

“Be Still and Know That I am God”

Texts: Amos 8:1-12

Colossians 1:15-28 (Series C. 6th Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 52

Luke 10:38-42

Let us pray: *Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.*

The Lord answered, "Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

Of course, the focus for today's readings is the iconic Martha and Mary story in Luke's Gospel. When we talk to people about the Bible, we can't assume anything. On one occasion, a mother was surprised when I told her that the story of Jesus' birth came from the Bible and that Jesus was an historical person. She said, "I thought it was just one of those stories like, you know, Snow white and Cinderella".

According Catholic Stat, in 1966 there were 22,000 ordained priests in Canada, today there are less than 9000 with the average age of 66 yrs. Lutherans and other denominations are not far behind. There are several factors that contribute this shortage of pastors in ministry. *(But due to time I am not going to go into it today).*

It's a sad fact that even those who attend church regularly there is little regular Bible reading. The National Church Life Survey has shown that about 70 % of Lutherans read their Bibles once a week or less.

In other words, the only time they hear God's Word from the Bible is at worship services on Sundays, that is of course, if they come to church every Sunday. *(And those who come some insist on 10 minutes of sermon!!).*

God has given us his Word to light our way as we walk the path of life. To not read it is like walking in the dark with an unlit lamp. What is it that prevents us from making the Bible a greater part of our lives?

We are distracted by *noise*, and *wants*. The first thing most people say is that the stress and pace of modern life leaves little time for any reading, let alone reading the Bible.

This is nothing new. We heard the story about Jesus' visit with Mary and Martha. This followed immediately after the story of the Good Samaritan that highlighted the way we are to love and serve our neighbour.

Maybe Martha had heard the story as well so she eagerly wanted to serve. When Jesus came to dinner she was putting into practice what Jesus had said and was showing her love for Jesus by cooking one of the best meals Jesus had ever had. She was going out of her way like the Samaritan who made it his business to see that the man who had been beaten and left to die was taken care of.

Maybe she was thinking that Mary had missed the point of the Jesus' Good Samaritan story. Loving your neighbour means action, doing something, going out of your way to help and here was Mary doing just the opposite, sitting in the lounge room, and taking it easy.

Martha comes out of the kitchen all steamed up. *"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me alone to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!"* Jesus answered, "My dear Martha, you are upset over all these details! There is really only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary is taking the time to listen and learn from me." The Logos.... God's Word in flesh!

I believe Luke, the gospel writer, recorded this event straight after the Good Samaritan for a very good reason. Life is busy and especially the Christian life is busy as our faith and love lead us to serve God and others everyday of our lives. Jesus isn't upset about the fact that Martha is busy.

But he is saying that there is a time for being busy and a time for listening to God, reading his Word, giving the Holy Spirit the opportunity to increase our faith and love for even greater works of service to others.

Stephen Covey wrote this. *"People expect us to be busy, overworked. It's become a status symbol in our society - if we're busy, we're important; if we're not busy, we're almost embarrassed to admit it. Busyness is ... a good excuse for not dealing with the first things in our lives."* (*First Things First*, p. 33).

We can become so preoccupied with all the things that make up our lives, even committees and service toward others in the church, that we squeeze out of our daily program a time to spend hearing God speak to us through his Word and talking with him in the quietness of our heart in prayer.

Why should we read the Bible?

Firstly, the Bible is God's powerful Word. I don't see in the life of me how people can claim to be Christians and not read or study God's Word!! His Word is a lamp to guide us along the up and downs of life. In times of stress and difficulty, his Word is there to comfort us.

Every step of the way we are guided by the comforting light of his lamp. God's Word is a lamp to our feet, and a light for our path to guide us through the ups and downs, dark shadows and obstacles along the path of life.

In the Bible we read God's Word.

- ❖ It is the same powerful Word that stilled storms, cast out demons, healed the sick and raised the dead.
- ❖ It is this same powerful Word that speaks to us and calms our fears; comforts us when we are depressed and despairing; forgives us when our conscience hurts; assures us healing power when we are sick and his presence when we are alone.
- ❖ God's Word is more powerful than we often realize. God's Word in the Bible, is his assurance that we are his beloved children and he is our loving Father and he will use all power in heaven and earth to help and protect us.

In Jesus we see God who came out in the darkness and the storm to help us who were his enemies.

Secondly, God's Word is a *hurricane lamp* that guides us through stormy nights. Through him, God has brought us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Jesus told a story in the gospel of (*Matthew 7:24-28*) about two builders who went out to build their dream homes: Any one who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice.

- First one built on sand: the rain came, the stream rose, the wind blew against it and down it went. Because it had foundation. But
- The second built on a rock: the rain came, the stream rose, the wind blew against it. Yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

God speaks to us through the Words of the Bible and reminds us that he will use his powerful Word in our lives today just as he did back then on dusty roads of Palestine.

He speaks to us through the pages of the Bible and promises that he will always be there walking through life with us, that there is life beyond this life. With the lamp of God's Word we can walk through the blackest night and the wildest storms, and find our way safely home... safely to our home in heaven.

We are very busy people aren't we? Despite all sorts of modern technology in our western culture that is supposed to encourage and allow us more leisure time. Yet when it comes to spending time with God we are too busy.

Yet God is always with us, Christ always within us, the Word always surrounds us and all we need to do is breathe consciously in and out with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit on our lips and in our hearts.

I saw a sign once that said, "*Someday is not on the calendar.*" Busy may accomplish earth-bound tasks in the life where *someday* never arrives. But being merely busy *doesn't* draw us closer to Christ, it keeps us away. Let us mindfully, intentionally, deliberately choose *the better part* of the very brief God-given life we have and all that needs doing will truly get done.

In the light of the Word we can see our way through the blackest of sin in our lives that we might think is positively unforgivable. It is the word that assures us that we are forgiven. His death guarantees our place with God in heaven.

May the Holy Spirit gives us all the strength to set time aside each day to hear what God has to say through the Bible. May we, through our reading and hearing of God's Word grow closer to him and more sincere in our faith.

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 10:41-42]

Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path. Amen.

Prayer concerns: *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Wilhelmina Tiemersma, Soo Young, Shirley Walker, Pastor Timothy, Sherly Beller-Kenner, Glenn Cleaver. May they find solace in the love and grace of God. The dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in our world, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

Prayer Lord God of Promise and Presence, release us from the traps of worry, busy-ness, and distraction that we set for ourselves, estranging us from You. Infuse us with the wisdom to choose the better part of the life you have given us to live, the hope of Christ within us. We ask through Jesus, Firstborn of All Creation; and the Holy Spirit, Counselor to our souls; who together with You are One God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- **God Is Here # 526**
- **Dearest Jesus, t Your Word # 520**
- **Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart # 750**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sanaz Shamsabadi

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

n/a

July 17, 2022