

THE ONE LOG IN THE LOGJAM
Rally Day – September 9, 2011 –Luke 10: 38-42
The Church of the Covenant

Ever wonder why we cannot accomplish what we want in life? Ever wonder why the very things we most desire in our heart never come to pass? Ever wonder why we feel tired and unfocused and stuck in our life? Perhaps it is we are missing the...*“one thing (that) is needful...”*

In people’s lives and in the life of the church often we are stuck and seemingly unable to do the very thing we want, the very thing that the Lord has placed in our heart to do. This becomes frustrating and debilitating and energy-robbing. We focus on small things and never get to the big things. Our lives are so busy we don’t have the energy to do the very thing we ought to do, the very thing that would cause us to have huge and major breakthroughs. There is one thing, one thing, and if we focus on that one thing and address it, it is amazing to me how all the other matters seemingly fall into place as well. The LOGJAM is the 12,000 things that overwhelm us and stop the flow of our lives and the Spirit of God in and through our lives. It appears from the outside to look like Hoover Dam. But if we can find the one thing, the one log in the logjam, and through God remove it, it is downright miraculous what else can happen; all the logs become un-jammed; it takes on a momentum all its own; everything stuck becomes unstuck; everything disempowering and debilitating becomes alive and filled with possibility. The waters of life and creativity and energy and force that have been dammed up for so long break forth and a veritable torrent of power and accomplishment and purpose flows into our life, into the life of our church. It just takes removing the one log in the logjam. We don’t have to remove all 12,000 logs. It just takes one. We become stuck and cemented in place because we think we have to remove all 12,000. But it just takes one. Just “one thing is needful”, not 12,000. Remove that one thing and our lives flow with the waters of the river of life, the living waters of the Holy Spirit. One log in the logjam removed and all the rest of the 12,000 come tumbling down as well...

Practically speaking, I saw this emerge in one church I served. The beautiful historic sanctuary was dreary and unpainted and chipped and cracked, and probably had been so for at least 20 years. I mean, people in their own home don’t do that, why was it so in that church? Well, I discovered there was a whole “back story” to why they couldn’t paint the sanctuary. An incredibly disempowering story that embodied everything they couldn’t do as a church. We can’t paint the sanctuary because first we have to redo the pipe organ. And we cannot redo the pipe organ until we get a smoke detection system for the sanctuary. And we cannot get a smoke detection system because we don’t have the money. And we don’t have the money because we need it for 12,000 other things. And by the way 25 years ago when we repainted the sanctuary it created so much controversy and a number of people left the church because we painted the ceiling light blue (by the way) that we’re afraid to ever do it again. And basically we cannot do anything else, not ministry and not mission, because if we cannot even paint the sanctuary its pretty clear we cannot do anything else either. Its like the old gospel song, “the thigh bone connected to the knee bone and the knee bone connected to the ankle bone” but the story ended differently because those bones were *never* gonna walk around; they were just going to die and stay there, stuck forever in a never-ending loop that had as the moral of the story all the things WE CANNOT DO as a church. So as the new guy I just said, “Let’s raise the money and repaint the sanctuary.” People were stunned. Stu didn’t buy into the old, oft repeated story of what we cannot do. To make a long story short, we raised the money and we painted the sanctuary and that turned out to be the one log in the log jam. And wouldn’t you just know it, the newly painted sanctuary precipitated redoing the pipe organ, and the revamped pipe organ allowed us to buy the smoke detection system, and then everybody was sitting around going –If we can paint the sanctuary and we can redo the pipe organ and

we can buy the smoke detector –all in 6 months—then what can't we do?????? The one log removed from the logjam sent 12,000 logs cascading down the river. The church came alive because it saw everything was possible. And the story that the people believed about themselves –we are a church that cannot do anything—became the story of a people who could do anything with God. Because with God *"all things are possible."* (Matthew 24: 25) Just removing one log in the logjam did that...when the one log is the one thing that is needful.

