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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
September 13, 2015  
16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 119:49-56; James 3:13-18  
Hymns: 294; 366:1-5; 297; 655; (348:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 10:38-42

38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Christian Education Sunday

School is back in session. Teachers are spending the first class days trying to get their students back up to speed, getting them back to where they were when school let out for the summer. It is generally acknowledged that most students haven't been involved in curriculum type of activities to maintain their level of knowledge.

It comes back soon enough because it hasn't been that long since these children learned their lessons. However it is also understood that the longer the lapse of usage the more that is lost, which any of us who have studied a foreign language can relate to.

This is also true with our knowledge of the Bible. The longer we are away from the Word the more we forget. After all, there is so much spiritual knowledge and wisdom in Holy Scripture that even faithful pastors need to be dedicated to their studies to maintain and then grow in their knowledge of Scripture.

There is also a second dimension to spiritual education, and that is the nourishment of our faith. Christian education does more than fill out our intellectual knowledge of Scripture. It also strengthens our faith. As we grow in the knowledge of God and His truth, we also grow in faith. Faith needs to be fed every bit as much as our body. A starved faith will grow weaker and weaker. Faith is sustained by God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through the Word, and not apart from the Word. A soul deprived of the Word will inevitably become weaker, until it becomes barely a glowing ember. While the Lord promises not to extinguish such glowing embers of faith, it is not an excuse for neglecting our faith, and an individual caught up in the ways of the world may indeed find that faith extinguished.

So it is that each year we designate a Sunday as Christian education Sunday. We emphasize not only the return to Sunday school and other instruction for the young, but the importance of the continuing spiritual education of all children of God be they eight or eighty. Throughout our lives we all need to be continually--

### **THEME: Growing in Grace.**

In our text we have a family setting us an example for –

#### **I. Welcoming Jesus into Our Homes**

**Luke 10:38** Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.

We are so familiar with this Bible history lesson that we might find ourselves missing much of great significance by skipping to the end. This simple opening statement is important for us to appreciate. Our Christian education is not something that is confined to church or church run schools. It begins at home. We invite Jesus into our homes just as Martha did so long ago. Now I can almost hear your protest that then Jesus was physically present and had need of a place to stay or a meal to eat. Martha set an example of Christian hospitality to be sure, but we might think that we are not in the same set of circumstances as Mary and Martha were so long ago when Jesus was visibly present on the earth.

It is our failing to recognize that Jesus is every bit as much present in our homes today as He was in the home of Mary and Martha. Martha made sure that Jesus was being treated as an honored guest, and for that matter so did Mary, each in their own way. For them it was a special occasion on a given day that Jesus was with them, and they were thrilled to have Jesus in their home.

Maybe that is where we have our difficulty. As children of God Jesus is present in our home, and we have that plaque on the wall that says Jesus is present and a participant in every conversation, but in reality we often forget that the Lord is present. He may not “visibly” present, but He is no less present because of that. We behave as if He were not present, and not aware of what is going on in our homes. In that way we treat Jesus as an un-welcome guest in our homes, relegating Jesus to a corner of our homes, and a corner of our lives.

As a true and welcome guest in our homes Jesus should always be a central character in our homes. We need Jesus to be in that position in our homes and in our hearts because we need Jesus in so many ways throughout each and every day. We need Jesus as our Savior each and every day. We sin every day. We sin in our **homes** every day. We are not safe from sin in our homes. The devil also follows us right into our homes. He would catch us with our guard down. In some ways we are more vulnerable to sin in our homes. We are vulnerable because we are tired, and run down by the pressures of life, and all that stress that has been bottled up all day comes pouring out in angry words toward our loved ones. We are vulnerable in our homes because finally, finally nobody’s

watching my each and every move. With that faulty thinking we may find ourselves sinning against the very people, who love us most, and we test that love instead of cherishing and nourishing that love.

So we need Jesus as a guest in our homes. He empowers us to overcome the evil in our hearts, to teach us to forgive one another and love one another.

These are important ingredients in our life long Christian education, but there is more for us to learn from these two sisters. From Martha we can also learn about --

## **II. Serving the Lord with our Gifts and Labor.**

Martha put her faith and love for Jesus into action. One might say she set about to do what was natural for her to do. She was busy doing what she would do for any guest in her house. She was doing what she knew best, what she was good at doing.

