

**As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> 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!"**

**<sup>41</sup> "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (NIV84)**

This week, as I was working on today's sermon, it just so happened that I my Bible reading plan, which I use for part of my daily devotions, called for reading through the book of Ecclesiastes. I was reminded once again, just how true verse 10 of chapter one still is. There Solomon wrote, **there is nothing new under the sun.** Even with all the advancements in technology and other changes that have made our world drastically different than Jesus' world, there is one thing that has remained the same: God's Word has and will always remain the only thing needed in our lives.

Jesus was near Jerusalem—two miles east to be exact, when he stopped by the small village of Bethany. He was invited into the house of a woman named Martha and her sister Mary. They were the sisters of Lazarus, whom Jesus would later raise from the dead. They had invited Jesus over to enjoy a meal and some company. No doubt there were other people in the house and Jesus began to teach God's Word to them. Mary was right there, sitting at Jesus' feet listening to his Word. But there was a lot to get done. Martha was running around frantically, preparing her house for the Lord and getting a meal ready for him. But Martha wasn't getting any help. Mary could have been helping her, but she was just sitting there while Martha was doing all the work! So Martha complained to Jesus, **Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!**

Jesus didn't agree with Martha, however. He responded, **you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is**

**needed. Mary has chosen what is better.** Martha was doing a great and noble thing. She was serving the Lord, preparing a great meal for him. But what she was doing wasn't nearly as important as what Mary was doing. Mary was simply sitting at Jesus' feet listening to his Word. That was the one thing needed. That is what is truly important. As great a deed as what Martha was doing is, it's wasn't needed; and it wasn't as important as listening to Jesus, as Mary was doing. So if Martha was serving the Lord, but it wasn't as important that listening to his Word, what does that tell us about what is important and what is to be the top priority in our lives? Nothing is as important as listening to God and his Word; it is the one thing needed.

And if that's the case, what do you think the devil tries to do? He is going to try to convince you that it isn't really needed. He uses various means to distract you from God's Word, trying to trick you into thinking that other things are more important.

We see it all the time today, just as Jesus saw it in Martha 2000 years ago. People are convinced that they need to do things instead of listening to God's Word; so they make excuses: "I need to work." No you don't. "I need to take my kids to this game or that event." No you don't. "I need to sleep." No you don't. "I need to have a good time and drink on Saturday night, so I just can't get up so early on Sunday morning." No you don't. "I need to go fishing or hunting or shopping with my friends." No you don't. Listening to the Word is the one thing needed, but the devil has so clouded our thinking and our priorities are so out of whack, that we think we need to do many things other than listening to God's Word.

"Pastor," you say, "we already know this; that is why we are here this morning listening to Jesus' speak to us." Good. But Sunday mornings are only the beginning. One hour a week is about .6% of the entire week—that is less than 1% of your week spent with the one thing needed! Notice that Mary was not worshiping the Lord in the traditional sense of the word. She wasn't in the synagogue or at the temple in Jerusalem, but at home. It is like attending her own personal Bible Class, or reading God's Word at home.

Don't get me wrong—worshiping the Lord is very important and it is part of listening to his Word—but it's only one small part. To listen and learn God's Word is part of a worship service, but it is not the sole

focus. Doing what Mary did as the one thing needed is attending Bible study, reading your Bible or devotional book at home. And for many of us here today, that is something that we often find an excuse not to do. “I need to watch that T.V. show.” No you don’t. “I need to workout.” No you don’t. “I need to get some shopping done on Sunday mornings.” No you don’t. “I need to get a bite to eat before worship.” No you don’t. Again, you get the idea. And then there are those of us who do read God’s Word on a daily basis but we are so distracted by things we aren’t fully invested in what we were reading.

There are things that we need to live—eating, drinking, sleeping, breathing, and wearing warm clothes in the cold. And no one has to try to convince someone to breath, eat or drink or sleep or to wear a coat when it’s below zero degrees outside. We do those things because we need to in order to live—but only physically. If you fail to do the one thing needed, you won’t die physically, but you will die spiritually and eventually you will die eternally. So in respect to our spiritual lives, which are far more important than our earthly lives, listening to God’s Word is truly the one thing needed.

