



MLC Sunday
Summer 2021
Luke 10:38-42

These Are A Few of My Favorite Things!

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Amen.” (Ephesians 1:3) God’s Word for our meditation on this Ministry Sunday is recorded in Luke 10. (Read Text) This is God’s Holy Word and so we pray: **“O LORD, whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. Restore us, O LORD, God Almighty; make your face shine on us that we may be saved. Amen.”** In the name of the Word of Life, Jesus Christ, dear fellow disciples of our Savior’s Word.

Julie Andrews sang, *“Rain drops on roses and whiskers on kittens; bright copper kettles and warm wooly mittens; brown paper packages tied up with strings; these are a few of my favorite things.”* Perhaps you agree with Julie Andrew’s character in the *“Sound of music”* and like cream colored ponies and crisp apple strudels; doorbells and sleigh bells and schnitzel with noodles... Whether it’s these or something else, we all have our favorite things. Those things in our lives that make us feel safe and content, those things that just make us feel good.

What are your favorite things? I won’t make it rhyme, but maybe it’s a family cottage or a morning to sleep in. If you’re a child, perhaps it’s all your various sports and extra-curricular activities. If you’re a parent, maybe it’s watching them. Maybe you like to take in the outdoors with hunting, fishing, boating, and I hate to say that it’s coming soon – snowmobiling or downhill skiing. ☺ Maybe it’s just an evening in front of the TV with a hot cup of cocoa or a date with your spouse. Maybe it’s helping others and being hospitable, being the best host you can be. Those are good things. And, of course, I’m sure that each one of us here would say that Jesus is number one in our life – **He** is our favorite thing.

For Martha, I think she would agree. She loved her Savior and when she heard he was coming over, I’m sure she ran back to the house and began to clean the rooms, make the bread, ready the soup, and get clean dinnerware prepared. She loved her Savior so much that she wanted everything to be just perfect for Him, she wanted the house to be just right, the meal to be just right, the company to be just right! Do you think that Martha didn’t want to sit down at Jesus’ feet and listen to him? I think she did. But...but...but, there was so much to be done *first!* In fact, she got so flustered and distracted that she blurted out to Jesus, *“Lord, don’t you even care? Don’t you care that I’m doing all the work while my sister Mary is doing nothing!? Tell her to help!”* The Bible says that Martha was *“distracted”* – literally she was *“divided.”* She wanted to sit with Jesus, but felt the need to get all the other dishes prepared first. What she had a hard time seeing is that only one dish was needed, and that dish was Jesus.

I think a common misconception for people when they read this text is that they are a little too hard on Martha. As though Martha was sinning because she wanted to have a clean home for Jesus...as though Martha was sinning because she wanted the food to be well prepared. The fact is that this was wonderful service to her Savior. The sin is not in preparing a dinner for Jesus – the sin for Martha came in thinking anything was more important than sitting at her Savior’s feet and listening to his Word. The sin came in not recognizing the one thing needful and prioritizing it above all else.

There is a story of a man who went to the Super Bowl and found that the seat next to him was empty. This diehard fan remarked about it to a woman sitting nearby. *“It was my husband’s,”* the woman explained, *“but he died.”* *“I’m very sorry,”* said the man. *“Yet I’m really surprised that another relative or friend didn’t jump at the chance to take the seat reserved for him.”* *“Beats me,”* she said. *“They all insisted on going to the funeral.”* Perhaps that story is not so farfetched for some! ☺ But I think it illustrates the point. The problem often times is not in what we’re doing, but in what we are leaving undone.

The equivalent to listening to Jesus is listening to his Word. If I took a poll of the congregation and asked the question, *“Is reading the Bible a good thing?”* I would bet that every single member would say emphatically, *“Yes.”* A Christian ought to never treat reading the Bible as a chore or be caught saying, *“I*

have to read God's Word!" That would be like a person saying, "Ughh! I *have to breathe!*" or a fish saying, "I *have to swim!*" We'd all say that listening to Jesus in his Word is a great thing, but do our lives **show**, "*It is better than the other good things in my life – including deadlines for work and meetings, etc?*" That is: "*These are a few of my favorite things?*"

