Proper 11/Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Series C)

"One Thing's Needful" (*Lutheran Service Book* #536*)*

This hymn text, *"Eins ist noth, aoh Herr, dies eine"*, Love to Christ, is one of Johann Heinrich Schröder's four hymns which he contributed to the *Geistriches Gesang-Buch*, Halle, 1697. It is a good example of the early hymns of the Pietists.

I received an email the other day featuring "S*hoes that you will need this Fall"*. Now I love shoes, and after seeing those shoes, four different pairs, I *wanted* them—all four pair! Part of me could be easily convinced that I *need* all four pairs of them.

We chuckle at the above statement. I still *want* those shoes, but I don't *need* more shoes, my closet doesn't *need* more shoes, and my credit card doesn't *need* four more charges. And I can only wear one pair of shoes at a time. Our selfish nature and our consumer world would cause us to confuse our wants (a desire or wish to possess or do something) with our needs (what is necessary and required for survival).

In Genesis 18:1-10 we read that Abraham welcomed three strangers and attended first to their physical needs, as was the ancient custom governing strangers and travelers. Water and food were the needs of those who traveled in desert lands. At Abraham's direction, the servants and Sarah, his wife, attended to the preparation of those needs.

In Luke 10:38-42 we read that Martha was the one who invited Jesus into her house. It was Martha who was consumed with household activities while her sister, Mary, sat a Jesus' feet and listened intently to him. Could it be that Martha was practicing needed hospitality, preparing a welcome for Jesus? Could it be that Martha *wanted* to have everything ready for Jesus?

It might seem that the Genesis reading and the Gospel reading are in contrast with each other, but they are not. It was faith in God that led Abraham to welcome the stranger. That faith was the foundation for all else for Abraham. It was faith in Jesus that led Mary to sit at his feet. It was faith that led Martha to invite Jesus into her house.

Jesus is the one thing needful and above all else. The Word of God incarnate, this Christ—this trust—this faith—supports all else in life.

Linda Kempke
Rocky River, OH

One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure
    teach me highly to regard.
All else, though it first give pleasure,
    is a yoke that presses hard!
Beneath it the heart is still fretting and striving,
    no true, lasting happiness ever deriving.
This one thing is needful; all others are vain—
    I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain!

How were Mary's thoughts devoted
    her eternal joy to find
    as intent each word she noted,
    at her Savior's feet reclined!
How kindled her heart, how devout was its feeling,
    while hearing the lessons that Christ was revealing!
All earthly concerns she forgot for her Lord
    and found her contentment in hearing his Word.

Wisdom's highest, noblest, treasure,
    Jesus, is revealed in you.
Let me find in you my pleasure,
    and my wayward will subdue,
Humility there and simplicity reigning,
    in paths of true wisdom my steps ever training.
If I learn from Jesus this knowledge divine,
    the blessing of heavenly wisdom is mine.

Nothing have I, Christ, to offer,
    you alone, my highest good.
Nothing have I, Lord, to proffer
    but your crimson-colored blood.
Your death on the cross has death wholly defeated
    and thereby my righteousness fully completed;
salvation's white raiments I there did obtain,
    and in them in glory with you I shall reign.

Therefore you alone, my Savior,
  shall be all in all to me;
search my heart and my behavior,
  root out all hypocrisy.
Through all my life's pilgrimage, guard and uphold me,
  in loving forgiveness, O Jesus, enfold me.
This one thing is needful: all others are vain—
  I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain!

_____