All these things may be true but there is something more going on when you do what you do to honor Jesus. That is exactly what Martha was doing. This is an important lesson for us in our continuing education. We should learn to identify the gifts and abilities that the Lord has given us, and then strive to use them to the Lord's glory. We should strive to do this in every area of our lives. We should certainly strive to do this in our homes. Our homes should be sanctuaries of faith for ourselves and for our children. Whether we are cooking, or cleaning, or paying the bills, or caring for the children, we learn from Martha to do all to the glory of God.

Again this is one of those lessons we miss when we skip to the end of this lesson. We characterize Martha as being wrong and Mary as being right. Martha was serving the Lord well. She was serving the Lord with love in her heart. She was using the gifts and possessions the Lord had given her to His honor and glory. We should all learn to do this. It is an honor and privilege to serve the Lord, and declares our love for Jesus to the world as well when we do all to the glory of God.

Where did Martha go wrong? She got her priorities mixed up. She didn't put first things first. She looked at Mary sitting there at Jesus' feet, and thought that Mary wasn't doing anything to serve the Lord. Martha wanted help. She wanted Mary to join her in preparing dinner, after all don't women belong in the kitchen? That was society's position far more absolutely then than it is today.

So finally we come to what we would regard as the greatest lesson for us to take home as we welcome Jesus into our homes.

We grow in grace by --

### **III. Taking the Time to Listen to Jesus.**

This is where we focus on the contrast between how Martha was serving the Lord and how Mary was serving the Lord. Wait, was Mary serving the Lord? Some might think that she was being served by the Lord rather than serving the Lord. Certainly she was being served by the Lord, however our first and greatest service to the Lord is to hear Him. He has much to tell us. Jesus isn't like the individual at the party who basks in the glory of being the center of attention. Jesus came to serve not to be served. He came to give His life a ransom for all. He came to show us the path of life. He does this by giving us the Word of life.

The greatest honor we can show the Lord is to realize that what Jesus brings us is more important than anything else in our lives. We need to give Him and His saving truth the proper place in our lives.

**Luke 10:41-42** “And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

We too are often troubled about many things. We can get so caught up in the busy-ness of life that we neglect the one thing needful. In fact it isn't that we don't have enough time. It's that we don't give the Lord our time. We don't take the time to search the Scriptures even though we know that it is in them that we will find the truth that brings eternal life. Maybe we are tired. Perhaps we feel the

need to relax after a busy day. We would rather read a novel or watch a TV program than to pick up and read the Bible. But the Scriptures will restore your soul! Yes, it is good start to have a family devotion, and even those five minutes are lost to us too often, but a continuing education, real growth needs more. I have been told that the average reader can read through the Bible in a year with about 20 minutes or so of reading a day.

Maybe that is an artificial goal. The Lord doesn't say anywhere in the Bible that we need to read the Bible through once a year. However we are encouraged to meditate upon the Word night and day. We are encouraged to look to the Word for guidance, for comfort, for assurance of God's love and deliverance, and to find the truth that sets us free. If we pick up that Book the Lord will give us the one thing needful that cannot and will not be taken away from us! We will be blessed with God's love and forgiving grace that is revealed for us in gospel of a crucified and risen Savior. We will learn that even when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We will be assured that the Lord has a place reserved for us in heaven. We will be assured that the Lord will come again to receive us to Himself that we may be with Him forever!

You say you already know all these things? The Scriptures are still full of many more treasures of God's grace for you. Also the Lord would have you firmly grounded in His truth against all the attacks of the devil, and the deceitfulness of this world. Continue your Christian education for all the days of this journey through life. It will be the greatest joy for your life.

Oh, yeah many wonder if Martha got the point. What do you think? Do you think she set aside the busy-ness of making dinner to give Jesus her full attention? I think the evidence reveals that she did indeed learn her lesson. We find recorded for us in John's gospel a marvelous confession of faith offered sometime later during a time of crisis in Martha's life. When Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus died, when it appeared that Jesus had come "too late" Martha actually made two confessions. First she confessed of Lazarus that which we all are blessed to confess of our loved ones who believed:

**John 11:24** “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

That’s the truth that cannot be taken away from us. And it wasn’t taken away from Martha. It couldn’t be taken away because of truth of Jesus’ response, to which Martha added another confession of her faith in Him.

**John 10:25-27** “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ 27 She said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.’”

That’s the truth the world can’t know. That’s the truth that assures us also of eternal life. That is the truth that we nourish with a continuing Christian education so that we are always growing in grace as we learn of and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God the Holy Spirit grant us the blessing of a real hunger for His Word that we make it our highest priority, and that we may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.