Do you see the point? The sin is not in doing those wonderful things that God gives you to do – the family cottage on a weekend, the sports activities, the outdoor fun, the hospitality to your friends and guests, or even with the service you provide for the church. That's wonderful if these are a few of your favorite things. The sin is in our inability at times to drown out those things that pull us away from God and His Word. The sin is in misprioritizing Jesus and the study of His Word in our hearts first and foremost which then gets played out in our lives. The sin is in being worried and upset about the many other things in our lives, neglecting the one thing needful, and like Mary, choosing what is better. Remember that Jesus said it wouldn't be taken away from her! Do we sometimes spend so much time chasing the temporal that our hearts are divided and we forfeit the eternal comfort that Jesus wants us to have? If we're honest, each one of us must say, "*yes.*"

It's interesting to note that as you read this account, you'll notice something about Mary – she's calm...she's silent. But when you read what is said about her, her actions speak volumes: "***Martha had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said...Martha, Martha...only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.***" Someone once said, "*Faith is the highest worship. The posture in which one receives Jesus' greatest service and gifts is not the busyness of human doing, but the stillness of listening to the words of Jesus.*" And that is precisely what Mary chose to do – she chose what is better and it gave her a peace that Martha did not have...not at that moment anyway.

Do you ever wonder what Jesus could possibly have been saying to Mary to give her such peace? What words filled Mary's mind as she listened? Perhaps Jesus was saying, "*Don't let your heart be troubled...trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms...I go there to prepare a place for you. Mary, don't worry about anything...but seek first my kingdom and everything you need will be given to you. Mary, I know that you love me. But I hope you know that I love you even more. You know that I must go to Jerusalem. Mary, there I will be treated like a criminal. I will be beaten and mocked. Mary, I will be murdered there. But, Mary, this is why I came. I came so that you and your sister Martha and your brother Lazarus might have life in my name. I came so that your life that is full of worry and hardship and frustration can be a distant memory when you stand with me by my Father's side in heaven.*" Is it any wonder that Mary sat with rapt attention at Jesus' feet? How could this not be what she chose to do? How could this not be her favorite thing? Imagine Jesus speaking these words to you and to no one else like he did for Mary. What would that be like? Here's the wonderful thing – he has. This is one of his favorite things – to speak to you, his child, through His Word!

When I was a parish pastor, I felt privileged to have what I feel is one of the greatest jobs in the world. I got to stand before God's people that he bought with his own blood, and tell them as though from God himself, "*You are forgiven. Jesus has come to save you. Jesus will come again to take you home...guaranteed.*" I got to see the joy of a new Christian in Bible Information Class when they realize the freedom we have from guilt in Jesus many times with tears in their eyes! I got to hear the excitement in their voices as they talked about living for Jesus and how sitting at his feet in His Word has changed their lives forever! I got to hear the confidence of someone who has been a disciple of Christ his whole life on his death bed...yes, even on his deathbed...yes, especially on his deathbed say, "*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want...surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!*" I got to see God work miracles in every church service and Bible Class when I realized that each one who comes is a miracle of God and God has worked a miracle in their hearts because they are like Mary, who chose what is better, who made Jesus the priority. And now, as a Professor, training the next generation of pastors and teachers, I get to see the incredible gifts God is giving to his church in the coming years. I get to encourage people to consider this incredible ministry as

a pastor or teacher. I get to hear the stories of students who said that a family member or a fellow church member like you encouraged them to consider becoming a called worker and that's why they are at MLC. Maybe one day those stories will be about you. And no one and nothing can ever take those things away from me. These are a few of my favorite things!

And they are also Jesus' favorite things. Be Mary. When you are prioritizing your schedule, make time to sit at Jesus' feet with your fellow Christians. Encourage your friends to come, encourage your family to come, and for the sake of the souls entrusted to your care, encourage your kids to come...and most importantly, make sure that you come. Listen to your Savior and learn from him!

Julie Andrews finished her song by singing, *"When the dog bites, when the bee stings, when I'm feeling sad; I simply remember my favorite things and then I don't feel so bad."* When you're worried and upset about many things...when your heart is divided and your attention distracted; simply remember your favorite thing – to sit at your Savior's feet like Mary...and then you won't feel so bad. May God bless your worship and study of his Word in his name this year – because what he tells you there will never be taken away from you. Amen.

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

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