

“The One Thing.”

St. John’s – East Moline

Luke 10:38-42

07/20/25

Intro.: Have you ever heard of the term “hyperliving”? It is attempting to do more and more things in less and less time. We see it in the way we try to multitask, especially in the car. We drive, eat, drink coffee, listen to the radio, talk on the cell phone, maybe even put on make-up and make gestures to other drivers – all at the same time. Before we come to a stop light, if there are two lanes and each contains one car, we find ourselves trying to guess which one will pull away first and quickly get into that lane. At the grocery store, if we have a choice between two checkout lines, we find ourselves counting how many people are in each line, multiply it by the number of items they have, and then get in the line “fastest” line. All the while we keep watch of the other person who would have been us in the other line, and if we finish first we claim the victory, but if we see them walking out of store ahead of us we get really bummed out. We just have so many things to do and to be anxious about that, hyperliving seems to be the only solution. Yet, unfortunately, it often keeps us from prioritizing on what is most important. In today’s Gospel, Jesus teaches us to slow down and recognize that there is truly one thing, above all others, that is necessary - Listening to Jesus, and receiving what He offers by grace.

I. Martha’s Many Things Brought Worry. (v. 38-41)

A. Martha was definitely into hyperliving and the many things she attended to were, in and of themselves, certainly good. To welcome Jesus and the many followers who were with Him into her house was exactly what Jesus had told his disciples to look for in people as they went out to share the Gospel. Martha provided a place for Jesus to stay and conduct His work. She showed hospitality and served a wonderful meal. All of this was virtuous and beneficial.

B. But even good things, when they become our main thing, can choke off God’s Word and work of salvation. The first thing that Jesus taught the disciples to look for in the people to whom they were sent was a desire to listen to His message of peace and receive His kingdom. Martha’s misplaced priorities and hyper-living had caused her to miss out on that, because she ***“was distracted with much serving.”*** Instead of peace she felt pressured, angry and frustrated. Instead of enjoying Christ’s presence and resting in His message of undeserved love and mercy she became self-righteous toward her sister, and went up to Jesus and said, ***“Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.”***

C. Because Martha’s service to the Lord was what was most important her focus was turned away from Christ and His Word. She was so concerned about what she was doing and what others were not doing that she lost sight of the real Servant who had come into her life. She thought that she was the host who was there to serve and that Jesus was the guest who had come only to be served. She had it all backwards. If you remember a couple of weeks ago we heard how Jesus taught his returning missionaries who were rejoicing in all the things they had done in His name that the most important thing was that they were served by Jesus’ saving work. They were to rejoice that their names were written in heaven.

D. Obviously when we get caught up in all the activities of life - when our jobs, hobbies, television programs, computer games or sports become the most important things to us – it is easy to lose track of Jesus and put God on the back burner. But it can also happen when we are focused on hyper-living in doing good things – even God things. When we focus on works of service and the things that we do we don’t let Jesus serve us and then we can easily lose sight of what He does.

Think about it, when you get either excited or uptight about the things you do in the Church, for the Lord or for others in His name, how much are you thinking about the joy of having your name written in heaven? When you get all worked up over how others aren’t thankful enough or get concerned that others aren’t

helpful, when you grumble and complain that you seem to be doing more than your fair share or that others are not godly enough, how much are you really experiencing Christ's goodness to you? Yes, good works and Christian service are important, but when they become most important, they will keep us from seeing Jesus as the real Suffering Servant who came to give His life as a ransom for us, which in turn can rob us of the joy of our salvation.

Transition: Don't be so distracted and concerned about doing good that you neglect what is **most** important, namely, to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear the saving Word of God. In our Gospel we learn that this was...

II. Mary's One Thing [that] Brought Eternal Blessings. (v.42)

A. To the world Mary may appear lazy, but quietly sitting at Jesus' feet is the best thing. In response to Martha's unhappy complaint Jesus tenderly said, ***"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion."* (v.42a)** Of all the fine foods that Martha had prepared and served, Mary had chosen the best of all, because she believed that she did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded from the mouth of her God, and there He was feeding her.

