

Sermon for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity 2020.

1 Chronicles 28:2-3 & 6-10. Hebrews 12:1-3. Psalm 73:25-end.
Luke 10:38-42.

The Collect: God who has prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding: pour into our hearts such love toward thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

Luke 10:42 'one thing is needful.'

During the week, I thought it would be sensible to fish the bag out from under my bed, containing various things e.g. toothbrush, razor, pyjamas etc. I was anticipating being sent into hospital again due to severe pain; possibly another kidney stone or flare up of the bile blockage I had last year. Well, I'm not writing this from the hospital bed, so, things have improved enough. But, when I looked in the bag I realised that it didn't contain a charger for the telephone. 'One thing is needful?!' What would you consider 'needful' in a similar emergency?

I also watched a programme about the ship the Queen Mary that is now berthed permanently in Dubai as a luxury hotel. It was Valentine's Day and the ship was busy catering for 'lovers' by putting on a themed programme of events and catering. One late middle-aged couple were interviewed sitting in a couple of chairs on the deck. When the man was asked by the woman why he hadn't got her a card, he replied that he couldn't see the need for one when they were (instead) having the full experience (in practice) by being there (enjoying all the luxury). 'One thing is needful?!' I guess the female readers will be thinking something different than the male ones here?

But, surely there was no male/female difference of approach between Martha and Mary? Both sisters had a bunch of very important visitors to feed, whereas the Mary was acting like a visitor herself. The Greek words describe Martha's animated annoyance with her sister and with Jesus. He is caught in the crossfire. Where translated it says 'she went to him and said,' it could be loosely paraphrased: 'she barked at Jesus demanding he tell her sister not to leave all the work to her as if he didn't care.' In other words, there was some energetic resentment on display. Jesus' response

is, as you might expect, masterful; acknowledging Martha's umbrage, he does not deny that there were many things to do. But, (please note well) she had a choice. Martha had a choice. Mary had a choice. Both had a choice. In fact, 'Ancient Authorities' render the Greek: 'few things are needful, or only one.' Furthermore, 'Mary chose the good option.' In fact, it is not just the *good* option, it is the only antidote to manifold anxiety; the **only** option.

Ah, but surely we know this, don't we? We have the benefit of having read the Bible story, and the experience of myriads of powerful preachers who have drawn our attention to the very obvious Lordship of Christ. We know that we should sit down at the Lord's feet and listen to his teaching. But, did we do it? Do we do it? Or, do we get caught up in our own angry or resentful little world; trying to keep the lid on a bubbling cauldron? Having Jesus turn up on our doorstep could throw us into a frenzy of fridge-raiding, Hoovering, shouting at the husband to get the car engine out of the kitchen, and so forth. Is this the right choice, the only choice?

The right choice, the only choice, is to choose to feed on Jesus first. Let us now look at other people and see their failings in comparison to our superior behaviour. 'Mary had chosen the good portion.' Martha had chosen what she had learned to do all her life. There was nothing new in what she did. But, in the presence of Jesus, there are always going to be things we do not know. We must earnestly desire to receive what He has for us. Ps 73:26 'Though my flesh and my heart fail me: God is the strength of my hear, and my portion for ever.' The gift is His, the choice is ours.

To God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost be glory now and forever. Amen.