

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
July 17, 2016
St. Luke 10:38-42
Two Loves Our Lord Acknowledged
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Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

“Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.” With this invitation we invite our Savior into our homes, and offer him a seat with us at the table. It is more than that, isn’t it? Aren’t we inviting the Lord to be a guest in our hearts? In both cases, with Jesus’ presence our request comes true, “Let these gifts to us be blessed.” Jesus’ presence brings a blessing to the food we eat, and to the Holy Scriptures we inwardly digest.

More than once, Jesus was a guest in the home of his friends in Bethany. “A woman named Martha opened her home to him.” Because she loved her Savior, Martha was busy in the activity of service to her Savior. At the same time because she loved her Savior, Mary, her sister, “sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.” Mary was busy in the activity of listening to God’s Word. These are **Two Loves Our Lord Acknowledged.**

We can almost hear Martha, can’t we? “Welcome, Lord! How was your journey? Are you tired and hungry?” Martha would have given Jesus water to wash his feet. She no doubt offered him the most comfortable couch on which to recline and relax. Nothing was too good for Jesus in her activity of service because Martha loved Jesus. Jesus acknowledged Martha’s love for him, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things.”

We show love for our Savior who loved us and reconciled us to God by the sacrifice of his holy life. We show our love in the activity of service, or ministry. There is so much to do, so much we can do to serve our Lord. We do much of that as we go about our daily vocations. We do much active service in love in connection with our congregation. We show love for God by teaching our children, serving on committees, noticing and taking care of needs with the property or with people. There are all types of busyness and activities to fill time and space in our church home.

We may worry and get upset about many of those things. Why don’t more people care and help out? Why does it seem I am the only one that does anything? Or, as one young pastor recently mentioned as a subject for discussion with his congregation I will be doing as circuit pastor, how do we get people excited to come to things at church?

Our Lord Jesus acknowledged that such activity of service is an act of love for him. There is a lot that needs to be done around here. There is a need for lots of people to do it. We do those outward things because they are necessary. We do them because we love Jesus who loved us and gave himself up for us on the cross. Jesus acknowledges that we get upset and worried about many things because we love him and want to serve him and others to serve him.

Note that Jesus did not rebuke Martha because she had done something wrong. She was doing something good for him because she loved him. At the same time, Jesus did not go along with Martha’s desire for him to rebuke Mary, “Tell her to help me!” Jesus told Martha that Mary “has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.” There are two loves our Lord acknowledged. Martha’s activity of service was good. Even better was Mary’s activity of listening to God’s Word.

Mary was determined to take advantage of Jesus’ visit and do one thing, sit at his feet and listen to his Word, God’s Word. Mary loved her Savior so Mary loved God’s Word. Those two things are inseparable. Mary loved to hear Jesus tell how he had come from heaven to pay for all

of her sins as the Promised Messiah. She loved to hear Jesus talk about God's love for her and how that love translated into love for others, even her enemies. Mary would know because of Jesus' words that when her brother Lazarus would die that Jesus had the power to raise him from the dead. Martha knew the same thing. Jesus' great wisdom and knowledge, the truth of our forgiveness and salvation, was something no one can take away from those who hear it.

The meal would disappear, Martha would put away the dishes, and the activity of service would end when Jesus left. But the power and comfort of God's Word remains in the heart. The activity of listening to God's Word leaves a strengthened and secure faith in hearts. The covenant promise God has made with Gabriel this morning no one can take from him as the Holy Spirit works through the gospel connected to the water of Holy Baptism.

What is the one thing needful for you and your family and for our congregation collectively? Lots of busyness and activity about which we worry and get upset, is not wrong. Neither is it necessary. The one thing needful is for each of you to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to God's Word; in family devotions, personal Bible reading, coming to Sunday school and Bible studies, being regular in worship and at Holy Communion. Our Lord acknowledges our love in the activity of various ministries. He acknowledges as better and needful the activity of listening to God's Word.

When I served in Washington, one of my members on a rare occasion stayed home to prepare a meal for family coming to visit. She listened to the radio service our congregation provided to a local station. You guessed it. The sermon was on Mary and Martha. Not this sermon by the way. The sermon mentioned and I assured her that showing love for her family is an activity of service for her Lord that he acknowledges. Her name actually was Mary and usually she was sitting at Jesus' feet in Bible study and worship in the activity of listening to God's Word.

You do not need to choose between being a Mary or a Martha. Bethlehem does not need to choose between being a Martha congregation or a Mary congregation. We have two loves our Lord acknowledges- the activity of service and the activity of listening to God's Word. Both are good, one is better. One will end. The other will not be taken away from us." Amen. <SDG>