

THE GOOD PART, WHICH SHALL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY

April 6, 2014

Luke 10:25-42

“One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part,
which shall not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:42

Each of us is prone toward inflated views of our own actions. When seriously engaged in a task, we are tempted to think that it is the most important thing happening. This is not entirely bad. It is often a necessary incentive to strive with all of our strength, to press through to completion.

But we must be warned of serious pitfalls in this matter. Such motivation transforms quickly into diminished views of others' work. This evil is always accompanied by exalted views of self and the work self is doing. These evils are crowned by another: Christ is excluded from our thinking. More troubling is the fact that these evils befall us when we think we are serving Christ. Even our praying strays from “thy kingdom come, thy will be done” to “my will be done.”

This quagmire enveloped Martha as she was serving Christ. Zealous to extend appropriate hospitality, to treat her Lord as an honored guest, she was utterly consumed in preparing a meal. Thus minded, and “needing” help in the kitchen, she prayed that Jesus would send Mary to assist her. But Mary was focused upon what Christ was saying; upon that which Christ knew to be “one thing . . . needful,” upon “that good part” (v. 42).

Mary “sat at Jesus' feed, and heard his word” (v. 39). Jesus chided Martha, and announced that nothing is better than sitting at Jesus feet and hearing His word. Luke includes this incident, which no other gospel writer reported, for it fits well within his immediate context and purpose. Christ sent 70 disciples forth to preach God's Word (vv. 1-12). He addressed the matter of men rejecting their message (vv. 13-24) and answered a self-righteous man's effort to escape his responsibility, telling the parable of “The Good Samaritan” (vv. 25-37). But lest any think that kind deeds are the ultimate duty of man, Luke adds this episode from Mary and Martha, showing that the greatest good is communion with Christ by hearing His word.

1. To hear God's servant is to hear God (10:16, 39, 42; I Thess. 2:13).
2. To hear Christ's word is the only way one might know God the Father (10:22; John 14:6).
3. To hear Christ's word is a privilege of grace which surpasses the privileges of many inspired prophets and kings (10:24; I Peter 1:10-12).
4. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Luke 4:4; Matt. 4:4).
5. To hear God's Word is “the good part, which shall not be taken away” (10:42)

These truths were not in Martha's thinking as she struggled to prepare the meal. Nor was she thinking that Christ provided manna for 40 years and fed 5000 on one occasion and 4000 on another from very small rations. In reality, her frenzy was not necessary, for Christ didn't need her food. But sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing his word is always necessary for everyone.

But alas, how often our failure to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word is due to mere earthly toil and amusement, actions which are not even intended to serve Christ! Let us chose that good part, which shall not be taken away.