B. The OT commandment regarding the Sabbath was given by God for just this reason, so that we may hear the Lord's call to come to Him and rest from our own labors by resting in Him. The third commandment is our call to sit at Jesus' feet and remember who the first and greatest servant was and always will be, God. After serving Adam and Eve, by creating for them and for all people the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, God blessed the seventh day to keep it holy between Him and His people. He did it so that they would remember how He served them as Creator. [Nt. Ex. 20] After bringing His people out of Egypt from their life of slavery He again told them to use the Sabbath as a time to remember how He served them as Deliverer. [Nt. Dt. 5] And still today our celebration of the Sabbath on the Lord's day is that special time set aside especially for that "One Thing" to remember that God, the Son, came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for us all. It is our day to celebrate that He rose again on the third day to usher in a new creation and to deliver us from our slavery to sin, death and the power of the devil.

Transition: What Mary chose and what you have chosen today/tonight by being here is the one thing necessary. It is the truly good portion that can never be taken away.

C. Poor Martha! What was left once all the feasting was done and all her service was ended? What would she have after Jesus moved onto Jerusalem with his band of followers? Dishes to do, a house to clean and at Jesus' death sorrow and regret that she had spent precious time with Him. What Mary had chosen by sitting at Jesus feet and listening to His teaching, on the other hand, would never be taken away from her. She found her "One Thing" the most important thing was sitting at the feet of Jesus to have Him serve her with His gifts.

Transition: This is also the "One Thing" we need, the "One Thing" that is best and the "One Thing" that will never be taken away from us.

III. The One Thing For Us Is Jesus' Service. (Col. 1:21-23)

A. Jesus is here with us today/tonight just as surely as He was in the home of Mary and Martha almost 2000 years ago. And he is here to serve us – to serve us with His sacred Word, with Baptism, and with His Body and Blood. He has called us here to sit at His feet and to listen to Him. This is the most important thing – the "One Thing" He wants for us and from us: to let Him serve us, to let Him bless us with His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation, to let Him reveal to us the mystery of His dying love and resurrected glory. Right now, it makes

no difference what you have done, how many church boards or committees you serve, or the size of the offering you give. He wants your focus to be on the what He is doing, on His service to you, and on the gifts that you are receiving from Him.

In our epistle St. Paul makes it clear that it is not the things you do or the service I render to God that makes us holy, blameless and beyond reproach before Christ. We are only reconciled and made mature in Him as we continue stable and steadfast in our faith in what He does for us. We are delivered from our spiritual alienation, from hostile thinking and evil doing when our hope refuses to shift away the Gospel that we have heard about Christ's service to us. This is the first thing and the best portion that Jesus wants us to choose, to sit at His feet and to let Him serve us with His gifts. This is what our churches confess to be the right understanding of worship and the divine service of the Gospel that cannot be taken away from us.

All the activities in our lives and even the good things we do in service to God and others can be taken away in an instant. Then, what do you have left after all that hyper-living is over? Our first and main thing cannot be the many good things we do and our Christian identity cannot be tied to how well we have served. All it takes is just one mistake, one sin, and our reputation is ruined, all the good things we may have done are covered over and we are labeled hypocrites. But that [Cross], what Christ did for us there, the truth of His resurrection, the new birth of water and the Spirit that He gave us over there [Font], the forgiveness, life and salvation that He gives us there [Altar], and the gifts that He pours into our hearts here [Pulpit] as we sit at His feet; His service and work can never be taken away from us. That is why it always comes first, then...

B. After being served we are ready to serve. Like Paul we who have been blessed by Christ's service and have received God's gifts have been made stewards of God for the sake of others. Today/tonight, by sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to Him, the Holy Spirit has prepared us to toil, and struggle to serve with all the energy that God powerfully works within us. Not hyper-living, but the abundant, joyful living, because the pressure is not on us. It is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. It is no longer we who serve but reconciled and born again, Christ serves through us. From all that we have received, we are ready to give, because we have received the "The One Thing" necessary.

Concl.: Now, you know what the secret of life is - one thing, just one thing: to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to Him. Amen.