

But one thing is needful:

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Bible Text: Luke 10:41,42

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Let us join our hearts in prayer.

Dear heavenly Father, most glorious Lord, we thank thee, Lord, for this hour that thou hast brought. The hour has now come, Lord. Glorify thy name. I pray, Lord, that thy anointing would be upon the message, thy anointing would be upon thy people. Lord, may you give them ears to hear this morning and may they hear your voice to the praise and glory of thee in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

That is a most blessed hymn to me, the one we just sang. I requested it this morning and in her graciousness she played it. I need thee very hour. I think about that often in this life because every hour seems to be filled with evil. Every hour seems to be filled with trepidation and every hour seems to be filled with a lot in this life. One of the verses that was in that song I think it was verse three said that without the Lord everything is vain. We need him in every hour. We need him in every minute. That is the subject of what the Lord has laid upon my heart today. You will find the text in Luke chapter 10 verses 41 and 42.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.¹

Glorious words, words that my prayer today is that every child of God experiences, experiences not in the trials. It is not in the temptations. It is not in the afflictions. The experience that the Bible, the holy word speaks about is when Christ proves himself to your soul. That is what experience is. As the Lord said these words to Martha and he called her name so lovingly, so mercifully, so compassionately, he called her by name to show his love and he said to her, "Thou art careful." The Greek word is anxious. We have spoken before about anxiousness, being anxious for nothing. The Lord knows what we have need of. The Lord knows what is in our day. He knows what is in his will, which we don't know.

¹ Luke 10:41-42.

Martha, you are careful and anxious about many things. And you are troubled about many things.

Can your soul identify with Martha's this morning? There are many things in this life that we are troubled about. We are troubled about finances. We are troubled about health issues. We are troubled about the world, the outlook in this nation. We are troubled about many things. And yet if the Lord doesn't come to our souls and tells us that there is one thing needful. And that word needful means necessary. It means one thing to want or desire. One thing is needful. And Mary has chosen that good part. And the free willers have no ground here. The Arminians have no ground here, for you will see how she chose what she chose. And then you will see how it is sealed by the Holy Spirit. So we will begin in verse 38, just to say a few words about this narrative, about how the Lord brought Martha to this revelation.

This was after Jesus had just spoken that great and beautiful picture of himself as the Samaritan. He had just answered a lawyer who had asked him who his neighbor was. He had just finished a discourse speaking to his disciples. And after all of that he went on his way. But notice everything about our Lord. He was always about his Father's business. And his Father is always about comforting his people. And his Father is always about showing his people a more excellent way. And that is my prayer today, that he shows us a more excellent way.

“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.”²

She invited Christ into her house. Now we know when we invite people into our homes there is anxiousness there, especially for you ladies. There is anxiousness to clean up the home, to get it presentable and you can see that anxiousness in Martha. And she had a sister called Mary. Interesting. When we are introduced to Mary we don't hear anything about Mary. We don't hear anything about her wills or her desires except one. She was brought to the feet of Jesus. This is irresistible grace. Many would believe and even think that Mary had a thought or a choice to do it on her own. And you know as well as I do that is not what we would choose.

You see, Mary loved her sister Martha. Why would Mary cast her sister to the side? Why would Mary do those things that to our eyes look like, wow, she doesn't have any care for Martha? But if that is what you think, you are missing what irresistible grace is. You are missing what the Father through his Son and through the Holy Ghost as a triune Lord does for his people. For, see, Mary everything was blocked out. Everything was secondary to her at this moment.

She sat and when we see that term sat we think of rest. She was at rest at Jesus' feet. And she heard his Word. She was made to lie down in this green pasture. As Jesus entered the home immediately Mary was drawn to his side. Mary sat at his feet.

² Luke 10:38.

How does that take place? You know as well as I do as we go from week to week, as we examine the weeks that were or the days that were, we have convictions. We have sorrow for the times and the things that we have done, the wasteful opportunities that have been there to have time with our Lord, to read the Word of God, to get away from all the worldly allurements and traps. But yet we don't. But yet we have that struggle within us. And there are times it seems like the world, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life seems to take us far away from our Lord's feet.

