

“One Thing Is Needful”

In reflecting on the story of Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38-42, I was struck by the phrase “one thing is needful”.

Martha was very busy that day. She was doing what she was supposed to do when a visitor was coming; she was cleaning her house and fixing a meal. Hospitality to visitors was a very important part of that culture and she had the Son of God coming to her house! (How do you think you would act?) But even with all her bustling and complaining, Jesus never tells her to stop. All He tells her is that “one thing is needful.” He does not suggest that her life and priorities are messed up. All He says is that ONE thing is needed. We too lead very busy lives, on the job and at home. We run children to ballet and Little League. We baby sit our grand children. We try to squeeze in a little time with our spouse. We are busy, busy, busy! And there is nothing wrong with what we are doing. But Jesus turns to us and says “one thing is needful.” Most of know that our lives need something, but we are not sure what.

What Jesus was telling Martha , and us, is that the one thing we need is to focus our lives on Him. We are running around like the proverbial chicken with its head cut off. Like Martha, we have become so busy that we have lost the focus on why we are busy. We live our lives and try to squeeze in a little God when we can. What Jesus was telling Martha was that if we focus our lives on Him, the busy THAT IS NECESSARY will fall into place. Everything that we might want to make happen may not happen, but everything that MUST happen will. Dinner may be a little late, but our lives will not be as frazzled. Martin Luther said that “If I don’t have time to pray, I don’t have time NOT to pray.” Brother Lawrence, a monk living a life long ago, said that he could worship God while peeling potatoes. There are many ways to keep our lives focused on Jesus. But essential to all of them is making a time each day to be mentally still and open to God. This is generally a time for prayer or bible study, but it may also be a time of vacuuming or commuting or peeling potatoes. Try to live God’s will for your life. Ask yourself WWJD (What would Jesus Do?) God does not want us to be frazzled. Rather, God wants us to sit at His feet and be still some of the time.

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