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Pentecost 9

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Come, Sit For a Spell”

Text: Luke 10:38-42; Genesis 18:1-10a

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The world seems to be going faster and faster every day. Everyone is in a hurry. There's never enough time. Technology is quickly changing, morals are quickly changing, nations are quickly changing. What used to take days takes mere minutes, or even seconds, nowadays. And sometimes we don't want to wait even that long.

*Come, sit at my feet, Jesus says.*

The world seems to be in flames. The coup attempt in Turkey. The Islamic State and its tentacles. Snipers firing at police. Orlando, San Bernadino, Nice, Brussels.

*Come, sit at my feet for a spell, Jesus says.*

There are troubles in your own lives. Difficulties at work, or finding work. Your beliefs are being assailed more and more. Persecution for going against popular opinion. Disease, uncertainty. You're tired and worn.

*Come, sit at my feet and rest, Jesus says.*

There is unrest in your own heart. Sin, guilt, struggle, dismay, wishes, longings, fear, anxiety.

*Come to me and sit at my feet, Jesus says.*

It has been observed that Americans seem to be terribly mixed up. Instead of keeping things where and how they belong, many worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.

*Come, sit at my feet and set things straight, Jesus says.*

Do you get the picture?

Our first reaction to many things is often to do something; take action. Work on it, try to

fix it. Take matters into our own hands.

Jesus says: *Come, sit at my feet.*

Our second reaction is to say: Jesus, you've got to do something about this! Don't you know what's going on? Don't you see? The danger, the decay, the distress?

And Jesus says: *Come, sit for a while.* Sit? Yes. Sit. Do you get the picture, Martha?

There's a time for doing, a time for action, a time for prayer. But first, come, sit at Jesus' feet for a while. Listen to Him. To His Word. For *One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure Teach me highly to regard* (LSB #536 v.1).

So two things here:

**First**, Jesus knows what's going on. He knows better than you. And He's in control. He's on the throne. And He's working. So to come and sit for a while is an expression of faith in that. Confidence. For while from our perspective, our experience, our feeling, everything is going wrong, and to hell in a handbasket, our view of things is far too limited to make right judgments. There is a bigger picture, and whether we know it or not, or whether it feels like it or not, Jesus is ruling all things for the good of His Church; for the good of His children.

And we know that, we learn that, by sitting at His feet and listening. The stories in the Old Testament in particular teach us that truth. For there we hear how God worked and how He kept His promises, over and over again. How He saved His people from Egypt, saved His people from the Philistines, saved His people from the Assyrians, saved His people from the Babylonians, and many others. We hear how He sometimes had to discipline His children, but always in love, always for just a time, and always for His good purpose. That's why St. Paul exhorts us all the time to learn from the past. Come, sit, and listen. Rest and relax. Hear. For the God of the past is the God of the future. What He did in the past He will do in the future. How hopeless did Israel feel and often seem? Yet God's plan for them never failed.

*Come, sit for a while, and listen.*

But not just do we know this from the Old Testament, but also - and even more - from the cross. The cross, where it seemed like everything was going horribly wrong, but where everything in reality was made right. Where God used even death to accomplish His good and gracious will. The horror of Good Friday made the marvel of Easter that much greater for the disciples. So perhaps the horrors of today will cause us to marvel even more, as perhaps we will see the hand of God at work, working good and using these things for His kingdom.

*Come, sit at my feet at the foot of the cross*, Jesus says. I've got it covered. Your sin is forgiven, your death is defeated, and satan - well, he roars loud. *Come and listen to all that I've done*. All that I've done *for you*.

And then **second**, come and listen, because when we act first and act apart from the Word of God, we act wrong. And the example of that we heard today was Abraham.

God had made a promise to Abraham: you will have an heir, a son. And from this son will come the promised Saviour. Abraham waited for a while, but things didn't seem to be working out. He waited some more, but he and Sarah were just getting older. The old biological clock was ticking! Until finally they decided they'd better **do something** to make this promise happen. So Abraham took Sarah's advice and had a child with her servant. *There!*

But then a little later, God came to Abraham and said to him - nope! That's not the child I promised. I told you I was going to give you a child, and I am. You think it's too late. You think you're too old. You think wrong. ***I will come back this time next year and Sarah will have a son.***

Come, sit for a while, Abraham. Listen.  
And you, come sit for a while. Listen.

*Or are you too troubled by many things?* Serving that needs to be done, preparations that need to be made. Work, home, school, family. And God's Word? No time? Oh, I meant to . . . I forgot. I got too tired. I thought I'd get to it later . . .

If that sounds like you, you're in good company. Luther had that problem, too. He said that if he didn't take the time to sit and listen first thing in the day, he never seemed to get back to it. One thing always leads to another. Jesus gets squeezed out of the day.

It's not that serving is bad. It's not. Serving your neighbor, your family, doing your work to the best of your ability, is fulfilling the callings God has given you. And that's good. But as Jesus told Martha, ***one thing is necessary***; one thing's needful. To receive from Jesus. To receive Him.

*Come, sit for a while.*

For you will hear marvelous things. You will hear of His love. You will hear of His forgiveness. You will hear of His care. His Spirit will work through that Word and strengthen you. If all you ever hear and fill your brain with is the bad news on the nightly news casts or from the internet, how do you think you will think? How do you think you will see things? How do you think you will be? But there's another Word, a greater

Word, a greater truth, to give you hope in the midst of a world of trouble.

*Come, sit for a while, and listen to Him. His Word. For **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.***

His Word given and applied to you in Holy Baptism lights the way for your feet, to move into the future with confidence, knowing that joined to Christ in His death and resurrection, you have a future that is safe and secure, that cannot be taken from you. A promise He will fulfill. Just like with Abraham. You don't do it. He's doing it.

And then there is His Word given and proclaimed to you in the Gospel which shines the light of His forgiveness into your heart, to scatter the darkness of sin and fear, for you to walk in the light of His truth and promises. You hear how Jesus took your place in sin and death, that you have His place in light and life.

And then also His Word which makes the bread and wine His Body and Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. That He who washed His disciples' feet, still is. That He who *came not to be served, but to serve* (Matthew 20:28), still is. That He who gave the manna in the wilderness to eat, fed the 5,000, and provided a passover lamb, still is. For here is the Bread of Life for you. The Passover Lamb for you.

For you in the wilderness of this world. For you perplexed and worried. For you oppressed and beaten down. For you troubled by many things. Your Saviour came to be the least for the least, to exalt you to the seat of honor, a seat at His Table, a seat of rest, forever.

*Come, sit for a spell, and listen. **Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.*** Nor from you.

And when the time then comes to act, God will use you, and you will be ready. For you will be equipped with His Word. You will forgive, for you have been forgiven. You will speak the truth, for you will know the truth. You will have mercy, for you have been mercied. You will act in confidence, for you know the end of the story and how it all turns out. The Lamb fights the dragon, and the Lamb wins. *For you.*

So whatever happens today, tomorrow, or the next day - who knows? Things are changing so much and so fast. But one thing does not change: **the one thing needful.** And He has you, and has given Himself to you.

And so whatever happens today, tomorrow, or the next day - how mighty the dragon seems, how loudly the lion roars, how deep the darkness gets - you are safe. Safe in His hands. Safe at His feet.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.