The One Thing

Luke 10:38-42

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.
39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.
40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.
41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:
42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Introduction

• Mary and Martha.
  o What a familiar story.
• On the one hand you have Martha,
  o the responsible sister.
• On the other hand you have Mary,
  o the starry eyed disciple of Jesus.
• I don’t know about you,
  o but every time I hear the story
    ▪ a conflict breaks out in my soul.
• I know that Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus
  o and I know that that is the better thing to do.
• But I can’t help but identify with Martha.
  o Poor, misunderstood, Martha.
    ▪ Her only fault, it seems,
      ▪ is feeling the responsibility to
      ▪ do the things that must be done.
• If you are going to have Jesus over for dinner,
  o someone has to clean the house,
  o someone has to prepare the food,
  o someone has to play the good hostess
    ▪ and make sure everyone has a drink
    ▪ and that no one’s glass sits empty for too long.
• There are a lot of things that go along
  o with hosting someone as important as Jesus.
    ▪ Martha gets that.
  o And a part of me loves Martha for that.
    ▪ Martha gets it.
- There are responsibilities that simply cannot be forsaken.
- There are important things that simply MUST get done.
- And Martha understands that.

- So, when I read the story
  - and I come upon Jesus’ gentle
    - but meaningful rebuke of Martha,
      - a part of me almost feels guilty
        - because I was rooting for her.
  - I know what it feels like
    - to be the one who feels the responsibility
      - to make sure the work gets done
        - while others sit idly by
        - and wait for someone else to do it.
    - I know what it feels like
      - to be cumbered about
        - with the heavy responsibility
          - of so many things that must be done.
        - I know how tired Martha felt.
          - I know how weary Martha was.
  - I know, in my heart,
    - that Martha would have loved
      - to be able to neglect the many things that needed doing
        - in order to rest for a moment
        - at the feet of the master alongside Mary.
  - But I also know
    - that Martha’s own sense of responsibility
      - won’t allow her to neglect
        - the meaningful things that she is doing.
- **Martha feels responsible for making it all come together.**
  - I can almost feel her anguish,
    - I almost want to argue with Jesus for her,
      - to stand up for her and say,
        - but someone has to do the work Lord!
        - Someone has to make sure that the many things get done.
        - Someone has to be responsible.

The NEED
- Earlier this week the story of Mary and Martha was refreshed in my mind
  - and I came to a fresh understanding
    - of the principle that was being demonstrated
      - in those 5 verses.
- This evening I want to open your understanding
  - to recognize the message that Jesus
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

The One Thing

• was trying to convey to the Martha in us all.
• The story boils down to this basic set of facts.
  o Martha is troubled about many things.
  o But Mary is concerned with only one thing.
    ▪ The point of Jesus’ rebuke is not to say
      • that the many things don’t matter
      • but rather that only one thing is absolutely necessary.
• The story of Mary and Martha is a story about priorities.
  o Martha’s problem was not
    ▪ that she was concerned with the many things.
  o Martha’s problem was
    ▪ that the many things that needed to be done
      • were causing her to neglect
      • the one thing that she needed to do.
• The moral of the story
  o is that there is one thing that we need
    ▪ above everything else.
• Jesus said: “Only ONE thing is needed.”
  o There is only one essential thing.
• That one thing is the thing that Mary chose.
  o That one thing is spending time in the presence of Jesus.
  o That one thing is sitting at the feet of the master.
    ▪ The one absolutely essential, nonnegotiable thing
      • is to spend time with Jesus.
• That is the one thing that we need.
  o That is the one thing
    ▪ that brings vitality to our spiritual life.
  o That is the one thing
    ▪ that empowers everything else that we do.
  o That is the one thing
    ▪ that brings meaning into everything in our life.
  o That is the one thing
    ▪ that really matters, the one necessary thing.
• The point is not to say that the many things are unimportant.
  o The point is not to say that the many things don’t need to be done.
    ▪ Somebody really does have to clean the house.
    ▪ Somebody really does have to prepare the meal.
    ▪ Somebody really does have to play the part of a hostess.
  o The point wasn’t that those things should be neglected.
    ▪ The point was that those things should be subordinate
      • to the one thing that really matters.

The Many Things.
• Martha had the same problem that many of us have.
  o We are busy people.
We do a lot of essential necessary things.