For some reason that wasn't the case in Mary right now. That reason was him. He drew her to his feet. And she sat and not only sat, but had ears to hear. And we must say something about the posture that the Lord brought Mary to have. She came in humility. She came in humbleness which is an answer, which is a picture of the Lord's work. When the Lord brings us to himself, our posture is one of needing to hear his voice, needing to sit at his feet to learn, not to instruct. We will see the opposite here in a moment. This is truly a work of grace. This is truly a work of a great shepherd who loves his sheep.

And then we come to verse 40.

“But Martha was cumbered about much serving.”³

The Greek word for cumbered means distracted. Martha was distracted, distracted from what? Sitting at the feet of the Lord. What is it that distracts you today? It doesn't take much for us. It could take a bird flying up on the window. It could take a tree falling over there, something jumping out in the water, a butterfly going by. That is the mind of fallen man.

When we sang those words, “I need thee every hour,” they were true and they are true to the heaven born son. Lord, I need thee every minute. My mind is prone to wander. My mind is prone to be distracted and I am. I am very distracted about many things. There is a lot going on in this world today. And it is very distracting. And if left there, we will not be at the feet of Christ. We will be at the feet of the world.

She was distracted about much serving. Interestingly, her distraction was something that we would think would be a good thing. But we can justify this, can't we? Because she is having people in her home. She does have guests coming over, so surely she must be doing the right thing by hurrying around, worrying about every need that they must have, trying to fulfill everything that she believes to be her duty. But the Word of God and the Holy Spirit says to us today she was distracted about much serving.

And, you know, that hits home. Because we can be distracted even in serving. We could believe that we are doing the Lord's work and yet be distracted from the Lord. That is a hard concept, that we could be so caught up with the goal, that we don't see the Lord.

³ Luke 10:40.

How is it that we are distracted? How is it that we are needful for one stronger than we are to bring us to his feet?

Martha was distracted about much serving. And she came to him. She came to Jesus looking for an answer. I correct that. She came demanding an answer. But, see, she had already had the answer to the question. Have you ever done that? Have you ever come to the Lord and told him what your will was?

“Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?”⁴

I thought about that this week because I have read this passage many times. I have got to say. I have asked the Lord many things this week. Lord, do you not care that it seems like this nation is just following right into hell? Do you not care for your people in this nation, Lord? Lord, do you not care for me as I struggle this week with some nagging things health wise? Lord, they are lingering, do you not care? Do you not care for me, Lord? Do you not care for my dear wife who has this affliction that seems to come back more often than I would want? Lord, do you not care?

“Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?”⁵

Do you not care that I am cumbered about many things?

And then usually in that prayer I am telling the Lord what I want. Lord, here is how I see it to make it better. And Martha is no different. You see, she is a child of God, too. And she struggles. She struggles with her old man. She struggles with her fallen nature and she struggles against the same enemies I struggle with today. And she says:

“Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?”⁶

Do you think that sometimes the Lord doesn't care about what we deem to be big things, but yet they are really small things in comparison to him? But then you hear the Lord say, “Despise not the small things.” And then you hear him tell you to cast all your burdens upon him because he careth for you. But that is the voice, that is what Jesus the shepherd says when he brings you to him, to his feet. And remember the posture. He brings you to sit. He brings you to lay down your arms a fighting. He brings you to sit in a posture that is ready to receive that which he has ordained to feed his sheep.

It is a horrible thing. It is a sorrowful thing to sit and even admit that I have these questions at times, that even these questions come, Lord, do you not care? And how silly a question it is that he would leave heaven, come down here, put on the filth of flesh, be in this world of filth, be surrounded by sin, be mocked and ridiculed, lay down his life for his friends, go to the cross and pay every debt and nail every one of my sins on a tree.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

And in my hardness and in my unbelief I cry out with Martha and I say, “Do you not care?”

Are you kidding? How does one say that? Well, he is blinded by sin. He is blinded by his desires. Martha at this moment was blinded by her desires.

“Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?”⁷

Here is my solution for this problem.

“...bid her therefore that she help me.”⁸

Lord, that will make it all go away. That will make the problem better, because if I am miserable, I want someone else to be miserable. Lord, you know, you can fix this. I could use some help right now. It seems to me like that is far more important than anything going on right now.

