**Luke 10:38-42 July 17, 2022**

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

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Luke chapter 10 here re-reading these words. “But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hosting is hard. Attending is easy. Being waited on is easy, it’s why we pay money to go to a restaurant where someone brings you a drink, takes your order, brings you food, and cleans up after you as you leave. There are many things to be anxious and worried about when hosting. A large group was being welcomed into Martha’s home. The text specifically says in verse 28, “They” meaning the whole group that traveled with Jesus in his ministry. We don’t know the specific number, it may include all 72 that we saw earlier in Luke chapter 10. We can at the very least say that this group would be at least 12. This wasn’t just a simple task of hosting one additional person, this was an impromptu party, and as we talked about earlier, hosting is no easy task. To have a large group of people, especially a group as important as Jesus and his disciples arrive would be an all hands-on deck sort of situation. One person couldn’t possibly get the house set up, and cook, and clean, and organize, and serve, and you can see how the troubles just seem to mount up. Everyone else can relax, certainly the guests can but not the hosts. Now is the time for action. Martha is busy, worried, anxious, and getting upset while Mary is sitting at the Lord’s feet and listening to his teaching. Listening and relaxing is easy, but hosting is hard.

It may be easy to see Mary as the lazy one and Martha as the responsible host. It may also be easy to see Mary as the obedient student of Christ and Martha as the distracted follower of the world. Both are far too simplistic for what is going on here. Mary is not in this moment just finding an excuse to not work out of laziness. If she was just loafing and sitting and doing nothing that would be one thing, if she was staring at the wall or looking up at the clouds when Jesus and his disciples needed help then we can point the finger at her disrespect for her guests, her sister, and her sister’s house. But that’s not what’s going on here at all. Mary is focused on Jesus Christ and what He is teaching. If Martha is preparing a meal that will sustain their earthly bodies, Mary is feasting on a meal that feeds her soul. And that’s not a bad thing.

Being a responsible host, in the same way, is not a bad thing. We find in verse 38 it was Martha who had invited them in and they have earthly needs and we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves, something we just looked at last week in the parable of the Good Samaritan, meaning that we sacrifice of ourselves for the good of our neighbor which is exactly what Martha is doing. How can we point the finger at her and say that what she is doing is wrong when just last week Jesus was teaching on how to serve others? Especially when in Luke’s Gospel these texts come right next to each other, this particular Gospel is just the continuation of Luke chapter 10 that we heard last week. Martha isn’t wrong to serve and host. We all are called to work and give and sacrifice for the needs of others, but we aren’t called to neglect the things we need in the name of work. We’ve all had busy days, crazy busy days, when I worked at McDonalds it was days like the 4th of July, or times when a bus would arrive during lunch rush. Breaks were canceled, no time to get a drink, no time to go eat lunch, it was all hands on deck, everyone working like crazy and a lobby full of people. When I worked at 7-11 there was no busier day than July 11th 7-11 day, when people would come in to get a free slurpee and the whole store was just full of people pretty much the whole day. We’ve all been so busy that we’ve neglected the things we need to do, like eating and drinking because we have to keep working. We’ve skipped the break because they need us. We’ve stayed late, we’ve stayed at it, we’ve overstepped the rules that are in place for our benefit just to get all the work done because we had to, it had to get to done and there was no other choice. And that is one thing when it comes to feeding hungry customers or working at a convenience store, or any other work that you were doing out in the fields, or working on your house, or getting things done. But the problem that we find in our text this morning is twofold. The first is that you can sacrifice learning from Christ for the sake of this worldly business and work and neglect the feeding of your soul. And the second is that in your anxiety and your irritation and frustration from the busy nature of the work you’re doing, you can blame God and take that frustration out on other people.

