

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed.^[a] ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

“So I declared on oath in my anger,
“They shall never enter my rest.”^[b]

And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “On the seventh day God rested from all his works.”^[c] ⁵ And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”

⁶ Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, ⁷ God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”^[d]

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works,^[e] just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

He’s No Joshua

Over the past few weeks we’ve seen how Jesus is greater. We started with He’s no Angel and last week we heard He’s no Moses. He’s so much greater. This week it’s, “He’s no Joshua.” What do I mean by that? Joshua is obviously an awesome guy with a great name. He was the one who led God’s people into the Promised Land. He fought battle after battle conquering the land and giving God’s people rest. But this rest wasn’t permanent. This is where the rest that Jesus brings is so much greater. In fact one could even argue that the rest that Joshua provided came with a lot of work. His entire life he spent in battle even leaving behind orders that Israel should continue to conquer the land otherwise the Canaanites would lead their children away. His rest was temporal, physical at best, but the rest that Jesus offers is eternal, spiritual, and yes even physical. He’s no Joshua. He’s so much better.

But we live and act like Joshua during our time here on earth. We work. A 40 hour work week is now seen as the minimum. You go up from there. Some countries have what’s called the 996 workweek. 9am to 9pm – 6 days a week. That’s work! It’s hard to find the rest that we so desperately need. We get stuck in this inescapable cycle of work so we can rest. We work long hours so we can take the vacation that we’ve always wanted, so we can afford those gadgets that help us relax, so we can retire and then rest. But, that rest is elusive and never there. We go on vacation only to return exhausted. Those trinkets enslave us to a mind numbing process, and after retirement we’ll find more work than we had before.

The rest offered and enjoyed by us today is the rest we need. It’s the rest Jesus offers that Israel rejected. This rest is from one who’s no Joshua. He’s Jesus and his rest is greater.

Our lesson starts with, “Therefore, since the promise to enter his rest remains, let us beware that none of you be found to have fallen short.” The promise remains so be careful that you don’t miss out on it. Be cautious that no one misses out

on this rest. The call to caution recalls the congregation in the desert who missed out on the promised inheritance. This missed out because they did not believe. *For we also have received the good news just as they did. But the message they heard did not benefit them.* Good news came to them but it was not benefit. The writer is moving from a physical understanding of rest in the Promised Land to the eternal rest won for us in Christ.

Some of them were excluded not only from the Promised Land but also from heaven itself. The message they hear did not benefit them. They didn't trust that God would provide for them. They didn't trust that God was working for their good. They didn't trust that God would drive out the Canaanites. So they put their faith in action and refused to enter and God swore in his wrath, *"They shall not enter my rest."* The author takes us all the way back to Genesis 2:2 upon the completion of creation it's recorded, *"And on the seventh day God rested from all his works."* The 7th day was established not only for rest from work but also rest with God.

The Sabbath became a day for the Israelites to rest from their labors, not because their bodies needed rest, but more importantly, the needed time to rest in the Salvation the Lord had won for them. It was a day to trust that God will provide. 1/7th of your time was set aside to trust that God would provide then in Psalm 95 he speaks of another rest, *my rest.* This rest is prefigured by the Promised Land as their place of rest with God and by the temple as the place of rest with them. The door of this rest is still open, *"today."*

But many who died in the desert failed to enter this rest. They believed that they weren't good enough or strong enough to take possession of it, and this when God said he would give it into their hands. They were better off wandering, so they rejected the Lord and his rest. They heard his word. They heard his promises and saw his almighty power but refused to believe and as a result they missed out on both physical and spiritual rest.

That can happen to us as well. That's the warning, *"Let us beware."* We can miss out on this spiritual rest that the author of Hebrews warns. It can be lost. It can be lost as we let those things that weary us, take us away from God's Word. It can be lost by assuming other types of rest are more important and we just don't need God's rest anymore. After all, there are so many things to do and so little time to do them all. We fill our lives to the brim with projects and work, and we can't do it all. I suffer from a rare form of FOMO. Fear of missing out. So even when I'm resting I'm trying to figure out what I should be doing.

