

Isn't it amazing how every day has the potential to be a trainwreck kind of day? Misunderstanding between family members leads to communication breakdown, mechanical failures or school costs and you can hear the cash register ringing (ch-ching), issues at work or issues because there's still no work, where are my keys and what happened to my ID (grunt), how could the AC go out today – one phone call/text message and it's like the whole world can be falling apart.

Isn't it also amazing that every time we hear the voice of Jesus in Luke 10 saying, "Martha, Martha," he's caught us again, and we know in our heart of hearts that he's saying our name twice – again. If the one thing Jesus said we need the most continually ends up being the one thing we do the least, should we be shocked when it takes so little to bring the walls crashing down around us? Listening to what Jesus has to tell us is the one thing we need the most and it's the first thing we're too busy for?? Take out all the gas and the oil and the antifreeze, and while you're at it drain the transmission fluid, too – how's your car gonna run?

This is not the kick-yourself-in-the-rear-end,-boy,- I've-been-stupid-for-not-reading-the-Bible Sunday after Pentecost. We're not going to try to make January 1<sup>st</sup> out of July 25<sup>th</sup> and have everyone re-up and reactivate their "I'll read my Bible" resolutions. When Jesus says it's our greatest need and we act as if it's something we don't need at all, then it's shame on you and shame on me. Whether we're talking about our listening to Jesus over the past forty years or the past forty hours, the resolution we need is the resolution of our guilt before God. Our laziness with the scriptures is not *like* saying, *it is* saying, "Jesus, I don't have time for you." And it's not the courteous, "I'm sorry but I don't have time for you right now." It's the blasphemous, "You don't mean enough to me for me to bother to make the time for you."

If I were Jesus, and I heard that from you time and again, day after day, I'd probably want to take just a small slice of my world-creating power and fill your life with trouble and let you die a slow, agonizing death.

The Lord Jesus himself, however, was of the mind to do something quite different. It's what he undoubtedly explained to Mary as she was sitting at his feet. He was of the mind to give up his own holiness to take into himself your sinfulness. He was of the mind to die a slow, agonizing death so that your sins would be paid for and so that you might enjoy life with God that will never end. He was of the mind to resolve all of your broken resolutions and promises and vows and good intentions so he resolved to let nothing stop him from carrying all your sins in his body all the way to the cross. And once he was there, without a single complaint, without any ill will toward you or me or God, he let himself be the target. "Father, punish me for their sins. Don't let your punishment ever come near them."

And that's what God did, and he did it so completely and perfectly and well that the only thing that could happen three days later was that Jesus rose from the dead so that you might hear this: *You are God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved.* You and I have no business being addressed that way by God, but that's the business Jesus took care of for us. Mary, Martha, anyone and everyone who can hear my voice right now – God has chosen you to be his own. He counts you as completely holy because of the life and death of Christ. He loves you dearly. There isn't anything you need as much as you need that, and you have it. What God has written in this book is the equivalent of God splitting open the skies, sitting down at your kitchen table and looking you in the eye and telling you, "I am God and I have rescued you."

So on that basis, as we spend our last few minutes talking about how you are on the inside and how you speak and act on the outside...

### **The Word of Christ Is the Big Difference Maker**

Without trying to sound sarcastic or funny, are you worried sick about tomorrow, are you drinking or smoking pot or popping pills, are you yelling at your parents or screaming at your kids in the name of the Lord Jesus? Are you finding plenty to complain about, are you dead set on not talking to that jerk so-and-so with thanks in your heart to God?

Do people change? Can you change? The good Lord swings open the door of the walk-in closet and there's a beautiful change of clothes hanging there. Take off anger and put on compassion (you look much nicer in compassion), take off haughty and put on humble courtesy, longsuffering patience rather than flying off the handle, being forgiving even when you have a valid reason for being angry, selfless love instead of fixation on self. You can be this person? We can be this kind of people? We can change like that? Listen to the Word: *As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved... As the Lord has forgiven you...* God's Word reminds you of who God says you are. That's how God changes how you act. You are my children – what a difference that makes.

Remember the old Get Smart series, Maxwell Smart. The enemy organization was KAOS. There's a better way to live than with constant chaos in your heart. Let the peace of Christ officiate in your heart, like a referee. Not chaos, not trainwreck, not my life is in pieces – Jesus has put me at peace with God, so I'm also going to be at peace with myself and my neighbor, too. What a difference that makes!

Some of you might enjoy Amazing Grace and How Great Thou Art and In the Garden every week. But look also at what the Bible says about hymns. They're another way that the Word of Christ fills us up on the inside. I don't know that today's hymns are your favorites but I do know they're filling you up with the Word of Christ about Samuel and Mary and the treasure we have between the front/back cover of your bible. That treasure is Christ. What a difference it makes to sing about him.

That every day is a trainwreck waiting to happen is the kind of thinking we want to swat like a bug. I'm not meaning to get commitments from you and I'm not intending to place a challenge before you about getting back into your bible or using a reading schedule. The Lord invites. The Lord who says you are his chosen people, holy and dearly loved, invites you to hear and to read and to believe what you hear and read. Some of the results will be internal, some external, but when you have heard again that he counts you holy in connection with Christ, you'll want to make verse 17 your motto, and Jesus Christ will enable you to do it.