted from what we are truly doing here. Get distracted from the world by focusing on the Word!

Last week for Bible class we talked about the sower and the seed, found 2 chapters back from this text. There, Jesus lays out the importance of the Word. **“But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. (Luk 8:15 NKJ)** That whole parable explains what happens when one loses the Word. It can be snatched out of hearts by the devil. Its roots can be tested by temptation. Or, it can be choked out by cares, riches, and pleasures of life. But to those who treasure and keep it, it is something that produces fruit, and it can never be taken away from them!

It is so easy to become distracted that it is hard to remember that only one thing is necessary. There is

only one place where we find that which we truly NEED. That place is at the feet of Jesus. On that day, it was in the household of Mary and Martha in Bethany. Today, it is here at God's house. When we go home, it also goes with us. It can be found at your bedside, or on your coffee table, or even on your cell phone. The Word is always with us, and when it is in us it will never be taken away from us. That is what we should truly care about.

The sister's relationships shaped Martha's narrative here. She couldn't get past the fact that she was working while her sister did nothing. But, Mary's relationship with her Savior shaped her narrative. She knew that whatever she had going on in her life could wait. Here was the Savior. What else truly mattered at that moment?

Think about the implications of Jesus' Word here: **Mary has chosen that better part, which will not be taken away from her.** Think about it. What can be taken away from us? Everything we have! Our family, our jobs, our freedom, our possessions... at least you got your health? No, all these things are subject to loss. There is only one thing that cannot be taken away from us. It is the Word of God and the security it truly provides.

In the Word, we see that we are sinners who only have eternal death headed our way. But then we see the Word, namely Jesus. **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (Joh 1:14 NKJ)** Jesus was God in Human Flesh. He came to this earth to seek and save the lost, people like us. He did so by going to the cross and dying in our place. Because of that fact of faith which we find in the Word, our place eternally in heaven is secure. Even though we are sinners, we are going to heaven. This can never be taken away from us! Shouldn't it then have the top priority in our lives?

But the world still spins. While it does, no doubt there will other things that pop up, seemingly out of nowhere, that require our attention. We will always have different responsibilities and cares here in this vale of tears. Even before the fall into sin, Adam

worked as a gardener. But our responsibilities and cares are always secondary. They are what we address after our souls' main problem is solved. Martha had many cares and concerns as we do today. But before we face them, our biggest care is our spiritual care. Your cares are always taken care of by Jesus and His Word. Let Jesus serve you first, then after that do all things to His glory.

There are many different things we can focus on. Many things require our attention. But no matter how important we deem them to be, there is always something else that should be our chief concern. It is the Word, it is **that better part or portion**. It is the everlasting Word of God, and in it is found our answer to every problem.

Now that we have addressed that problem, we can go on to the other things. But never lose focus on what is really important. Jesus said, **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Luk 21:33 NKJ)** Cares and concerns will come and go into and out of our lives. But our primary care is already taken care of! Our sin is paid for by the blood of the Savior. Let us always be quick to hunker down at His Holy feet and hear what He has to say. Martha asked Jesus here, **"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone?** Jesus does care. He cares for our souls, and He will never neglect them. He has saved your soul from hell and delivers it into heaven! All praise and thanks be to Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the one thing needful! AMEN!!!