- There are important things in our lives
  - that simply must be done.
- If we don't do them then
  - nobody is going to do them.
- We see the need
  - and we step up
    - and we spend ourselves,
    - our time
    - and our energy,
      - making sure that the many
      - important things get done.
- The problem is that we act just like Martha.
  - We get the cart before the horse!
- When you get your priorities messed up,
  - you become troubled
    - with the many things.
  - You become consumed
    - with taking care of the many things.
- Every hour in your day,
  - every minute in every hour,
    - all of your time and energy and effort,
  - all of it is consumed
    - in the effort to take care
      - of the many things.
- The truth about the many things
  - is that there are too many of them.
- If you allow yourself to get wrapped up in the many things,
  - they will rob you of your peace of mind,
    - because no matter how hard you try
      - there's just never enough of you to go around.
  - There will never be enough ability in you
    - to accomplish the many things
      - that need to be done in your life.
- The many things will exhaust you,
  - they will use you up,
    - they will leave you tired and worn out
  - and when you have fully spent yourself
    - in the effort to make sure
      - that the many things are done
  - you will lift your weary eyes in dismay
    - at the many things that still remain undone.
- That's the truth about the many things.
  - They captivate our time and attention.
    - They trouble our minds
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- and worry us in the late hours of the evening.
  - They keep us running around
    - busy, tired, week and exhausted.
- The many things,
  - though they are needful,
  - though they must be done,
  - though they are an important part of the Kingdom of God...
    - The many things will never satisfy your soul.
    - The many things will never nourish your inner man.
    - The many things will never replenish your depleted resources.
  - They take and take and take
    - but never give anything back in return.
- The problem is not the many things that need to be done.
  - The problem is the priority that we assign
    - to the many things in our lives.
  - **When we put the many things first,**
    - when we make those our priority,
      - they leave no room
        - for the one thing that really matters.
- That’s the point that Jesus was making to Martha.
  - **When we get the many things ahead of the one thing,**
    - the many things choke out
      - the one thing in our life that is necessary.
  - But when we put the one thing first,
    - it empowers the many things that we do!

The ONE Thing.
- The one thing that really matters is spending time with Jesus.
  - The one thing that really matters is a spiritual refreshing.
  - The one thing that really matters is divine direction.
  - The one thing that really matters is a holy anointing.
- The one thing that we need,
  - above everything else in our lives,
    - is to spend time in the presence of God.
  - That one thing empowers everything else.
- When we get the one thing right,
  - the many things fall into their proper place.
- When we get the one thing right,
  - the abiding peace of his presence
    - overflows into the many things.
- When we get the one thing right
  - the joy of being with him
    - overflows into the mundane duty
      - of the many things in our lives.
- Make no mistake about it,
• There are a lot of necessary things
  o that must be done in order for us to have church.
• Musicians have to practice and prepare.
  o They have to devote themselves
    ▪ to the necessary effort
    ▪ to become good at what they do.
• Likewise, the praise singers
  o have to work to excel at what they do.
    ▪ On off nights, when the rest of you are busy doing something else,
      • they meet up here for practice.
• There is a worship leader that helps facilitate the service.
  o He has to put some thought into that,
    ▪ he has to prepare for each service.
• There is a sound man in the back
  o that gets here most services
    ▪ before anyone else is here.
• There are Sunday School teachers,
  o Kids church teachers,
    ▪ youth teachers,
    ▪ young adult teachers,
  o these folks have to study
    ▪ they have to prepare themselves,
      • they have to work at doing their job in the church.
• There’s preacher that puts untold hours of labor
  o and effort into preaching.
• There are people who clean the church.
  o People who help maintain the church.
• There’s a whole lot of effort that goes into
  o making things run smoothly around here.
    ▪ There are many things that simply must be done.
• But listen to the Pastor tonight,
we cannot afford to get our priorities out of order!
  ▪ The many things must be subordinate
    ▪ to the one thing in our lives that really matters.
• All of the other things that we do around the church
  o depend upon the one thing to make them effective.
• The power, the anointing,
  o the ability to be led by the spirit,
    ▪ all of that relies on the one thing.
• There's something dreadfully wrong with us
  o if we let the many things
    ▪ choke out the one thing in our lives!
• Ben Patterson pointed out the fact
  o that Churches can run without prayer.
    ▪ But he asked a very important question:
      ▪ Is what we are doing worth doing
        o if we can do it without prayer?
• Think about it for a moment.
  o We can have church without prayer.
    ▪ We can play our songs and sing our choruses without prayer.
  o We can preach simple powerless sermons
    ▪ and teach shallow meaningless lessons
      ▪ without prayer.
  o We can do all the busy work of the church without prayer.
• But what in the world are we accomplishing?
  o If the only hope that a lost world has
    ▪ is based on what we can do
      ▪ in and of ourselves,
        o then my friend there is no hope for the lost!
• The point is not that the many things should be neglected.
  o The point is that **we cannot afford to neglect the one thing.**
    ▪ The many things need to be saturated with prayer.
• Everything that we do, as a church,
  o needs to be saturated with prayer.
• Everything that you do in your life
  o needs to be saturated with prayer!
• We live exhausted lives
  o because we think we have to neglect the one thing
    ▪ in order to accomplish the many things.
• What we fail to realize
  o is that we can’t accomplish the many things
    ▪ without the one thing!
• As long as we are doing the many things in our lives
  o out of our own ability and talent and strength,
    ▪ we will always be empty and tired and unfulfilled.
• But, when the many things in our lives
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• are influenced and directed by the one thing,
  ▪ our lives will be transformed.
• All of a sudden there’s purpose.
  ▪ All of a sudden there is fulfillment.
  ▪ All of a sudden our soul is satisfied
    ▪ and our faith is loosed
  ▪ and, instead of seeing our inabilities,
    ▪ we stand amazed at God’s incredible abilities.
• When we make prayer a priority,
  ▪ it changes everything else.
• When we pray,
  ▪ it empowers everything else.
• When we pray
  ▪ our feeble efforts are anointed by the power of God
    ▪ and he who can do all things
      ▪ uses our efforts to accomplish
      ▪ his divine purpose.
  ▪ When we pray!
• The church will grow
  ▪ when we put the one thing
    ▪ back into the primary place in our lives!

