

THE GOOD PART

38 Now as they were travelling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

Beloved in the Lord,

Life often presents us with choices. The decision making process really begins the moment we wake up in the morning. We must decide what to wear, what to have for breakfast. This morning amongst the decisions to make were whether to come to Church or not. Whether to be part of the service and Garden Fete celebrations. Those of you who have come, made a good decision. I praise God for you and I am certain that you will be blessed.

As we consider decisions, we can divide them into those that have little or no significance and consequence, and then those that have a great significance and carry weighty consequences. Some decisions we make are life changing.

Today's text tells the story of two sisters Martha and Mary. One glorious day, Jesus came to their home to pay them a visit. He is a friend of the family. He came to their house to visit both of them and probably their brother Lazarus. The interesting thing is that only one of the sisters had a blessed experience from this visit. Mary took the time to enjoy Jesus company and so she received the blessing. To use Jesus own words: ***"for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."***

Mary made a conscious decision to sit at Jesus feet and listen to what He was saying. She knew that every word that Jesus spoke was precious. On the other side of the door, in the kitchen we find her sister Martha. Martha is not focused on enjoying Jesus' company, but is preoccupied with being a good host. Being a good host is not a bad thing, but the problem here was that she was so preoccupied with the hosting that she lost sight of the guest.

This can happen if we get too religious, and shift our focus off Jesus and get caught up in the peripherals and paraphernalia. We can get so carried away with the outward things of Church that we lose sight of the one whom we worship, namely Jesus. It happens so often that the going through the motions and the doing of religion replaces true devotion, worship and fellowship. This then often leads to disharmony and disputes and a whole host of problems, that foster a self – righteous and critical attitude.

Martha is a good example of what happens. She had foremost in her mind the role of host. She is so flustered that she has lost perspective, has trapped herself in the kitchen and is missing out on fellowship with Jesus. After a while she begins to think to herself – "Where is my sister Mary? Why is she not helping me? I can imagine she looks into the lounge room and her blood pressure rises. There's Mary, sitting at Jesus feet! That's it! She bursts into the room, wiping her hands on her apron

and has an outburst: ***“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.”***

Martha has so lost it, that she is almost accusing Jesus of not caring that Mary is not helping her! Jesus looks lovingly at her and says: ***“Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”***

As I read these words, it made me think about something Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” – Matthew 6:33

Mary was seeking Jesus first. She determined that sitting at His feet and enjoying some fellowship was more important at that time. Jesus said that she had made a good choice and that the blessing would not be taken away from her.

I began today’s sermon by saying that we are faced with many choices, many decisions have to be made on a daily basis. If we make right decisions we are blessed. I believe that a great guide to making good decisions is in the words I just quoted: ***“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”***

The sad thing is that there are not many who do this. The majority of people seek everything else first, and then maybe God and His Kingdom. The person that does this, does not understand that they are hurting themselves. Not seeking first the Kingdom of God in your life causes you to lose. A person who does not daily feed upon the Word of God is starving his soul and spirit.

Solomon wrote: ³² ***“Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, For blessed are they who keep my ways.***

³³ ***“Heed instruction and be wise,***

And do not neglect it.

³⁴ ***“Blessed is the man who listens to me,***

Watching daily at my gates,

Waiting at my doorposts.

³⁵ ***“For he who finds me finds life***

And obtains favour from the LORD.

³⁶ ***“But he who sins against me injures himself;***

All those who hate me love death.” Proverbs 8:32-36

This is stated so well and so strongly. To love God’s Word and to daily read it and study it is life. To not do so is death.

God has so much to give us. He loves us so very much and He desires to bless us. I believe that some of the saddest words in the bible are the words Jesus spoke as He approached Jerusalem and looked down at the city: ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!”*** Luke 13:34

Wouldn't it be an absolute tragedy to one day stand before Jesus and hear Him say: "I wanted to give you so much. I had a great plan for your life. I desired to bless you and make you strong. I wanted to keep you close to Me. I shed my blood on that cross for you, to wash away your sin. I prepared a room in my Father's house for you; but you would not have it! You rejected me. The world had a greater attraction for you. You relied upon man made philosophy and religions. You stored your treasure where the moths, rust and thieves could get to it, and stored nothing in My Kingdom. I had so much for you, but you rejected me! I stood at the door of your heart and knocked and knocked, but you did not open it. I laid my table for you, offering my body and blood for your forgiveness, but you didn't come.

How tragic and sad would that be?

God has so much to give us. He loves us and everything that He does, says and is summed up in three powerful words; GOD IS LOVE!

But God does not force His love upon us. He gives us a choice.

If we decide to reject Him, to go our way, He will let us. The consequences will then be upon our own heads.

But, if like Mary, we make a good choice, choose the "good part", then God takes the responsibility upon Himself to ensure that it will not be taken away from us. How awesome is that? Praise God!

You can never ever lose, if you place God and His Kingdom at the top of your life.

Jesus said: ***"the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."* John 6:37**

Therein is our security. If we come to Him and trust in Him we cannot lose, because nothing can separate us from the love of God, revealed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord! Nothing! Not even death itself, because Jesus has conquered death with His Resurrection.

Today, on the day of our Garden Fete the invitation is for each one of you to look deeply into your heart, into your life and to consider the question: "Where is God and His Kingdom in my life?"

Are you a Martha or a Mary? Are you seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness or is God just an afterthought in your life. A go to God when things go awry.

Come to Him today. Be assured that He loves you. If you do come, the past will be wiped out and everything will be made new in the blood of Jesus.

Paul wrote: ***"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."* 2 Corinthians 5:17**

Let us choose the good part today and always.

Amen.

Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.