And now we come to our text. After she tells the Lord what is needful, Martha was convinced she knew what was needful.

“And Jesus answered and said unto her.”⁹

And that is why I said that at the beginning. Do you hear the love in the Savior’s voice? Has he ever spoke your name this way? Has he ever told you that you are anxious and troubled about many things? Have you ever been anxious and troubled about many things? Because that is the only remedy. It is the only remedy to keep us from getting caught up in everything around us and being in despair of everything around us and crying out to the Lord and saying, “Lord, do you not care?”

But the Lord does care and he shows Martha what he cares about. He cares about her. He cares about his dear sheep. He cares about her so much that he doesn't leave her in her thought. He doesn't leave her in her mindset. He comes and he rescues her and he rescues her from herself. And he says, “You know, you are careful and troubled about many things.” And, boy, are we. But her is one thing needful. That is it.

You say, “Well, that just seems so simple. Are you trying to tell me that Christ is the answer to all my concerns?”

I can't tell you that. But he can.

Are you trying to say that Christ has an answer for all my concerns?

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Luke 10:41.

No. I am trying to tell you Christ is the answer to all of your concerns. And I tell you, he does it in such a powerful ... and it is really... I use this term in an awesome always mystical way, because I can't explain it. I can't explain it. In my limited understanding of how I care of the ones that I love, I am nowhere near sufficient for their needs. I can work to put food on the table. I can make sure the doors are locked. I can make sure they have clothing to wear. I can make sure that the cars are running. All of these things and not even come close to what they have need of. I can't touch the soul.

You see, dear ones, we get so caught up with our bodily needs. And isn't that really what it is? Isn't that what it was for her? She is looking on the physical. This is what I need, Lord. I need help. The Lord says, "Yes, you need help, but it is not your body. It is your soul."

One thing is needful. One thing is necessary. And, oh, how Mary has chosen that good thing. Was that to exalt Mary? No. You know what it is to exalt? The faith of the Lord's elect, the faith that is given from above, his faith. Mary has chosen that good part. See, Mary is the second cause. She is not the first cause. We love him, because he first loved us. We have faith because he gave his faith first. We have peace, because he is the Lord our peace. We have hope because he is the Lord our hope. We have all of these things when the Lord brings them so powerfully to our soul, because of him.

How do we know that? Well, this last phrase tells us that.

"...which shall not be taken away from her."¹⁰

Well, Lord, how do you know her faith can't be taken from her? Because he is the author and finisher of it. He is the one who birthed that faith. He is the giver of that faith. He is the giver of the one thing needful. He is the giver of the one thing necessary. And no man can take that away from her. No thing can take that away from her, no circumstance can take that away from her.

Yes, the child of God much like his Lord has meant that the world knows nothing of. Jesus says that meant is to do his Father's will. And the child of God's meant is to do the will of his brother and his Father and the Holy Ghost.

I was reading this week, finishing the life and letters of Thomas Bradbury. Many of you know me. You know he is a favorite author of mine. I believe the Lord mightily spoke through him. And one of the things he said in one of his letters he was writing—and I wrote it down—he said, "I only want Christ. I don't want Christ and something I am to think and I don't want Christ and something I am to feel and I don't want Christ and something I am to do."

Can you say that today, that Christ truly is everything? But I don't want to take his word for it. I want to look at the psalmist this morning. I want to look at what David's Lord said to him and I want to look at it in these three things, that I want Christ thinking for

¹⁰ Ibid.

me. I want Christ feeling for me and I want Christ doing for me. And the first place we will go is in Psalm 40 verse 17. This is where the psalmist David says:

“But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.”¹¹

Do you know what the Hebrew word there for upon is? It is above. The Lord thinketh above me. His thoughts are higher than my thoughts. His thoughts trump my thoughts. For the child of God, it is his way. It is the Lord’s way. And the child of God and the sheep would have it no other way.

“But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh [above] me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.”¹²

This was David’s Lord. He wanted his Lord to think for him. He wanted the Lord’s thoughts to be his thoughts. He wanted the mind of Christ to be his mind, not any mixture, not any mixture of what I think the world needs or what I think the situation needs or what I think my own person needs, but, Lord, what is it that you think? What are your thoughts that are so much above me?

