

Luke 10.³⁸⁻⁴²

³⁸Now 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. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. ⁴⁰But 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."

⁴¹And Jesus answered and said unto her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: ⁴²but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

The first thing we should most certainly say about this passage is that Jesus's rebuke of Martha should not be thought of or utilized as a sexist attack. There is no question whatsoever that both genders are equally gifted at and guilty of pursuing inferior worldly concerns and thus, being distracted by the inferior and hindered in far more needful spiritual and eternal pursuits.

It is clear from Luke's account and Jesus' instruction that the problems with misplaced priorities are many. First, there is waste. We waste time and thought and energy on things that are of little consequence. Translating things of little consequence into things of deep importance impacts our entire world of priorities. Soon we are rich with that which we do not need and poor in that which is most necessary. Second, there is hindrance. Because we spend so much time and thought and energy pursuing that which is not truly needful, we have little or no time or thought or energy to spend on those things that are most needed. If we do happen to devote a little time or thought or energy to the "one needful thing," it is often cursory and distracted. We appreciate the needful thing less than we might otherwise have done. The thing of most consequence becomes boring and less enticing, thus reinforcing our perverted priorities and causing us to spiral higher into the zone of inconsequential desires and actions.

These two problems are obvious. A third might escape our notice. Perverted priorities impact our relationships. We see this in Luke's narrative as Martha becomes, first privately then publicly, critical of Mary. We see the one with perverted priorities attempting to set the standard for everyone else. If everyone else yields to the bullying, then the entire society becomes one of perverted priorities. In addition, others, along with their needs, are more easily and justifiably ignored and devalued. The individual is dehumanized, viewed as a mere tool to be used for another's ends. These three problems are debilitating.

But there is perhaps yet another, more serious problem. There is one priority, indeed, there is One Being who is most needful and most needed in our lives. He is, like Lehi's tree that is symbolic of him, "most desirable above all things" and "most joyous to the soul."¹ When we become distracted by other, inferior priorities, our relationship with Him suffers—the one thing that we can least afford.

Looking into the future, Alma saw the coming of the Son of God. Seeing Him, Alma concluding that though "there be many things to come...there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people."² I was a young man when my life and priorities were dramatically changed by reading this latter passage.

¹ 1 Nephi 11.^{22 & 23}

² Alma 7.⁷

I have never looked back with any degree of remorse at the lesser things I gave up to acquire the “one thing is needful,” “that good part, which shall not be taken away.”

Used correctly, the Season of Lent provides an opportunity for us to re-evaluate our priorities, jettison what is of little consequence, and work to further develop and deepen our relationship with Jesus, the most indispensable necessity of life.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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