

John 10 vv.22-42.

While the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the Lord instituted the three great feasts. You can still remember the names of these feasts, I am sure. They were the Passover, Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles.

Later on a few more feast days were added.

Mordecai instituted the feast of Purim, which was in remembrance of the wonderful deliverance of the Jews from the great distress caused by the wickedness of Haman. Haman was hanged upon the gallows and Mordecai became the friend of King Ahasueros. So the feast of Purim was a "national feast day".

Later still yet another national feast-day was added. Listen!

In the last chapter of the Old Testament History, we told you about the Maccabees, ~~KKXXX~~ In those days the Jews were cruelly oppressed by Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria. This wicked prince had made the Lord's temple in Jerusalem into a temple of idols. Read the story once more if you have forgotten.

Now when the Maccabees drove the Syrians out of Jerusalem, they cleansed the temple of all idols and strange altars. Furthermore the damaged and neglected temple was completely restored and renewed. What happy days they were for the Jews. So it is no wonder that in memory of that deliverance a national feast was instituted. They called this feast "The feast of the dedication". Every year this was celebrated two months after the feast of tabernacles. The feast of the dedication was therefore in the winter. In Palestine the winter was a rainy season, and it was then often cold and bitter.

During the feast of tabernacles Jesus had been in Jerusalem. On that occasion he had given sight to the man born blind. You have read about this in Chapter 49.

Now, at the feast of dedication, the Lord Jesus is again found in the temple.

Look, there Jesus walks in Solomon's porch. Very soon He is surrounded by a large number of Jews, among whom are evidently a few Scribes and Pharisees. What do they want? ... Just listen!

"How long dost thou make us to doubt?" they ask. "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."

Now, what do they mean by this? Well, it is as though they say "How long wilt thou keep thyself hidden from us? ... If Thou art in truth the Christ, the long promised King of Israel ... tell us. Say Yes or No ... give a clear answer."

At once the Lord Jesus replies: "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." Then He continues: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you."

You can still remember who are referred to as "sheep", can you not? The sheep are God's children. The Lord's people believe in the Lord Jesus. At times they hear their Saviour's voice in their souls. They know that voice.

"I give unto them eternal life," says Jesus, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

He came down to this world in order to give eternal life to His people. For His sheep, He, as the good Shepherd, was to suffer death. Those sheep are given to Him by His heavenly Father.

Then the Lord Jesus says solemnly: "I and my Father are one." He means: "My Father is the eternal God, but I am also the eternal God. We are one."

Listen now, Jews, here you have an answer to your question. Yes, the Lord Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, is the Messiah indeed. He is truly Israel's great King. Now He says so plainly!

So then, now they know. Are they now satisfied? ... Do they now believe in Him?

Not at all! Just look at their furious faces. Look at their evil glistening eyes. Look at the tight pressed lips and the clenched fists. They are offended at His words. They resent them, stirred up to a fearful pitch of anger, they take up stones. They intend to stone Him. He, this man Jesus, the carpenter's son from Nazareth, dares to say that He and His heavenly Father are one. How dare He! That is blasphemous and must be punished by death. So they reason.

And what does the Lord Jesus do? ... Does He flee in fear? ... Does He tremble for His life? ... No indeed! Just look! ... Unmoved He stands among the angry people who thus reject Him.

"Many good works have I shewed you from My Father; for which of these w do ye stone Me?" He asks them calmly.

"For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that Thou, being a man, makes Thyself God," they reply.

They demand that Jesus take back those words. They want Him to say that He has just told them is not true.

But Jesus cannot do that, for He is in truth the Son of God.

That is why He answers them: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not, but if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

At the sound of these words the Jews advance upon Him. They try to take Him in order to drag Him before the judges. But when it comes to the point, one of them lays hands on Him. They cannot, for there is something which prevents them.

Calmly He leaves the temple and no-one plucks up courage to resist Him. Before they realise what is happening Jesus has escaped and has left the house of God.

Here is a sign of His almighty power. Another proof that He is truly the Son of God.

Luke 10 vv. 38-42.

What a privilege it is children, that most of you have a home where you are cared for lovingly. You go to school, you play and you rough and tumble, but you return again to your home. When it is time for a meal, you go home. When it gets dark in the evening, you go home. When you are in trouble, you run home. There you are safe, and there you are looked after.

Pity those poor children who lose or lack a parental home in their early years.

Everyone, great or small, is in need of a "home" ... I wrote "Everyone needs a home". The Lord Jesus also needed a home to go to. Again and again He was surrounded by hostile Scribes and Pharisees, who sought His life. Frequently He had to be on the alert. They attempted to catch Him in all manner of ways. Hatred, envy, ridicule and contempt, scorn and enmity surrounded Him.

Yet when He left Jerusalem that evening, tired from disputing with the Jews, then there was a home for Him to go to, where He was welcomed with love. That home lay in the little village of BETHANY, a half an hour's walk from Jerusalem.

There lived two sisters with their brother. We will just mention their names because later you will be hearing more about them. Evidently the elder woman's name was Martha, her sister was called Mary, and the name of the brother was Lazarus. Remember them!

Whilst the Jewish people turned further and further away from Jesus, whilst the hatred of the Scribes and Pharisees toward Him increased daily, Martha opened her home to the despised Jesus of Nazareth.

There He could come with His disciples as often as He wished. There He was welcome. There He was looked after lovingly. There He was at home.

Perhaps some of you are thinking: "Yes, but, Mary, the mother of Jesus was still alive surely? Could He not then have gone to His mother?"