And that is all the motivation we need. The one thing we need for eternal life is the God’s Word, which is written down for us in the Bible. It is not the thoughts and opinions of man, but the Words of God, written by man by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As Paul told Timothy, **All Scripture is God-breathed.** And since the Bible is God’s Word we can trust everything found in the pages of Scripture—it contains no lies or deceptions and has no mistakes or errors. As Jesus once prayed, **Sanctify them by truth, your Word is truth.** Because the words of the Bible are God’s Word, they aren’t dead words, but are powerful and effective to bring someone to faith. As the Writer to the Hebrews wrote, **the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.** These words remind us of our verse of the day from Isaiah, **my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

The purpose of the Word? It’s to bring to faith and to strengthen faith. And thus, the purpose of the Word is to save. As Paul said, **I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.** It is the gospel that saves, it is the Word that brings salvation. Peter says the same thing, **you have**

**been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.**

It is through the Word alone that we here about God’s grace. That out of love for us he sent his one and only son into this world to die on the cross in our place and suffer the eternal punishment that we deserve. And by this same grace, he won for us eternal life by his resurrection from the dead. And it is through faith alone in him, apart from any work we have done (also a gift by the Holy Spirit) through which we are saved. This message is found only in the Bible, it is not something man could have come up with—it is utter foolishness to us by nature. And so if we want to be saved, it is necessary for us to remain in the Word—not by the act done, but because it is the means by which the Holy Spirit works and strengthens faith.

Again, listening to God’s Word is the one thing needed because the gospel is necessary to be saved. Without it, no one can be saved as Paul makes this abundantly clear in Romans 10, **how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?... Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.** If that isn’t enough motivation for doing the one thing needed, I don’t know what is. And yet, there are so many more blessings that we receive through the Word.

It comforts us in times of trouble. When troubles and difficulties appear, whether they are health related, because of finances, or some issues you are having with others, we find comfort in our loving shepherd, who knows us by name, and even the number of hairs on our heads. He loves us, cares for us, and provides for all that we need. His Word also encourages us. In times of sickness and death. He comforts us with the sure hope of eternal life by his resurrection from the dead and the forgiveness of sins by his death on the cross. He encourages us by reminding us that he has not left us all alone, but he watches over us from his throne in heaven, and makes all things—both good and bad turn out of the good of those who love him. His Word is life giving water—quenching our thirsty soul and satisfying our need for pure spiritual truth. It is the bread of life—feeding and nourishing our soul to eternal life. It is the light that sheds the light on our sinned-darkened life and shows us the way to eternal life: Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the light.

Martha was concerned about many things. She was running all over the house getting a meal prepared for her Savior. She became **worried and upset**. Don't we get that way sometimes? Don't we get worried or feel anxious about certain things? There are many things that trouble us, that keep us up at night, or little things that cause us to become upset and lead us to lose our temper.

Through the Word we see what is truly important and we understand that the only thing we really need in this life is God's Word. As we place the number one priority where it should be, our worries and anxieties, what troubles us and causes to get upset, don't bother us as much. A week or month, or even a few years later and wonder to yourself, "why did I even care, or why was I so worried about that—how foolish I was!" God's Word removes our worries and quiets our anger over worldly and temporal things. In the end, those things don't matter much because they aren't needed. God in his Word shows us what is needed and God's Word is all we need!

There is nothing new under the sun. Nothing has changed—God's Word is all we need; and the devil still hasn't stopped trying to convince us otherwise. So let us choose what is good—let us choose God and his Word. On a weekly and daily basis, let us choose the one thing needed! For though it alone we learn about Christ and the grace of God. It forgives and saves, it brings to faith and strengthens faith, it comforts and encourages, it removes anxiety and troubles in our lives; it feeds, waters, and lights the way. We eat and drink throughout the day because we need to in order to survive. We sleep 6,7,8 hours or more a day because we need it. But in the grand scheme of things, when it comes to eternity one thing is needed—God's Word. And it will never be taken away from us. We have it in many forms, make use of this great gift on a regular basis for through it, the Lord gives you his grace and love. Amen.