



Devotion

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

LUKE 10:39-42

³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed — or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Christians often fall into the trap of thinking that it is mainly "bad things" that destroy faith: pornography, greed, alcohol abuse, a perverse pop-culture, etc. But what Jesus shows us in this account is that good things can damage faith too.

What Martha wanted was not bad. She wanted to demonstrate hospitality (an often neglected Christian virtue!) to Jesus and his disciples. Martha wanted to humbly serve her Lord and Savior. That is a wonderful thing. It is an important thing. However, it is not the most important thing.

When we elevate good activities to the level that they get in the way of the most important activity — listening to our Savior's voice — then those good activities actually become harmful to our spiritual welfare. Jesus says that "indeed only one [thing]" is absolutely necessary. We need to have our faith maintained and strengthened through the means of grace.

That is *not* to say we should not care about anything else. It simply means that if we have to choose between giving up listening to Jesus' voice or giving up anything else, it is an easy choice.

So much of elder work and “in-reach” is simply doing what Jesus does here, reminding people “few things are needed — indeed, only one.”

Family time is a good and godly thing. However, if spending family time requires that family to *not* gather with their spiritual family, listening to Jesus’ voice, it might be good to take a hard, honest look at the schedule.

Youth sports are a wonderful thing, allowing your children to use their God-given abilities to his glory. But does anyone really think God would want those gifts to be used at the expense of receiving a *greater* gift — the one thing needful?

A proper understanding of the one thing needful is also important when explaining why we as a congregation track church attendance, and not much else. (We track offerings, obviously, but that is as much for tax purposes and budgeting as anything else.) Every good thing a church would wish to share with its members begins with those members receiving the one thing needful.

Take the forgiveness of sins and the peace of a clear conscience. Christ’s righteousness is received *only* through faith, and faith is created *only* by the one thing needful — the Gospel of Jesus’ voice.

Take an increase in good works... a changed life... a growth in our sanctified living. Those things cannot be forced. Fruits of faith can only grow only when the seed of the Gospel — the one thing needful — is sown generously in the soil of one’s heart.

There are many good and godly things that engage Christians attention and consume their time. But Jesus reminds us that there is one activity that is “better” (his word) than them all. Listening to his voice.

Let us lovingly and gently remind our people of this truth.

Amen.