Now just listen! ... You are right, that was His home, but Mary lived in Galilee, and when Jesus was in Jerusalem, He could not possibly go of an evening to Galilee. That was much too far. That is why it was so convenient for Jesus to have a home to go to in Bethany, near Jerusalem.

There He was not surrounded by hatred and envy. There He did not need to be on the alert. There He could rest from fatigue. There He felt completely at ease.

These three people were three God fearing people. They believed in Him as the Messiah, as the Saviour.

Look, there He sits in that hospitable home, encircled by His disciples. Lazarus too was most probably present. The Lord Jesus is teaching His disciples. He is speaking to them about the Kingdom of heaven.

Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, has come to sit nearby and she is listening attentively to the words of the Lord Jesus. Oh, her soul thirsts for the preaching of the Saviour.

Housework? ... Oh, she does not give that a thought. If she can but listen, then she is happy, then she forgets everything else.

Her sister Martha however, walks busily to and fro. There is so much to be done. She must get the evening meal ready, mustn't she? ... She wants to

look after her guests royally.

No, boys and girls, you certainly must not think that Martha is a heedless woman, who is not interested in the words of Jesus. On the contrary, she too would gladly have listened. She too loves the Lord Jesus with all her soul. It is indeed through love to Him that she wants to care for Him so well. He must lack nothing in her home. Perhaps she even wanted to produce something extra special for the Lord Jesus. The best in her house is still not good enough for the King of Kings. That is why she is so terribly busy.

But she cannot get the work done all alone. And there sits Mary, her sister, so calmly, as if there is nothing to do. Mary just lets Martha work on. Martha is upset by her sister's behaviour. She considers that it is Mary's duty to help her. Surely that is no way to behave?

From time to time she gives her sister a cross look. All this work makes her nervous and upset. Anger rises up in her heart. Mary just lets her slave and toil ^{alone}. She ought to be ashamed of herself!

At last she can bear it no longer. Crossly and with a voice full of indignation she says to the Lord Jesus: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

Her voice betrays anger. Though she probably did not intend to do so, she in effect blaming the Lord Jesus. She reproaches the Lord Jesus for not sending Mary to help. Surely He can see that she cannot manage? ...

But then she receives an answer which was quite unexpected. The Saviour's voice admonishes her: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful."

It is as though the Lord says: "Oh Martha, you need not wear yourself out for Me. I have not come to be served, but to serve. Martha, come and sit by Me and let your work wait a while. The words which I speak are worth more than the most sumptuous meal. You are slaving and toiling for temporal things, but Mary is wiser. She has chosen that better part. She prefers to listen to things of eternal importance, and in this she is right.

Oh, Martha meant well, but she forgot one thing. She should not work thus for the bread which perishes. It was better that she should seek first eternal things, the words of life.

One thing is needful! ... The salvation of the soul comes before things of time.

Mary realised this at that moment, but Martha did not.

That is why the Lord Jesus speaks thus to her. She learned there, through love, an important lesson. How ashamed she will have been about her sharp words, do you not think so too? ...

One thing is needful!

These words are for you as well. Nowadays everybody is extremely busy. One may study from morning to evening. Another works during the day, but attends evening classes or studies later at home. The girls too are very busy, one with this, another with that.

Time? ... No, there is nobody with time to spare. Each one throws all his energies into the things of this world. Even you, boys and girls, especially those who are older.

* See
manuscript.

If there is a church service on a week evening, you have no time for it. You must get your work done. ... You must study and learn. ... Oh, if you can possibly do so, you stay at home.

And, be honest, you do not want to go.

But ... is it ^{true} ture, what you say? Have you really no time? Oh come! If there is a party, then you have time. If your friend has a birthday, then you have time. If there is something else to do, then you have plenty of time. Then your homework is put to one side. Then your homework is not so important. You are not anxious to miss such pleasures, but a church service you willingly miss. Quite readily in fact.

Perhaps some of you will ask: "May we not have anything then?"

Certainly ... but ... ONE THING IS NEEDFUL!

Your salvation, the good of your never-dying soul is worth more than all parties and pleasant evenings put together, yes, it is worth more than temporal things; it is worth more than your studies, necessary and important though those are.

Set apart an hour of your time to study the Bible. Who knows? God can make it a blessing to your soul. You will not be sorry and you will lose nothing by doing it. Time spent thus is not wasted, for ... ONE THING IS

But most of you do not want this. Most of you will not admit such a thing. No, first study and pleasure, and then ... later ... when you are older, the rest, the salvation of the soul.

The Lord Jesus said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you."

But this is not how most of you act. No, you turn it round. You seek first all other things and then you hope that later, the Kingdom of heaven will be added to you.

Boys and girls, do not make a mistake. God is not mocked. And ... the Lord works through MEANS. The Lord is pleased to use His service for the salvation of sinners. Never forget that.

One thing is needful! ... And that one thing is ... "Forgiveness of your sins, and peace with God." Seek for that peace. Plead for that forgiveness. There MUST be time for that, and there IS time for it too.

Oh, may you come to know the only Saviour, Jesus Christ. He has shed His blood for lost sinners.

May the Lord discover to you your sin and your imponderable guilt. May He make you alive through His word and Spirit.

Here on earth you may consider you have no time to think about it, but in endless ruin there is time indeed. ~~XXX~~ There you will regret eternally those services so willingly passed by.

Cast not from you the only way of salvation! If you die unconverted, remorse will for ever burn into your soul later.

You cannot save yourself, God must do that, but ... use the means which God still grants you, and do not neglect them.

Always remember the solemn word of the Saviour:

"ONE THING IS NEEDFUL."