But we too have to be aware that we can miss out on something even greater than life here on earth. We can miss out on the rest God provides. We come together on Sunday to remember and rejoice in the salvation won for us. This is more than rest from work; this is rest from trying to reach God by our own works. This is rest from the burden of guilt, slavery to sin, and the bondage of death. This is the "Sabbath rest that remains for God's people. *For the person who has entered his rest has rested from his own works, just as God did from his.*

But we'll search for rest in all the wrong places. We'll try to find peace by filling life with so many distractions. We'll numb our mind by binge watching our favorite shows, endless news feeds, or even the search for something more to fill our time. These things are just a crutch or a pacifier until we get to the next thing. These things keep us from thinking about the great problem of sin and ultimately death that hounds us all. We busy ourselves to death, all with the hopes that at some point we'll find fulfillment and joy. All this does is tear us away from family, each other, and most importantly God. That's what idolatry does. It leads us away from God and his voice. It's the idolatry of self. It's the idolatry of experiences. It's all about me and that is deadly. That's not rest at all.

And God's word cuts through it. *"The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* God's Word shreds every excuse and leaves us standing bare before God. It should make us uncomfortable before the Almighty. This means our sins are revealed, the thoughts and intentions of the heart. If your works aren't done out of love for God but rather because you want to earn a place in heaven, that's selfish. If you're working instead of finding rest in God's work then you're not listening. *"And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to*

the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” God sees everything there’s nothing we’re doing wrong that He doesn’t notice. We’re exposed and we will have to give an account. The Israelites who rejected God’s offer of rest perished in were buried beneath the sand. What will happen to us?

Some might see God as a strict judge and that’s often how Hebrews 4:12 is used but I’d rather you see the skilled surgeon with a sharp knife operating on human hearts. God’s Word must untangle us from the deception of sin and unbelief to deal with the problem of hard heartedness. He’s separating a Siamese twin separating soul and spirit, joints and marrow. God is skillfully separating the sinful nature from the new man and this is done not with a knife but with his son.

Jesus took our load of sin from our shoulders. He wants us to rest so much so that he didn’t rest. He carried our cross. He suffered our death. And on the 7th day he rested from all his work. His work was over on Good Friday when he called out, “It is finished.” The debt we owed was done. The curse of sin was broken. And on Sunday the day we worship he rose from the dead and brought entry into the 8th day. He took humanity into the new creation. We now rest from our work on the day he rose from death. No longer do our sins weigh us down. We rest in his promises. We are no longer lost and condemned. We are forgiven. In God’s Word we’ll hear the Law which cuts and condemns but we’ll also hear the Good News, the promise that this rest is yours today.

This is the rest that Jesus brings, *“For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.”* And here we rest from our works, just as God did his. This rest is yours today. Jesus comes to us today and reminds us of his work, his promise. He takes us to the font and there reminds us that we are his children we can rest secure in the fact that just as we were buried with Christ in our baptism so also we will be raised with him. He then takes us to the altar reminds us in the Lord’s Supper that this bread and wine are indeed his body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. Then in his Word he reminds us of the rest now won for us. The rest we now enjoy.

The Promised Land is now the kingdom of God. The new Sabbath is “today” and the rest for God’s people is now. God invites us into his loving arms forgiving our sin and separating us from it. There is nothing lacking. Nothing more that you need to do. But there is a warning, *“Beware so that none of you be found to have fallen short.”* And it’s a warning for one and all. We don’t want tragedy to strike and have anyone miss out on this rest.

That’s why Christian worship is primarily a matter of rest. I’ve spoken about the etymology of liturgy before. I’ve said it is the work of the people. It’s the part that we do doing worship as we respond with God’s Word. We sing hymns and praise, rejoicing in God. But the worship service is primarily about God’s Work for us. It’s God’s Service. The Divine Service tries to bring that back. We assemble in God’s presence to receive rest from him. We can rest from work. We switch from an active self-serving state to a passive receptive state as God gives. We believe he promises. We listen to God’s Word and let it work in us. If anyone stops listening and believing that person can become like faithless Israel in the desert. so we need to keep on listening to God’s word.

And Jesus will get us there because, “he’s no Joshua.” Although he has many of the same qualities and even the same name, there is only one Jesus, one savior, one Lord who provides all the rest we need in our weary world. Focus on Jesus who offers us the rest we need.