

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." (Luke 10:38-42, *Evangelical Heritage Version*)

One Thing Needed

"Martha, Martha..." poor Martha. When we get to this story in Luke 10 you may have heard something along the lines of, "Don't be a Martha, be more like Mary." I say poor Martha because it seems like many forget that it was Martha who had that beautiful confession that Jesus is the resurrection and the life! But, back to Luke 10. Don't be a Martha, be more like Mary doesn't real solve Martha's issue. "Be more like" sounds like some solid guidance, but it doesn't really help us—it just piles on more. This account isn't an object lesson teaching us to be more like this rather than that. No, these are real people in history like you and me who need the constant encouragement and reminder that there is one thing needed.

So there's Martha. She sees Jesus enter this certain village and invites Jesus into her home. As Jesus enters her home there we meet Martha's sister, Mary. Now Mary has only thing on her mind at this time. Nothing else is going to pull her away from it either. Mary is eating up everything that Jesus sets down. She is listening.

Then there's Martha. I'm sure she is trying to listen a little bit, catching what she can as she runs through this room to make sure everything is in order and goes back to that room to stir the food and flip it to make sure nothing burns. I'm sure she was trying catch some of what Jesus was saying while she was setting everything up over here and going over mental checklist to make sure she is being a good host. Martha is being pulled in this direction while yanked back by something else. She's distracted with all her serving.

The thing is, in and of itself, this isn't a bad thing! In fact, she was doing a good thing, a great thing! She was serving her Lord! There was work that needed to be done. Someone had to do it; otherwise, it wasn't going to happen. Martha feels it needs her attention right then and there. The thing is it wouldn't have been that bad if only Mary would get up off her lazy bum and actually help a little bit. How rude could she be? I mean, Jesus is right there! They need to make sure to serve him; he

is their guest after all and important to them. There would be time to sit and listen later, Mary.

But do you know what really grinds Martha's gears? Jesus isn't doing anything to support her. **"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."**

You can hear Jesus' care and concern. He knows there's just a whole lot bugging Martha. He knows that there is so much weighing heavily on her mind. **"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is needed. In fact, Mary has chosen that better part, which will not be taken away from her."**

I know for many of you, you have a lot on your minds too. Everyone is busy. We readily admit it. In fact, it's often a point of pride to talk about how busy we are working here, running there, checking on this, making sure of that. What terrible shame and we get quite upset if anyone accuses or we feel that you aren't doing enough! I get it. I do it too.

So when it comes to stopping and listening to Jesus, it feels like we should be doing something more. We know it's not a waste of time to hear him speak to us in his Word, at the same time there's just so much more other stuff too! Even when you do take the time there's the ding of the cell phone that tells you, "I need your attention over here." Or you're trying to fill up with the Word and your mind is filling up with the list of things you need to do before you forget it. Sometimes it is sinful, bad things that distract you. A lot of times, though, the good stuff that we need to do pulls at us the most. It's your job or career. It's the drive to use your gifts and talents to the best of your ability. It's the kids who need your help right now in that instant. It's work that you've been pushing off to take care of your home. It's time you need to recharge with your hobby. It's time you don't want to think about anything but want to turn off your brain for a bit. It's good things. The problem is that there are so many other things, good things too, that it sometimes feels almost wrong to take time to be in the Word and in prayer. I get it. I feel it too.

Obviously it happens here, at church too, while you are sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing his Word. If we were to project on the screens what's going through mind right now, what would it show? Again, it might not be even bad, evil things. Who of us isn't anxious about something, concerned about other stuff, and still troubled by more? There's so much pulling at your mind and often it is good stuff that you need to take care of this afternoon. It's concern for that individual that hasn't been here a while. You might be thinking about who you need to make sure to talk to

after the service. It might be thinking about the work this last week. Does it ever cross your mind that you could be—even should be—somewhere else?

So why are you here? Why do we go to church? You see, Martha forgot something vitally important. Jesus doesn't need to be served. It's easy for us to forget about that too whether that's at home with your devotional life or it's especially here coming to church. We go to church not because God needs our service in some way. Jesus said it himself, he doesn't come to be served. We don't come here, stopping and listening to his Word, to keep certain people off our backs and the "Big Man" upstairs happy. For Jesus' sake, he's already well-pleased with you, dear child of God. You aren't doing some great good work by filling a spot in the pews. It's not because the church needs your money. You being here and the offerings you give are God's personal gift and service to you with the opportunity and ability to do so. Is it because we are here to give our thanks and praise? Yeah, we do that. But it's not like God is this narcissist in heaven who will pout in the corner because he didn't receive enough of your thanks this week.

So why are we here? Why do we want to stop and listen to Jesus' voice? Because he's the one thing truly needed. Of course the devil will use bad and sinful things to pull us from Jesus and our time with him. But his greatest trick is to use the good things, blessings from God, important things, to distract us. It's so tempting too because these are good things! And we are doing good things! But there is only one thing needed. We might readily say with our lips this is most certainly true. But what does your life—how you live, how you act—what does that say?

Jesus doesn't shame Martha or scold her. He invites her to listen. He doesn't lay the guilt trip on you. He comes to relieve your troubled mind and anxious heart. He doesn't leave you to go hunting it down or searching for it. He give it to you. Here's the one thing you need—it's Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus. As he does for Martha, he does for you: he calls you by name through all the distractions. Jesus invites you, "*Thad, Thad*, (insert your own) please sit down and just listen. You are worried and upset about many things, but look. I did not come to be served by you, I came to serve and to give my life to pay the price for your sin. My blood washes over you so that you are clean—the sins that have been committed against you and the sins you have done; your well-intentioned priorities and often distracted thoughts—you are clean. I have rescued you from the dominion of darkness of sin and death, snatched you from Satan's grasp, and set you free so that neither sin nor Satan controls you.

Thad, Thad (insert your name), please sit down and listen: you were bought at a price so that you are not your own. You have been washed in the waters of baptism and raised a new creation. You are righteous. You are right with God already so do

not worry about trying to serve him or keep him happy. He already is with you. You don't need to justify yourself—you already stand not guilty before God. Please, sit down and listen: you have my love, the one thing you need. Satan, hell, demons, this world can try as much as they like, this good part will not be taken from you. So please, sit down and listen, I am with you always. There's nowhere you can go that I will not be with you.

Thad, Thad, you are worried and upset about many things, please, listen. Come to me and I will give you rest; rest for your aching conscience, rest for your tired soul, and rest from your constant need to justify your actions. Listen: here's the one thing needed, I give you myself in the bread and wine where you receive my body and blood given and poured for you. Listen: the one thing needed is right here—my Word, the Sacraments of Baptism and Lord's Supper I give to you, the absolution that your sins are forgiven.

Please, sit and listen. I'm coming back for you to take you to be with me in a place I have prepared for you. Stop trying to do and feeling like you need to do more. Listen. You are anxious and upset about many things, but I'm working even all of those things out for your eternal good.”

So why come here? Because here, at church, you will find and receive the one thing needed. You see, it's not about whether or not you are being a Mary or Martha. It's receiving what your Savior gives with his promise that this one thing needful is sealed to you in your baptism and yours through faith will not be taken from you. Amen.