

Readings: Psalm 27:1-4 Luke 10:38-41 Luke 11:1-4

But the Lord answered her, **“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her. Luke 10:41**

We can see it all. The itinerant preacher with his close followers entering the village. Word quickly spreads and he’s surrounded by the curious, the desperate, the cynics.

Martha’s first thought.

He must need some refreshment, somewhere to rest his feet before the crowd besiege him.

She’s that sort of person. “I can whip something up from what I’ve got here. May have to dash off to the market for some more of that. There’s some other things too ... but I can fit it all in – with some help.

Where’s Mary?

Wouldn’t you know it! She’s parked in there with the men. Right up at the front. Sitting at Jesus’ feet!

I can’t handle this.”

She storms into the room and it all comes out. I need her help in the kitchen. Mary doesn’t need to be here.

With all his love and compassion, and so very gently, Jesus accepts the interruption. Addressing Martha quietly he responds –

“there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Wow! It’s not easy to take correction.

But that’s what we pray for. That God will speak a word -direct our path – put us back on course when we’ve missed the way.

“Need only one thing.”

Someone called Greg McKeown was interviewed on national radio last year about his book, **“Essentialism– the disciplined pursuit of less”**. His ideas must have caught many people’s imagination, if the library wait was any indication. On the wrapper – “An essential read for anyone who wants to regain control of their health, wellbeing, happiness.”

One acknowledgment: “to God, for planting in me this endless wish –and for granting it.”

A few extracts –

“We live in a world where almost everything is worthless and very few things are exceptionally valuable.”

Socrates: Beware the barrenness of a busy life.

“An Essentialist discerns more, so that he can do less.”

“If I could do only one thing with life, what?”

How interesting that from a secular writing there’s raised this really important religious question. One which Jesus addresses.

I hope Greg McKeown, if he hasn’t yet, finds that one thing that is necessary.

Realistic in today’s world?

What about responsibilities – family and home, work and colleagues.

Are we called to leave all this behind? Live under a bridge? Rely on the state?

Maybe when I retire there will be time? Then someone from that privileged class of retirees tells you –with pride – “I’m busier than I ever was before.”

It’s not always necessary to be busy– can sometimes be an escape – stop you from having to think. A trap.

“There is need of only one thing.”

What is the one thing Jesus is pointing us to?

Our relationship with God through his Son, Jesus Christ..The relationship that experienced/nurtured in prayer.

May we be helping and encouraging each other, as members together in the Body of Christ, we discern and go after “the one thing necessary”.

In our own, individual lives and in our life together.

From time to time a church will have to go through the process of reviewing its programs to see that its priorities are right. That time and effort are not being squandered. We entrust our elders with that responsibility.

Of Course we need to work -So how do we manage -

Our work AND the one thing that is necessary.

God doesn’t condemn us when our work day is totally absorbing. He wants us to reach our full potential.

God doesn’t put us in relationships in order to break off our relationships.

It may be that he is calling us to review our busyness. Some of what we do may not be important. When we stop to think, maybe there can be adjustments.

True, yes, for some, the pressures are extreme – no juggling is possible.

There may be gaps when we can do something. Holidays?

eg For us on holiday, with three little boys camped beside a deep lake there was no escape for quiet prayer. Or so we thought. Until we talked about it

and said, hang on – we don't need to be both here every moment. You go off with your bible for an hour. Then I will take my turn. Seems simple, obvious. Why didn't we think of it before? It was almost a revelation! A great blessing. We made some wonderful connections with people that holiday.

What about looking at the Spiritual Growth Ministries' calendar? They offer quiet spaces of various lengths – a day, a weekend, a week. Away from all distractions it's wonderful how mind and spirit concentrate. We may hear something God has been wanting us to know for a long time. Talk to me if you have questions about Retreats. (Display brochure.)

It's the balance between daily responsibilities, (our work), and prayer.

Jesus put it clearly to Martha. Right here and now, while I am close by, while we are here together in your house – “only one thing is necessary”.

