

**“The Heart of the Matter” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 6 – July 17, 2022**

- I. **Luke 10:41-42** – “<sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”
- II. **Choices, choices, choices...**
  - a. I've told this story before, but I remember reading a book written by a missionary from India.
    - i. He was originally sent out to share God's Word like the 72 as it says in the beginning of this chapter of Luke we are reading today.
    - ii. He went with a ministry partner, but took nothing extra with him – no money, extra clothes or anything – just relying on the hospitality of those who received the message of salvation.
    - iii. After going into the poorest and distant villages for an appointed time, he was called home, and then asked to get more education... in America.
    - iv. He decided to go to the seminary and was sponsored by an American family who gave him room and board.
    - v. The part that really stayed with me as I read about his experience in America was how awestruck he was by our choices...
      - 1. Go to the grocery store and we can pick 50 types of spaghetti sauce or 15 kinds of apples.
      - 2. He looked around in his host family's walk-in closet and he was absolutely blown away by the colors, the sheer amount of different clothing and accessories... the belts, the scarves, the hats, the shoes, the stacks and stacks of pants and sweaters.
      - 3. He had never seen that many different colors – let alone the unbelievable amount of stuff that we collect – when we only use about 5% of it.
      - 4. He had been living with one set of clothing and getting by with almost nothing, and he came to America and could not believe the excess and wealth that we take for granted.
  - b. We are nation full of choices, a nation that values the freedom of choice.
    - i. Yet, we can all agree that having many choices does not always equal freedom – in fact, it can turn into bondage.
    - ii. Consider the average person's day 100 years ago... no electricity, no refrigeration, no indoor plumbing, no grocery stores or convenience stores... no cars... a very simple lifestyle.
      - 1. Their choices were limited by the environment around them
    - iii. Today, we get up and have unlimited options in our day... and what do many people choose?
      - 1. Drugs and alcohol

2. Eating to excess
  3. Buying unneeded things or very expensive toys
  4. Sitting on social media for hours or playing video games
  5. Seeking out unhealthy relationships
- c. I'm not saying that having good things or enjoying life is bad – I'm saying when they become a priority over the best choice... we need to change.
- III. **Jesus always makes us reevaluate our beliefs.**
- a. He is constantly calling into question the social norms, the things we consider important, and the ways of the world around us.
  - b. He is wandering around, just like the 72 He sent out, going to homes that will receive Him...
  - c. When He goes to Mary and Martha's house in our reading today, it was a social norm to treat a guest with respect and hospitality.
    - i. So, Martha starts working diligently to make a meal or whatever else is the right thing to do for an important guest...
    - ii. And Mary her sister sits down and listens to the words of Jesus.
  - d. Is Martha wrong for doing right??
    - i. She chooses to serve, to prepare for a guest, and be welcoming.
    - ii. Some of you are the "host with the most" when it comes to receiving visitors in your home – some even have that spiritual gift of hospitality
      1. Why would this ever be a problem?
    - iii. In Martha's anxious and troubled mind, Jesus tells her to choose something better... receive the gifts that He gives first.
  - e. It's interesting when you look up the word origin of "choice", one of its meanings is "to taste."
    - i. Kind of like tasting something to see if you like it...
    - ii. In Hebrews 6 it says that some have "been enlightened... and have tasted the goodness of the word of God..."
    - iii. In other words, we have more important food than preparing a dinner for an important guest.
  - f. God's Word and the goodness it provides takes priority over all things...
    - i. And then watch and see what happens – all things fall into place
- IV. **We have tons of choices, but one choice is impossible to make.**
- a. This may come as a surprise to some, but we cannot choose God.
  - b. Jesus says in John 15:16, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you."
    - i. God's Word tells us that we are dead in our trespasses (Ephesians 2)
    - ii. No matter how hard we try to climb the ladder of salvation and find God – it cannot happen without God coming down to us first...
    - iii. Jesus, our Savior – both God and man – chose to leave the perfect connection and heavenly splendor for a rescue mission.
    - iv. He chose to live like us... with all our choices... in the dirt, in the pain, in sickness, and the suffering.

- v. Jesus even chose to die for us in order that our trespasses... the death sentence called sin... could be overcome by His work.
    - 1. In His death... and then rising from the dead... we also have life... our spiritual deadness is brought to life by grace through faith – not our own choice, but by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God!
  - vi. Again, please realize that we have nothing to do with our salvation – that is a gift of God and Him choosing us... by grace through faith you are saved as a gift from God! (Eph 2:8-9)
  - c. And now that He chose you for this wonderful life... now that you are set free from the bondage of sin and death... now that you believe in Jesus as your Savior... some choices can flow out of that.
- V. **Through the faith given me by God's grace, I choose the best portion!**
- a. Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, receiving the Word of God in its purest form – right from Jesus Himself.
    - i. The right thing to do – the best choice – is to receive the good gifts of God – the forgiveness of sins, the Lord's Supper – even Baptism... and then we can freely choose to serve and obey Him.
  - b. Can you hear Jesus calling you with compassion and love?
    - i. The other Scripture that uses a double name in a sentence is from compassion and love – like when Jesus looks over Jerusalem and says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered" you up but you wouldn't listen! (Luke 13:34)
    - ii. Martha, Martha – I have a better choice than running around with an anxious and troubled heart... rest in the peace that My Word gives.
    - iii. When you taste and see, you will realize the best portion is My Word.
  - c. I cannot encourage you enough – I cannot try to help you see enough – that God's Word will transform you when you choose to spend time in it.
  - d. As Christ followers, or those who were given faith in Christ as our Savior, we cannot know what it means to be an authentic human being – until we know Christ Himself.
    - i. How can we know Christ until we spend time in the Gospels... following Him around just like His disciples?
  - e. The choice is clear, we get to know Jesus and His Word, and this good portion will never be taken away.
  - f. You might be saying to yourself, "I don't read well..." "I don't have time..." "I'm not a pastor and can't understand all this stuff..."
    - i. Yet, we have so many options for hearing, reading and receiving the Word of God... Bible apps on our phones will read it to us, short YouTube videos summarize books of the Bible, different Bible studies are available... and finally being right where you are today... the whole divine service is Scripture and connected to the Bible.

- g. Yes, we have many choices to make every day, but stop to consider the heart of the matter – God’s Word is the good portion that feeds us with eternal blessings!
  - i. After God chose you, now the choice is yours – but it’s easy to see what’s best. Amen.