

Sermon Proper 11 2019

July 21, 2019

Luke 10:38-42

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel previously read.

Having had the parable of the Good Samaritan last week, it's interesting that Luke, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would place this interaction of Mary and Martha right after it. But if you look at it, it's fitting. You see, it's easy to come away from Jesus' words there and assume that He is preaching what we so often call "works righteousness." You hear that word, "**Go and do likewise,**" a word of command—and as we look at the question the lawyer asked in the first place, the question of how to inherit eternal life—we assume that this command means that if we do this, then we will inherit eternal life. That is, if we live according to the Law, we will earn heaven for ourselves. But lest we think that, here we see Martha doing good works, being active and doing, and yet our Lord commends the one not doing, but receiving. All the more there is a rebuke for the assumption of some sort of works righteousness here.

But as we say that, let's take time to unpack this interaction a bit. To start, I think we should understand something about hospitality in the culture of that day. If you look at Scripture, you can see just how valued hospitality is. For example look at Abraham in the Old Testament lesson. Now, on the one hand we can just say that Abraham knew this was the Lord coming to him in these three men, and so he responds as he does because of that. But look at something like what it says in the letter to the Hebrews: "**Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**" There is in this an understanding that even should the person be a total stranger you entertain them as if they are angels from heaven, because they might just be. And so Abraham shows that. He has Sarah baking cakes, he himself goes and gets the calf to prepare for a meal. He goes out of his way to entertain well.

Coming back to Martha, we can see her trying to do this. In fact this word that's used there for welcoming bears an image of arms being put under someone and that's how they welcome them: they support them and provide care for them. Think about the pressure then Martha felt in this. I know whenever we are preparing for

houseguests in our home we have the stress of trying to get things just so to be good hosts. For Martha it's that plus some. And so she has this anxiety about it.

But you see that's what Law does. It creates anxiety. In theology we say *lex semper accusat*, the Law always accuses. It always comes to bear on you and creates anxiety on you. You know this anxiety. Sometimes you experience it as the crushing of the law explicitly against your sin. You hear the commands and fear whether you'll even get to heaven. You might hear how Jesus preaches and say, "I don't do that, I fear that I'll be cast away at the judgment." You might know that anxiety. But sometimes it's more like what Martha was doing. Sometimes it's more that anxiety to get enough done, the worry of all of the things you have to do. You know those things, the things that distract you as it says in the lesson. Which by the way, that's the distraction of divided attention, the distraction that creates anxiety that would draw you away from the Lord.

I myself had an experience with this this week. You know, with having been gone last week on vacation, then going to a friend's wedding on this past Friday in Fort Wayne, then I went to a conference on the Concordia campus this week, so I had all of this stuff on my plate. I had shut-ins I needed to visit. I had things I needed to get done, sermons to write. Our secretary is out of town and I had to pick hymns for her, not just for today, but for next week. I had all of this stuff weighing down on me, and I was a bit anxious about how to get it all done. So I thought, well, I'll start with reading the texts for the lessons to pick hymns. And what was the first lesson I read? This one here. Martha and Mary. And it reminded me, just stop. Take some time to sit at the feet of Jesus. Take time to hear His Word. Take time pause and rest in that rest of Jesus.

And as I say that, what do you find yourself doing that with? What do you find distracting you? Why would you rather run around in busy-ness than sit at the feet of the Lord? I'll tell you what it is. It's justification. You want to be able to justify yourself. You want to be able to tell that voice, perhaps in your head, or that voice that comes from outside pressures: bosses, family, friends, etc., you want to tell those voices to look at just how much you've done. You've done enough so now they can be pleased with you. Remember I said this is sometimes even just the voice in our own head, but it's there and you want that voice to say "well done." You want to

hear that voice speak affirmation justifying you. And all those things become more pressing than Jesus in that moment then, don't they? And you need to repent.

“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.” Martha, you need the one thing. You don't need the justification from those voices, you need the justification from the voice of your Lord and His Word. You see all of this around you, all of these voices you want to answer are a form of the Law. But Jesus invites you to sit at His feet and He invites you to hear His Word. What does that Word say? You are sufficient in me. Think about what He said to Paul. “My grace is sufficient for you.” Here Paul had this thorn that wouldn't leave Him alone. And through that thorn there was this utter sense of inadequacy. You're not enough. You're not doing enough. You're not accomplishing enough. And think about Paul: Paul the apostle, Paul the great missionary, Paul the minister and steward of the mysteries of God. Paul, you're not enough.

And you hear that. You're not enough. And the reality is that's true. You're not. But Jesus says it to you, “My grace is sufficient for you.” You see the Devil, the World, and your Sinful Nature like to remind you of all of your offenses and all of the things that you fall short in, and they would seek to crush you under the burden of anxiety and disapproval in that failure. But Christian, all of that is fulfilled in the cross and in the resurrection. It's all done. It's taken care of. *tetelestai*, it has been, is, and will be finished. It's done. It doesn't mean now that you sit on the couch and eat bon-bons all day watching soap operas and expect that your kids will take care of themselves. No but it means as you care for those kids, or you care for the house or you do the work of your job, or those in need, you know that what God says to you, what Jesus speaks to you is sufficient. In other words, it's not that this means you don't care, it means that Jesus invites you to cast that care on Him in the promise that He is sufficient to provide the fulfillment of all things in the way that is best.

This is what Jesus invites you to hear. He invites you to hear it here, through the ministry of the Word. I talked about Paul as an example, but look at what he says in the lesson: **“I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.”** Jesus invites you to sit at His feet hearing the word from His ministers. Hearing that absolution that speaks of your

justification in His cross, in His life, death, and resurrection. To know that you were joined to Him and made sufficient in baptism, to know that He still supplies your needs in His Holy Supper. He says come, sit here, and know that.

He also invites you to sit at His feet and study His word daily. I've mentioned before Luther's four things to look at in a passage, and those are good. If you recall they are to look at the passage and seek what the passage tells you to be informed of, to confess, to give thanks for, and to pray for: Information, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Prayer. In addition to that, I'd like you to be aware of a great resource that we have for daily devotion, and that's our hymnal. I've found sometimes people are not great with daily devotions because they just don't know what to do. It seems overwhelming. Well, a simple way to do it is in the hymnal. Take a second and pull out the hymnal in front of you and look at pages 294-297. You see there little orders for the parts of the day. You can do all of those, you can to some of them, one of them, any. Just follow that and read the readings for the upcoming Sunday. That's a great way to connect your daily life to the life we have together on Sunday Morning. A daily reminder that as you sit at Jesus' feet here on Sundays together, you are still connected in Christ daily in that Word, in that prayer.

And as you do that, hear those promises of His Word daily. Hear that gracious gift that He gives. Hear the Word of your justification before the God who created the whole universe, over and against the voices of this world. Hear that one thing necessary, the one thing needful and know that this is what matters. And know that just as Jesus said it wouldn't be taken from Mary, so also it will not be taken from you. Not now, not ever. Amen.