

Luke 10:38-42 (Sixth Sunday after Pentecost—Series C)
“A Constant, Comforting, Calming Word”
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT
July 17, 2022

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Gospel Reading from Luke 10:

³⁸Now while [Jesus] was traveling, He entered a certain village and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him. ³⁹And she had a sister Mary, who sat at the feet of the Lord and listened to His word. ⁴⁰But Martha was quite distracted with much serving. So she approached and said, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me alone to serve? Then tell her that she should help me.” ⁴¹And the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴²but one thing is needed. For Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her.”

Martha is certainly very relatable to all of us. She showed Jesus hospitality as she welcomed Him into her home. She was going about being a good Jewish hostess. She was frustrated that her sister, Mary, wasn’t participating, and she told Jesus as much. We can all relate to this and understand Martha because we’ve been there ourselves.

We’ve all been “distracted” from the one thing that is most important, the “one thing needed” as Jesus calls it. What is that one thing? His Word. His Word of both Law (that shows us our sins and our need for a Savior) and His Gospel (that shows us our Savior and gives to us the very forgiveness of our sins). We have been and still do get “distracted” from the reading of God’s Word, from the hearing of His Word preached, and from the quiet listening and study of that one thing needful.

To be distracted means to be preoccupied with the cares of life or the work of life. To be distracted means to be drawn in different ways at the same time by our cares and responsibilities. We see that with Martha there is more to the picture than the fact that she is over-busy with the serving. Jesus says that Martha is “anxious and troubled about many

things.” Martha’s heart and mind seems to be in an uproar, in a commotion, that has to do with a whole lot more things than getting the hospitality right. And we sure can relate to that, can’t we?

What are some things that distract us from God’s Word, which prevent us from hearing and reading that which God gives to us for our life and salvation? Let’s start with the fact that life is just so busy. Seems like there is always something to do or something that we should be doing. We’re always connected to the world via our cellphones. Always something to consider, something that needs our attention, or something to worry about.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount pointed out the broad categories of the things people worry about. “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on” (Matt. 6:25 ESV). Pretty much sums it up, doesn’t it? We worry about our life—from food to clothes, and everything from A to Z. Job, health, finances, national and world situations, community concerns, as well as personal mental and emotional matters that affect ourselves and our loved ones and friends. We are concerned if there is enough time in the day to do what we planned. Pressures at work, school, or at home pull us this way and that. Immediate family needs, extended family concerns. Do we turn left first or go right? How do we figure it all out, scrambling around?

And where does that so often leave us? Like Martha, busily carrying out of life’s vocations and callings, doing the best we can, but not recognizing that we are missing the most important part, the one thing that is necessary. “Seek first the reign of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Martin Luther once

preached, "Thus we hear Christ the Lord telling Martha in the Gospel: 'One thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion. You, Martha, are anxious about many things; you are busy. It is fine to work, to manage house and home, . . . to be a servant, But this will not attain the goal. Mary has chosen and found the right thing to do. She is sitting at My feet and listening to what I am saying. This is proper; this is the right thing. This is the secret, just to hear Me. This alone does it.'"¹

The Word alone, Jesus' Word, given to us in the Bible, is the one thing needed for our lives. No matter what we might be anxious and troubled about—financial difficulties, relationship struggles, upcoming medical procedures—Christ calls us in faith to Himself to His **constant, comforting, and calming** Word.

The Word of God in Christ is a **constant** Word. Isaiah 40:8 promises, "The the word of our God will stand forever" (Is. 40:8 ESV). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35 ESV). His Word is eternal and everlasting even as our God is eternal and everlasting. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8 ESV). He is present in His Word for you day after day after day. "For I Yahweh do not change" (Mal. 3:6 ESV). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8 ESV). Dr. Luther wrote in 1523, "Christ himself says, 'One thing is needful,' i.e., that Mary sit at the feet of Christ and hear his word daily. This is the best part to choose and it shall not be taken away forever. It is an

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 23: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 23 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 247.

eternal Word. Everything else must pass away, no matter how much care and trouble it may give Martha. God help us achieve this. Amen.”² Christ’s Word is **constant** for you.

And that constant Word is also a **comforting** Word. God promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5 ESV). Jesus says to you in His Word, “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20 ESV). In the midst of all the worries and distractions that come about because of your age, your job, your health, your income, your expenses, or national and world situations, the almighty God of heaven and earth is present with you through His Word by the power of the Holy Spirit. And He speaks comfort to you in the midst of life’s struggles, “My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not” (Hag. 2:5 ESV). “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32 ESV). “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and the Grave” (Rev. 1:17–18). You have a Savior from sin, death, and the devil, Jesus Christ. You have a Lord who is for you, not against you. In Christ, your sins are forgiven. Eternal life is already yours because you have a God who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Psa. 103:8 ESV). You have a God and Lord who has made you members of His kingdom by faith through His almighty Word. “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9 ESV).

² Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 14.

Because the Word of the Lord is a constant and comforting Word, it is also a **calming** Word. When we are anxious and troubled, when we are being pulled this way and that way with our cares and responsibilities, it is the Word of God that calms the commotion and uproar within us. Lutherans especially know that Martin Luther based His famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress” on the text of Psalm 46, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. . . . The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress” (Psa. 46:1, 7 ESV). But the Psalm’s concluding verses begin with these words encouraging our calmness because God is with us through His **constant** and **comforting** Word: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psa. 46:10 ESV). What the psalmist is encouraging here is that because of the promises of the Lord in His **constant**, **comforting**, and **calming** Word, you and I are able to “be quiet and relax.” That’s the meaning behind “be still.” I guess we could say, “Chill out.” God’s got this. God’s got you. He has placed you into the hands of His Son, still marked with the nails, guaranteeing that you are right with Him, that your sins are forgiven, and that you have peace with God and His Spirit’s presence throughout the commotion of this life.

The words of the Getty-Townend hymn do a good job of leading us into the **constant**, **comforting**, and **calming** Word of Christ:

In Christ alone my hope is found;
 He is my light, my strength, my song;
 This cornerstone, this solid ground,
 Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
 What heights of love, what depths of peace,
 When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
 My comforter, my all in all—
 Here in the love of Christ I stand.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

The power of Christ is the Word, the Gospel of Christ. It is for you because His grace, love, and forgiveness are for you. Sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His Word preached. Sit at the feet of Jesus and read His Word. Listen to what His **constant** Word of **comfort** and **calm** offers to you in the midst of distractions, anxieties, and troubles of life. Relax. Know that He is God. You are His beloved children. And that His Word is really the one thing needed because it is His Word for you. Amen.