That is a precious place to be brought to. Oh, Lord, I want you to think for me. I want you to be my mind, because my mind is at enmity. My mind has a million things racing through it. And, Lord, I need you to bring my mind to your feet for the one thing that is needful.

The beginning of Ephesians tells us that he:

“...worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”¹³

That is his own will. Oh, Lord, may that though be our thought, that, Lord, everything that you do you have done perfectly and you have done it for thy people.

The second one I told you we would talk about is I want Christ to feel for me. Turn over to Psalm 103. David, once again. One of the blessed things we have been doing in school is going through the Lord in the psalms, what the Lord is, who David’s Lord is in the psalms. You know, I ... David had a lot of ups and downs and you can read them in the ... the psalms just breathe that life. It breathes the life of the child of God the struggles we have and the triumph we have in Christ. And all throughout David’s Lord never left him and never forsaken him. This is the Lord that I desire so much in my sight. This is my beloved. This is my friend. I do want Christ thinking for me and I want him feeling for me.

Look at Psalm 103 verse 13.

¹¹ Psalm 40:17.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ephesians 1:11.

“Like as a father pitieth...”¹⁴

Compassionates, has mercy, has love.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”¹⁵

That is a great work of the Lord’s compassion. That is what I need upon my soul. That is not only what I need upon my soul, that is what I need working in my life, the compassion of Christ, the one who is full of mercy that endures forever, the one whose love constrains me. This I the Lord that I need. I need him thinking for me. I need him feeling for me. And all of these things and all of the fruit of the Spirit is what the Lord brings is child to feel. He feels the gentleness. He feels the hope, the love, the faith. All of those things are felt and what I mean by felt, I mean experienced in the soul.

Remember how we started with the experience? The experience is Christ proving himself to our soul that it is him and him alone. We have such a hard time down here and we continue to fight against Christ being everything, Christ being all in all. Well, what does that mean? Does that mean that I am in total surrender? It does to me. That is what it means that the Lord Jesus Christ is my sufficiency and I have none in myself.

And, finally, turn over to Psalm 57 to see Christ only doing for me. Look at Psalm 57 verse two.

“I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.”¹⁶

Is that your God? Does he perform all things for you? Or is there something still down here that you feel like you have to do? You feel like there is something you have to add to that, something you must do for him. That is a sad life. It is an unfulfilled life and it is a life that has a never ending goal is to do something for him.

“I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth...”¹⁷

And if you want to take the italicized words out of there, go ahead.

“...that performeth... for me.”¹⁸

As the heaven born soul knows that his Lord performs all things for him and he has performed them in those three words.

“It is finished.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Psalm 103:13.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Psalm 57:2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John 19:30.

And what does that mean? That means everything pertaining to this life and everything pertaining to the life to come and everything in between, he has done it. And he has done all things well.

What is the need for this hour? What is the need for every hour? And, you know, you hear a lot of different things. You can listen to a lot of different things and a lot of different messages and everybody had got an idea of what we need. We need this. We need that. We have got to do more of this. We need to do more of that. But for the child of God, it never changes. It never changes because our Lord never changes. And the one thing is needful. The one thing that is always needful is for the child of God to be brought to his feet, to be prostrated at his feet, to be laid low at his feet, to be emptied at his feet, to not have any thoughts of adding to what Christ has done at his feet in total submission at his feet.

Oh, Lord, bring us to those feet this day to show us the one thing needful.

The last psalm I take you to in support of Christ doing all for me, Psalm 138 and that will be verse eight. Oh, how glorious this is.

“The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me.”²⁰

What concerns you today? Everything that we are troubled and anxious about, the Lord will perfect that. He will do it.

“...thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.”²¹

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”²²

That is the Lord I need. I would have to stand with Bradbury and stand with David and stand with every saint that the Lord has brought to his soul, his or her soul to show them that he is the one thing needful. Christ and Christ only, not to be mixed with anything of me or any creature around me. Lord, I need thee every hour.

Oh, Lord, may you please come. Please make us to lie down at thy feet. Please restore our souls. Please, Lord, have mercy upon us.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, glorify your name in the lives of thy dear children for the glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

²⁰ Psalm 138:8.

²¹ Ibid.

²² 1 Thessalonians 5:24.

