**September 1st 2024 Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Luke 10:38-42** 0735

**Theme: At the Feet of Jesus.**

May the treasure of our Lord and Savior be generously given unto you all, every day of your life until we shall be received into everlasting glory. Amen. Dear Christians: While our Savior dwelt on this earth, it often happened that men would begin to follow Him, becoming His disciples. However, there were others that were called by Him to be disciples, and their answers to Him were uncertain. They would waffle between following Jesus and clinging to the things of this world. Jesus called one and he replied: *“Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” (Luke 9:59)* And another said: *“Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.” (Luke 9:61)* Again, another said: *“I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.” (Luke 14:18)* And: *“I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray have me excused.” (Luke 14:19)* And finally: *“I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” (Luke 14:20)* It is interesting to see all the distractions that cause men to balk at receiving the invitation of Jesus. Anything and everything distracts us and turns our heads away from receiving His love, mercy, and grace. Part of us wants to say that they have legitimate excuses for their behavior, after all one man needs to bury his father, two have made recent purchases affecting their business, and another had just betrothed a wife; who could blame them for turning away, just temporarily from following the Lord? Yet, the distractions never end, do they? After we are done proving our oxen, the field needs to be plowed, after that the seed needs to be planted, the crops need tended, the harvest must come in, and the next year it all needs done again. Before we know it, a temporary excuse has turned into a lifetime of putting it off, delaying it, and we are on our deathbeds with little comfort, little hope, and all we have to show for all those years of distraction is a full bank account, full barns, neither of which do us any good when we approach death. A life full of regret, a life culminating in the realization that there was something far more important that we ignored and delayed seemingly without end.

Another example of this is found in the life of the apostle Paul. After his arrest by the Romans he was brought before Felix, the governor of the region of Caesarea, and Paul spoke with him earnestly, exhorting him to hear and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we hear: *“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” (Acts 24:25)* That time never came, for Felix was distracted, possibly even on purpose, and never again heard or saw Paul. His attention had been grabbed by the worries and cares of this life, and it choked the Word out of him. We hear Jesus say: *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” (Matt. 13:*22) Now thus far we have only spoken of those who have rejected the truth of God, following after only the cares and troubles of this life. However, these distractions do not cease with those who do not believe, but they exist, and distract, also Christians. We are not exempt from putting too much stock into the things of this life, in fact, it is a constant, ever present danger to our souls. Every minute the things of this world compete for our attention and our time, leeching ever more away from following our Lord and Savior, and following rather after our cares and troubles. Our text for today is one example of that very thing, along with a contrasting example of the heart of faith sitting at the feet of the Savior, hearing Him, and receiving from Him that one thing needful. Our text for today is found in the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at verse thirty eight.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most gracious Savior, we humbly confess unto Thee that we are creatures of sin and death. We have turned our attention from Thee to useless and unnecessary things all too often. We implore Thy forgiveness for our wasted time in watching television, in pursuits of fleshly lusts, and in the cares and pleasures of this life. Forgive us, O Lord, and hold not us accountable for these things; give unto us mercy in not giving us our deserved punishment, but rather give us grace to receive Thy precious Word. Give us hearts which yearn and long for the manna of life, the bread which comes down from heaven, even Thy saving Gospel. Give us ears to hear, hearts to understand, and faith which receives salvation through Thy name. Cause that this precious treasure shall never be taken away from us due to our inattention, but preserve it unto us our whole lives through, along with the lives of our children, grand children, and great grand children, for many generations. Grant unto us blessings in this life, which sustain our bodies, but hinder the temptation to trust in these things rather than in Thy name. Help us to choose that good part which shall not be taken away from us, for it is truly the one thing needful. Grant our petitions, O Savior, for Thy sake alone. Amen.

Dear Christians, let us sit at the feet of our Savior, learning that when we do so, we are:

1. **Hearing His Word.** We read verses thirty eight through forty of our text: **read verses here.** The scene which presents itself to us in our text is quite interesting. Jesus had come to Bethany, the home of Mary and Martha, and their brother Lazarus. This is the same family which received the miracle of Lazarus rising from the dead. The timing of our text is difficult to place, for the writer of this Gospel does not give an account of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, and so it is difficult to tell whether or not this scene took place before or after that miracle. In fact the only Gospel writer that gives the account of Lazarus’ resurrection is John. It would seem, however, that John’s account of Jesus eating meat with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, following his account of the miracle, is the same as Luke’s account, though differing a little in detail, showing primarily the anointing of Jesus’ feet by Mary. That likely being the case, the scene in which we view this portrait of our Savior’s life takes on a whole new meaning. Both women in this story portray very different aspects of human life, and the different responses seen within each person, both in dealing with grief and in rejoicing over a miraculous recovery of a loved one. What we have here is somewhat a microcosm of the Christian world in reaction to what things Jesus has done for us. We find Martha in almost a frenzy, cooking, cleaning, rushing around the house, preparing food, refilling cups, sweeping floors, washing dishes, full of care and troubled in her heart and mind, wanting every little thing to be perfect for her Savior, and the Healer of her brother. Many of us can sympathize here with Martha. When we have company over to our house we want them to have a good time, to feel comfortable, to feel welcome, to never lack anything that they might need or want, and sometimes it is almost too much for us. There is too much to do, too much to prepare, too much to handle alone. And that is just how we feel if another man is visiting our home, now imagine if your God and Savior were coming to dine with you, and on top of that the great Physician who had returned your dead brother to you whole and healthy. We would be so overwhelmed that we would run ourselves ragged, just as Martha does in our text. Now we do not condemn Martha for her work, just as Jesus Himself did not condemn her, but rather showed her a better way, a better treasure than that she currently labored for. After Jesus had fed the five thousand, and had departed from them across the sea, the multitude came to him on the other side and thronged Him, wanting to make Him their earthly king, and Jesus said to them: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” (John 6:26-27)* The labor which Martha was engaging in is not in and of itself sinful, but it could become sin if we make acts of service to our Lord and Savior the most necessary thing. We have studied good works and their necessity for a Christian, and indeed they are necessary and even desired by the Lord, but if they become to us a distraction from hearing the Word of Christ, they cease to serve the Lord, but have become rather a hindrance to our salvation, for we must needs hear the Gospel of Christ. It is for our salvation.

