

*Luke 10:38-42* 38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

---

A while back, our son Gideon learned a new phrase which has revolutionized his whole way of life. That simple phrase is "I need." It used to be that he wanted juice, or peanut butter toast or whatever, but now he needs it. "I need, I need, I need," he cries out. It is no longer something that he would like to have, but now is something that is a life and death matter. If he gets the juice, he lives, if not he could die right there. Or at least that is how his little voice presents the situation.

But I shouldn't be too tough on Gideon, for humans as a whole have and continue to abuse the phrase "I need." We who have plenty of food everywhere and often a little extra energy around our waists often say "I need to eat." And we mean right now. People whose clothes are not nearly worn out say "I need a new shirt or a new outfit." People living in a house that most of the world would die for say "I need a bigger, newer house."

Each of us can quickly add to the list the things that we have heard others say and if we are honest, the things we often say as well. Quickly we can add of sorts of things like new cars, new TVs, new toys, new phones, and more to the list. Perhaps we learned when we were two years old also that the phrase "I need" seems to have much more power than a much more accurate phrase like "I want." But the more and more we cry "I need" the less the phrase actually means. "I need" becomes nothing more than an emphatic synonym to the phrase "I want." Just like the boy's cry of wolf, the phrase "I

need” really doesn’t draw any attention to itself anymore. Even some dictionaries now define the word “need” as an “urgent want.”

In our text for the day, Jesus certainly wasn’t primarily concerned about grammar or the force of word when he tried to teach Martha about the real meaning of the word “need.” You see, Jesus had come over to Mary and Martha’s house for fellowship and a meal. When Jesus arrived, Mary and Martha had two different approaches. Mary sat down at Jesus’ feet and listened to Him. Martha continued to scamper around in the kitchen trying to prepare a wonderful meal for Jesus. In their culture, both sitting down with the guest and preparing a meal were things that should have been done when someone special came over. Hospitality was in their culture and quite frankly in the bible something of great importance. And so Martha went to work preparing a very special feast for their very special Guest. And Mary sat at that Guest’s feet listening to His every word.

But as Martha continued to prepare the meal, she began to get as hot as the bread she was baking. She couldn’t believe that her sister Mary was leaving her to do all the work in the kitchen. Finally, her anger steamed out as she essentially said to Jesus, “Tell Mary to get up and come help me in the kitchen.” Jesus responded to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the better part and it shall not to be taken away from her.”

There is that word again: “needed.” “Only one thing is needed,” Jesus said. Can Jesus be serious? Are we to take Him literally that in the whole world there is only one thing needful. Indeed, we are. Oh, He was not telling Martha that being hospitable was wrong or that the meal would not be appreciated. But rather He wanted her to make the distinction between what was nice, and what was needed.

What is the one thing needed that Mary chose? To sit at the feet of the Lord and listen to His words. This was truly a life and death matter. And it still is a life and death matter. If we do not have God’s Word, we will die. Without His Word, we will literally die an eternal death. Through her

student-like posture at Jesus' feet, Mary said "I need, I need, I need Jesus' Word." And that would not be taken from her.

Jesus turns His head to us this day to those of us who live in a world noted for its busyness and reminds us also that only one thing is needed, His Word. Oh to be sure, some of what makes up our busyness are things that are much like Martha's cooking. They are not bad in and of themselves. In fact at times, they are very helpful things. But the trouble is when we forget in all of our busyness concerned with helpful things to pay attention the one thing needful, to sit and listen to the words of our Lord.

Ask a delinquent member why they are not in church and nine times out of ten, they will answer that they are just too busy. Ask someone who does not attend bible study why they do not come, and they will say nine times out of ten that they are too busy. Ask people why they do not have family devotions and nine times out of ten they will tell you that the family is just too busy to pull that off. And sadly, in all of this busyness, we are starving ourselves of the one thing needful, the Word of God.

We must hear God's Word clearly today. The Word of God is the one thing, the one thing needful. Nothing, and God means nothing, is more important.

Several years ago, there was a whole line of t-shirts that said something like, "Life is baseball, the rest is details." Stick in your favorite sport and they had the t-shirt. Perhaps Jesus' t-shirt would read, "Life is my Word, the rest is details." But today we wish to even go a step farther than wearing a t-shirt. We wish to inscribe on our hearts anew the conviction that "Life is God's word, the rest is details." We wish to cry out with Mary, "I need, I need, I need Jesus' Word."

I beg of you today to not take this sermon in general, but look at the specifics of your life to determine if you have treated the Word of God as the one thing needful in your life. How often are you at church? How often are you in a Bible class? How often does the Word find its way of the shelves in your home? For to claim to love the Word and never to study or look at it is a more than obvious contradiction.

For any deficiencies you see in your love of God's Word, I urge you to join me at the feet of Jesus. There together we will admit that we have all too often allowed our own busyness to rob us of the one thing needful. We come before our Lord with hearts wanting to change. We confess to Him that His Word is the one thing needful and that our lives have not reflected that conviction.

And thank be to Jesus, that as we sit there humbled and broken at His feet, he does not speak to us a word of condemnation, but rather speaks to us his Word of life. He pronounces to us that we are forgiven for our lives that have been busy with everything but Him and His word. He reminds us that through His death and His resurrection, our sins have been completely and fully washed away.

God does not wish for us to leave church with guilt in our hearts today, but rather with a forgiven conviction that His Word is the one thing needful. That is why He fills us again this day with His Spirit that enables us to cry out, "I need, I need, I need Jesus' Word." Through the Spirit's work, we learn how to be Marys in this Martha world of ours. We learn that there is only one thing needful. We learn to love the words of Jesus. Amen.