God’s Method
• Martha’s main problem
  ▪ was that she felt responsible
    ▪ for making it all come together.
• She is troubled with the many things
  ▪ because they represent to her
    ▪ the things that she CAN do.
• She sees the need
  ▪ and she is doing her best,
    ▪ in her human effort,
      ▪ to satisfy the need.
• She really thinks
  ▪ that, without her effort,
    ▪ the job will not get done.
• The reason that we get caught
  ▪ in the trap of the many things
    ▪ is because we think
      ▪ that the many things are necessary
        ▪ to accomplish our purpose in this life.
• I want to make another point about the many things.
  ▪ The many things are not God’s method.
    ▪ They are our method.
• The business,
• the effort,
  ▪ the multitude of jobs and programs
    ▪ and busy work that we come up with,
  ▪ they represent the very best
    ▪ of our carnal efforts.
• That’s why we can do church without prayer.
  ▪ Because it doesn’t require prayer
    ▪ to play an instrument.
  ▪ It doesn’t require prayer
    ▪ to sing a song.
  ▪ It doesn’t require prayer
    ▪ to teach a Sunday School Lesson.
  ▪ It doesn’t even require prayer
    ▪ to preach a sermon.
• All of these things are meaningful to us.
  ▪ They are how we do church.
    ▪ But they are not God’s method.
• God’s method is people.
  ▪ God doesn’t use a song,
    ▪ God uses a singer or a musician.
  ▪ God doesn’t use a Sunday School Lesson,
    ▪ God uses a teacher.
  ▪ God doesn’t use a sermon,
    ▪ God uses a preacher.
• God uses people
  ▪ and people become usable to God
    ▪ when they pursue the one thing that is needed!
  ▪ I’m sorry sir,
  ▪ I’m sorry ma’am,
    ▪ but God doesn’t need
      ▪ your talents, abilities and skills...
    ▪ God doesn’t need
      ▪ your programs, and plans...
    ▪ God needs you!
  ▪ God uses men and women.
  ▪ God’s chosen instrument is humanity!
• The power isn’t in the many things you do,
  ▪ the power is in the life that is submitted to God!
  ▪ The power is in the life that is anointed by God.
  ▪ The power flows from having been in his presence.
• The one thing isn’t just the most important thing.
  ▪ It is the vital, necessary element
    ▪ that makes everything else work!
• Men are God’s method.
  ▪ The church is looking for better methods.
But God is looking for better men...

- This is why we must pray!
  - The secret to revival isn’t in a new program
    - or a new theme or a new focus.
  - The secret to revival lies in the one thing that is necessary.
  - The one thing that we cannot do without.
  - The one thing that really matters in life!
    - Prayer is what powers the church.
    - Prayer is what makes men usable to God.
    - Prayer is what puts us in the place
      - where he can anoint our lives
  - We MUST pray!

The Choice

- Jesus said:
  - Mary hath chosen that good part,
    - which shall not be taken away from her.
- Mary CHOSE the one thing.
  - That tells me that, in the eyes of Jesus,
    - Martha had a choice.
- Sure the many things needed to be done,
  - but Martha could have chosen
    - to put the one thing first.
- She could have taken the time
  - to sit at the feet of the Master,
    - alongside Mary
  - and listen and learn
    - and be refreshed in her spirit.
- And then, after her time with the master,
  - she could have accomplished the many things
    - that needed to be done
      - with the assistance of her sister.
- The difference is that if she had chosen the one thing first,
  - she would have still accomplished the many things
    - but they wouldn’t have been nearly
      - the burden and trouble to her soul
        - that they became when she put them first.
  - If only she had chosen the one thing.

Close

- The many things are the “busy work” of a distracted soul.
  - The many things are all the things that we do
    - To make up for the fact that we haven’t prayed.
  - Prayer is the only thing that really matters.
• If we don’t get anything else right, this year, we must get this right.
  o We cannot operate without the one thing.
    ▪ Nothing in this church is more important than prayer.
    ▪ Nothing matters more than spending time with Jesus.
    ▪ Nothing matters more than being in His presence.
  o That’s where the power is!
    ▪ That’s where the anointing is!
    ▪ That’s where the blessings of heaven flow from!
  o When we pray,
    ▪ everything else that we do is transformed.
• I want to appeal to you, again tonight,
  o to make the one thing
    ▪ the highest priority in your life.
  o God wants to use you!
    ▪ God wants to anoint you!
    ▪ God wants to bring revival through you!
  o When you pray you make yourself
    ▪ an instrument in the hands of God!
• Above all else,
  o we must become a people of prayer!