

CAREFUL AND TROUBLED ABOUT MANY THINGS  
(Luke 10:38-42)

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

This little story can only be found in the Gospel of Luke. Matthew doesn’t record it. Mark doesn’t record it. John doesn’t record it. But Luke, the great historian, pins it as a fact of history. It very well could be that a story of this nature is what John had in mind when he said, “And there are so many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. (John 21:25).

Now, before we begin our study of this text, let me call your attention to the words of Jesus and our subject in verse 41 and 42. Jesus is speaking to Martha, who is in a state of panic. But Jesus says to Martha in a very calm manner, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Jesus is speaking to Martha about priority. Jesus is not speaking to Martha about priorities. Jesus is speaking about the “one thing”. The one priority that “is needful”. And without this one needful priority, all else will lead to distraction, all else will lead to anxiety, and anxiety is a state of uneasiness, a state of worry, which leads to a state of intense fear. Without this one needful priority in place, life for a believer in Jesus Christ can be filled with many troubles and much heartache. Now, the word priority is not a strange word to any of us. In fact, this word is used regularly in our society. And as our society becomes more and more disconnected, and more and more mobile, the more often this word is used.

Books can be found in almost any book store on setting priorities. You can hire professionals to come into your home, or your business, and teach you how to prioritize things. Setting priorities seems to be a very great need in our complex time. However, with all the talk of priority, from what I have read, and from what I have seen, there seems to be a contradiction in the term and the way in which people use it.

When you dig a little deeper into the word, you will find that the word “priority” is simply a form of the word “prior”. Now we all know what the word prior means. It means “before”, “ahead of”, or “preceding”. A priority then is something that comes before everything else. It precedes everything else. It’s ahead of everything else. It is supreme. It is essential. It is foundational. It is preminent. So, when you talk about priority, you are really talking about that one thing in your life that comes before anything else.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, if you understand this meaning of priority (that which comes before anything else), you will understand what Jesus means in verse 42: “that good part”. Jesus said to Martha in verse 41, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.” This is a rebuke, but it’s a sympathetic rebuke. The words of Jesus are filled with concern and filled with compassion. Martha, you are worried about things that really don’t matter. You are troubled deeply by these things. In fact, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. Martha, you have missed the beauty of life – you have lost the joy of living.

In verse 42, Jesus says to Martha, Martha remember this, “ one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good, which shall not be taken away from her.” Mary had that one thing. Martha didn’t have that one thing. What is that one thing? Verse 39, Mary “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.” That’s the one priority that makes life work, that one thing, that good part, is hearing the Word of God.

Our lives are so full of things that are unnecessary. They control us. They ruin our attitudes. They ruin our relationships. They wear us out. What is it that keeps you from hearing the Word of God? What non-priority occupies you on Sunday morning and Sunday evening? What is it that is robbing you of joy?

Nothing is as important as divine truth; it is the priority of all priorities that Jesus set forth. And the Lord takes Mary’s side; this rare opportunity is too rich and too critical to turn to anything else.

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