- That is, our fellowship together – Your drawing life from me. Your letting me take your burdens. Your being washed clean. Your receiving a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit. Don't let this chance slip through your fingers.

It comes down to finding in ourselves the desire to pray.

The first secret we need to discover is, the desire to pray. The desire to be in touch with the Lord. That desire is prayer – when it becomes prayer as soon as possible. When we really want to, we can salvage a few moments.

“One thing”: Our Psalm today included this verse- verse 4

“One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after;

To live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

The Psalm writer knew it. He'd discovered what was essential. To live in the Lord's presence “all the days of his life.” – His yearning – his prayer.

What do I really want? From God? Or as the question was put to Jesus by the scholar (Luke 10:25) “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

The answer is the same. It hasn't changed.

What must I do? – The answer is written –

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.”

Isn't it true -Praying to the Lord&loving the Lord are the same. You can't separate them. They go together.

egWhen you love someone and they love you, you don't have to explain your busyness. You don't have to explain that the job took all your energy and concentration – that's why you didn't call – until now. But now you are free, have the time, so you can enjoy catching up, sharing all the little details.

Express your love.

(The Song of Songs didn't get into the canon of scripture be accident.)

Love for God, and God's love for us is real, rich, personal.

So when we are very busy, fully extended, don't ask if you've time to pray.

Have I time to love God?

Love involves feelings of tenderness every time you think about the loved-one.

There's a longing at the mere recollection –the glance at a photo.

When we areTogether as a church, we sing Christian songs about how we love Jesus –

"Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me"

On our owntoo we can make our prayers short expressions of affection.

I'm sure you already do – "I love your Lord, and I lift my voice – to worship you..."

I remember a lady in our church telling me some time ago how she is in conversation with the Lord throughout the day.

No, nothing can separate me from my God. Certainly not my activities. Nor other people. Not even death.

If you love God you will find your own way of telling him. Because prayer is like love. It transcends space. It can be lived anywhere.

You don't forget your loved-one because of your activities. There are those moments of recollection, and thanks, joy.

Never let the thought of prayer bring guilt. Jesus didn't come to bind with rules. He came to set us free. To bring life, life more abundant.

But yes, specific prayer times are important – time set aside

The discipline of set times – on our own, with others, at home, after the service. It's part of our ongoing commitment. A reaffirming of our faith and trust in God, in Jesus our Saviour. -

So,how am I, how are you, responding to the Lord's question TODAY?

- Picking up the "One thing that is necessary". Maintaining the connection.

If we don't keep the connection, stay plugged in, we don't receive the flow of power.

Mary's sitting at Jesus' feet – following the one thing that is necessary – isn't an opting out of all responsibility from the day to day activities.

It has to do with being in the Lord's presence. Listening for his voice.

Following his direction in your life. It may be going where you were, with fresh inspiration and power. It may mean new initiatives.

The men of Galilee would have gone on fishing in the lake and attending synagogue if Jesus hadn't been there to say, "Come" "Come and follow me." - that was their - "One thing that was necessary".

In the account of Jesus stopping in at Mary and Martha's – Martha's sitting at Jesus's feet. **Waiting to hear what he will say. Listening.**

This waiting, this not making iron-bound plans, this being silent'some of the most important things we have to learn.

Waiting, listening, spending time in the presence of God, ears tuned.

Then when the time is right God will use us.

Plans: My plans are only important as they synchronise with God's.

What a wonderful God.

We know him through his Son, Jesus Christ. "He who has seen me has seen the Father".

All powerful, yet humble, gentle with the children. Gracious with the women. The one who was overwrought. The one who sat and listened. He accepted them both. Along with their brother they became friends. One of the great miracles was to happen in that family not too long after.

Was Mary's now seeking that one thing necessary, was that in some way to be a preparation for the raising of her brother Lazarus from the grave?

Prayer: Lord, once again, we place ourselves in your hands.

"One thing we ask of the Lord – That we may live in the house of the Lord all the days of our life."

May your will be done. Amen