Our Bible story is the story of Martha and Mary, and of someone trying to do many things and of someone else just doing one thing. It is a story of many things versus *"the one thing that is needful..."* (Luke 10: 42) Jesus is coming to visit. He always is. Martha busies herself with preparation --Cleaning the house, cooking, preparing so everything is just so for the Master's visit. Martha was, as the scripture says, *"distracted by much serving"* (v. 40) I think this should be the motto of most churches and church leaders. Maybe our mission statement shouldn't be "Knowing Christ and making Him known to the next generation", maybe a more honest one would be, "Distracted by Much Serving". And everything that Martha did was wonderful, it was motivated by her desire to make sure Jesus knew that she loved Him. Doing too much, being distracted by the vast array and variety of service is always a Pastor's sin. We wind up trying to do everything and wind up doing nothing very well. And while Martha is so close to Jesus that she can touch Him, she has no peace about this; the Prince of Peace has come, but He notes: *"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things."* (v. 41) Focus on too much and even when Jesus is present we can be anxious and troubled. Mary has chosen to sit at the feet of the Master; to enjoy His presence; to be at rest and peace with the Lord. By contrast to Martha, Mary has chosen to be with Jesus and *"listened to His teaching."* (v. 39) This annoys Martha, and she, getting no JOY from her serving, upbraids her sister and in a way upbraids Jesus Himself and says: *"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?"* (v. 40) Let's see, Martha is anxious and troubled and is resentful in the presence of Jesus. But Mary, as Jesus notes, has *"chosen the good portion"* (v. 42) Mary is listening to Jesus; Martha is engaged in frenetic activity. Jesus says to them both –*"one thing is needful"*. (v. 42) To put it another way, Martha is focusing on the 12,000 logs in the logjam. But Mary is focusing on the one thing that is needful, the one log that will dislodge the entire logjam. Martha is tired, resentful of her work, anxious and troubled. Mary is allowing God to do the one thing that is needful, and is resting in the presence of Jesus.

Which of the two had a major spiritual breakthrough? Which of the two dislodged the logjam in their life?

I think our church has come through a time when we have pulled the one log out of the logjam we have needed to pull. Was it paying off the mortgage? Was it repainting the sanctuary? Was it the ease with which it all happened? Was it that some of these things were told and re-told as the reasons we couldn't do other things as a church? Better stay close to home; better not step out into the community; better not take any risks –Can't afford to, we owe too much, there are too many other projects we have to do first. The story of what we couldn't do as a church stopped us for too long. Now there's a new story –God through us addressed everything in less than a year. The logjam has burst its boundaries. The raging living waters of the Spirit are set free. If we could do all that, what is there that with God we could not do? What large, seemingly impossible task, what other logjam, could we take on and succeed? Could the logjam that are the problems of the city of Washington be addressed? Could the spiritual malaise of America be taken on? Could The Church of the Covenant step out from the comfort of its beautiful church building and be salt and light for its community and world??????

We just have to pull one log out of the logjam, not 12,000. Just one thing is needful. To be sure it is Jesus and His presence in our heart and life. But maybe the one thing that is needful is what Jesus will tell us if we just slow down a bit and sit at His feet. Maybe we become like Mary and cease to be distracted by trying to do so many things and do the one thing the Master will tell us to do, maybe then we could have a huge breakthrough and victory, and by the way, not be tired in the bargain.

At this point I'm supposed to tell you what the one needful thing is. But I'm not going to. This fall we're going to have a congregational survey and a full day of visioning together in October. We're going to sit at the Master's feet and inquire of Jesus –“Lord, what is the one thing that is needful?” We're not going to generate the typical smorgasboard of 12,000 things that need to be addressed, because that's the logjam, not the one log. No. We're going to pray and listen and discern what Jesus is saying, what is the one thing, not 12,000 things, that is needful. And then with the help of God Almighty we're going to pull that log out of that logjam and we're going to stand back and watch what happens.

Beloved, we can do all things through HIM who gives us strength!

Don't be too-busy, distracted Martha, we'll just get tired and cranky. Be Mary, choose the good portion, sit with Jesus, and have Him show us which log to pull. Cause it just takes ONE LOG IN THE LOGJAM....Amen.

**By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**