And we are guilty of both of the problems that we find here in Luke chapter 10. Because we get busy, and we skip a meal or two because we are on the road, out at the job site, getting things done. But we also skip a spiritual meal or two as well. We neglect worship, we neglect our own personal devotions, we neglect the study of God’s Word either here at Bible Study or on our own. Even when we can just as easily turn it on in the car or at home on our phone, when it wouldn’t take much at all to be connected to Christ and His Word, we are too busy, or at least we think we are. But while Martha has busied herself with the necessary work of being a host to Jesus Christ and his followers we have busied ourselves with other things. Less necessary things. Worldly distractions, stuff that doesn’t matter, stuff we think is so important when in comparison to eternity means nothing at all. But the summer is full of such things and we go without being spiritually fed. The host eventually has to be hosted, no one can serve forever, they have to take care of their own needs and here is where those needs are met. Where forgiveness is found, where peace and rest at the feet of Jesus Christ is our reality this morning. Where we are surrounded by others who are here for the same reason, which leads to the second failing.

Our lives get hard, stressful, frustrating, and we lash out at others. Like a person who is drowning who thrashes and brings down the person who has swam out to save them. We turn on others in our frantic anger. In this case Martha is turning on both Jesus and Mary at the same time. “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” Martha has let the worries of hosting, change her perception of her guest, and attempt to take away the rest and spiritual feeding that Mary is experiencing. This is the problem, and when we get upset at the worries of our world, when we see the news and the problems and the increasing costs and the strife and divide in our world, we lash out at God. We blame. We blame others, they are the problem, if they were doing what we were doing we wouldn’t be in this mess! Which really boils down to an idolatry of self that can be summed up simply by saying, “If only everyone was like me.” Martha serving isn’t the problem, Martha hosting isn’t a bad thing, but Martha’s response to the added stress of hosting so many people and her blame of Mary for being spiritually fed is.

But for Mary, the “good portion” won’t be taken away. Not by Martha’s frustration, and certainly not from Jesus Christ. Jesus is such a brilliant teacher that he takes what Martha is frustrated about, the meal that she had prepared and was serving and uses that to illustrate what was going on in his teaching of Mary and the others gathered. Mary has chosen the “good portion” which will not be taken from her. The good portion is the part of the meal that everyone enjoys the most. It’s that bite of the nachos in the middle with all the toppings on it. It’s the biggest and best prepared of all the steaks. It's the good stuff, it’s what you look forward to receiving in the meal, and no matter how good any earthly food can be, there is no greater food for your soul than the very Word of God coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ. And this is not something that could only be received by those who lived at the time of Jesus in his ministry such as Martha and Mary, this is what you receive right here, right now, in the Scriptures that have been written and passed down for your learning. You recline and receive in the same way Mary did, and it won’t be taken away from you. Even if these walls crumbled, it wouldn’t be taken away. We’d find a place to worship. Even if it was illegal to gather together and study the Word, we like so many underground churches would gather and receive from the Lord the food for our souls. Because the food that nourishes our bodies is meaningless when we look and think of eternity, of the life to come, and that’s what Mary was focusing on, and it’s what Jesus, in his love for Martha was pointing her to as well. “Martha, Martha….one thing is necessary.” For today the worries and cares of being a host has her completely overwhelmed, and it’s the same for us. Today is full of worries and there’s always something on the horizon, more to do, more to get done, things that make us anxious and worried and afraid of the future. And Jesus comes with a knowing look, and speaks your name, and focused you on what truly matters. The life you have in His name. The life he won for you by dying in your place, by rising to destroy death forever. The food that sustains your faith and feeds your soul and points to a better place where you will not have to host, but where you will be the guest at the Lamb’s high feast for all eternity.

There is a wonderful scene in the movie “The Shawshank Redemption.” Where inmate Andy has received a shipment of records. When the guard leaves him to move the records to the library Andy plays one of the records for the whole prison to hear, and for just a moment, everyone stops and listens to the beautiful music of an opera. Andy’s punishment for this was 2 weeks in solitary confinement in a place they called “the hole” at the prison, but when Andy arrives out of that punishment and rejoins his friends he says it was the easiest time he ever did. Because he could hear the music in his head. He says, “That’s the beauty of music….they can’t get that.”

Jesus says, “Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” The point being, “the good portion”…they can’t get that either. My dear friends there may come a time, when the world attempts to stamp out the teachings of Jesus, when the Word isn’t so readily available, when there is no public place of worship in your community where you may gather to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him. But they can’t take your faith, and no one else can for that matter. Not when you’ve been regularly spiritually fed. So come and eat, and don’t let the worries of the world keep you away from the food that truly matters.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.