

July 17, 2016
Sermon for The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Luke 10:38–42

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Luke 10:38–42 (ESV)

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

There are many fairy tales in which someone is granted three wishes. These fictional stories challenge our imaginations: “What would I choose?” My favorite was to wish for more wishes, but nobody ever seems to think about that one.

In Psalm 27, King David gives his one and only wish: *“One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple”* (Ps 27:4).

David wanted above all things to be in the Lord’s forgiving, gracious presence. What’s your one thing? In today’s Gospel Jesus tells us that the thing for us, above all things, is to listen to Him and receive His life-giving service.

Some would try to convince us that there is a time when we can move beyond being forgiven and receiving our Lord’s service. But just as a branch must always receive nourishment from the vine or die—no matter how green or full of life it appears to be (Jn 15:4–7)—so listening to Jesus and receiving His service, is the one thing above all things. Jesus came to serve us as our Savior; to serve us with His life giving Word.

Martha’s many things brought worry. Martha had much on her mind and agenda. She was going to be a good host and serve her Visitor. Martha’s many things were in and of themselves good things: welcoming Jesus, providing hospitality, and serving a meal.

This is as much as Jesus told the 72 as He sent them out, *“two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.”* Jesus taught that they were to go where they were welcomed and listened to (Lk 10:5–12, 16).

So Martha is welcoming Jesus. Just as she thinks she is supposed to do. But sometimes even good things choke off the work of God’s Word (Lk 8:14).

Martha's wrong priorities caused her to be self-righteous toward her sister and to miss the very presence of Jesus.

I heard a story about a man that had left his church. He was upset because when he took over the Sunday school and got it going well—with new equipment, greater attendance, and excited teachers—all he ever heard from the members was, "Come with us to church." He thought they should have helped him or at least been thankful for what he did, but instead they wanted him to sit around and hear God's Word instead of spending time during worship to prepare for the Sunday School that followed the service. He was doing important stuff while everyone else was sitting in worship. But he was missing the whole point, just like Martha.

Martha forgot who the real Servant is. She thought she was the host and Jesus was the guest. If you remember, earlier in Luke 10 Jesus warned the joyful 72 returning from their successful mission not to rejoice in their seeming success, but in the most important thing—that their names were written in heaven—they were served by Jesus' saving work.

We have had numerous discussions about this in Men's Bible Study; about which comes first, faith or works. And the answer is yes. Rather than quibbling about which came first, we rejoice that our names are written in heaven.

When we are concerned about how others aren't thankful or helpful enough, when we're grumbling and complaining, dragging ourselves around, these are signs that we're not letting Jesus serve us first.

Life seems so much busier, each and every day! We seem to be rushing to so many things. It seems people even rush to vacations and weekend retreats. Some even boast of how busy they are.

Mary's one thing, listening to Jesus, brought eternal blessings. To the world Mary may look lazy. We are tempted to say the same thing. But passively sitting at Jesus' feet and listening is the best thing (v 42a).

The OT commandment to rest on the Sabbath was given by God in order that His people would remember who is the first Servant: God, the Creator (Ex 20:11) and Deliverer (Deut 5:15).

“It will not be taken from her” (v 42b). Contrast this beautiful promise of our Lord with the word snatched by satan in the parable of the Sower and the seed. Luke 8:12 (ESV)

“The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.”

The one thing always for you is Jesus the Servant.

Jesus is here to serve you in His sacred Word, Holy Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). Let Him serve you!

Our hymnal, maroon and red, follow the Eastern and German tradition of calling the Communion service the “Divine Service.”

The point is that worship is first and foremost *God’s* service to us. Going to church isn’t doing God a favor. We go to receive the fruit of Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection— forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation.

Sure, we respond to His grace and forgiveness by confessing and praising His name and serving our neighbor, but first things first. Unless we passively sit at Jesus’ feet and listen, let Him wash us in Holy Baptism, let Him take our sins away and give us His perfect righteousness, let him put His holy body and precious blood into our mouths, we are not His.

The Gradual (from Psalm 145:5-6) puts it in the right order: *“On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.”*

The Bible gives us other examples of getting things in the right order.

The OT Reading: Abraham recognizes the best thing is to be in the Lord’s presence, and he continues to receive the Lord’s blessing in the more detailed promise of Isaac’s coming.

Peter's mother-in-law got it right: she was served by Jesus first (as He healed her), then she served (Lk 4:38–39).

Later, after Lazarus' resurrection, Martha also got it right. First Jesus taught her and raised her brother. Then she served a dinner without complaining about what Mary was doing. (Jn 12:1–2).

What a blessed way to begin a week! To be here, sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His Word, receiving his forgiveness and peace, and gathered at the Table, where Jesus is host and distributes the holy meal He has prepared for you, "*given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.*"

It is yours. Come, receive, and be served by your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Sermon Outline

What is Your One Thing

(Luke 10:38-42)

- I. Martha's many things brought worry.
- II. Mary's one thing brought blessings.
- III. The one thing for you is Jesus who serves.