Mary on the other hand ignore, for the time being the service and work which were necessary, to hear that which is absolutely necessary. The food could wait, the cleaning could be done later, the dishes could be washed at a later time, but in that moment our Savior spoke, and more than anything Mary wanted to hear the voice of Him who is her Savior, and He which had given her brother back to her. She sat at His feet, like a little child, and heard His Word with joy in her heart. This we hear the Psalmist say: *“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” (Ps. 27:4)* Mary’s desire was to hear the Word of her Savior at the time it was available for her. There are many excuses which could be made in avoiding listening to His voice when it is sounded, but there may come a time when it is no longer heard in a certain place. The very next day after this encounter with Martha and Mary, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, marking the beginning of His final week upon earth. He was to never again speak in the home of Martha and Mary, and Mary had heard Him while she could, but Martha probably lived the rest of her life in regret for having spurned the voice of Christ while it could be heard. The dishes could have waited, the sweeping could have been done later, but she chose rather to be cumbered with the cares of this life and lost something far greater than what she had accomplished on that day. So it is each and every time we assemble together in this place for worship and hearing the voice of our Savior. If we are distracted even within our own minds, we miss what our Savior has to say. What if today were the last time you would hear the voice of your Savior? What if this coming week is the week wherein we enter upon our deaths? Would we not want to enter therein having heard the voice of the Savior one final time? Indeed we would and so our Savior implores us to sit at His feet and hear His Word, thereby:

1. **Receiving the one thing needful.** We read verses forty one and forty two of our text: **Read verses here.** Our Savior gives a soft rebuke here to Martha,for her work was done out of love and thankfulness to her Savior, but in so doing she had given up the one thing truly needful. Her soul, as all of ours, need to hear the voice of our Savior, commune with Him in His temple, be reminded of our forgiveness and salvation, and be assured of everlasting life. Had she known this was her final opportunity to sit at His feet and receive the one thing needful, she likely would have desired rather to hear Him than to cumber herself with the chores of the household. So too, we should be aware that our service, even those done in service to the Lord, do not become to us of greater importance than hearing His Gospel. The one thing needful is not works toward God, but the Gospel which moves to works. Without the Gospel the works do nothing, but with the Gospel they become works out of true thankfulness and service, not because we must do them out of necessity, but because we want to do them for Him. When they happen in this way they do not hinder the hearing and receiving of the one thing needful, but promote that very thing. And just what is the one thing needful which Mary was so joyous to hear? we hear Paul tell us: *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses: blotting out the handwriting of ordinances against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Col. 2:13-15)* The work of Christ in our redemption, the taking away the guilt of our sin, removing the hindrance which was contrary to our salvation is the very thing that Mary received. She did not sit at His feet to hear of her brother’s resurrection, not to hear of Jesus talk about anything else than His Gospel, the one thing needful. What else could we ever hope to receive at His feet? Would we rather hear of anything else, than that our sins are taken, our trespasses purged, our iniquity cleansed? Think of the worst sins you have committed, think of those shameful deeds you have done in the dark, knowing that God saw them, and then think if there is something more important each Sunday than hearing the promises which Christ gives to us all. Often many stumble at Jesus saying that Mary had chosen this, for we do not teach decision theology, but the words of Jesus are proper, for in so far as a man is a Christian, he wills to hear the words of Christ, to sit at His feet and commune with Him. It is a choosing, not a choosing to believe, but a sincere desire to hear the one thing needful, proceeding from faith which is given to us by God. This is borne out by experience and also by Scripture. We heard earlier the psalmist say that he desired only to dwell in the house of the Lord and to enquire in His temple. This is the proper teaching of Scripture, but as we have seen our flesh often gets in the way of this, and distracts us, as it did Martha, and deprives us of the one thing needful. Let us then sit at the feet of our Savior each and every Sunday, hear His Word in wide eyed wonder, receive the one thing needful, even the assurance of sins forgiven and salvation granted through Him whose voice we hear, gently reminding us that the one thing needful will not be taken away from us. Let us praise His name forever and ever. Amen.