

Sunday Sermon: October 21, 2018

Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:9-16

Sermon Theme: The Word Works to Bring Eternal Rest

1. The Law brings us Low so that we won't lose our rest
2. The Gospel raises us up to show us our Savior who gives us our rest

⁹There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

¹²For the word of God is living 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. ¹³Nothing 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.

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Some of my favorite commercials are the Southwest Airlines commercials. Usually they have an ordinary situation that turns bad in seconds. The quiet conversation about the boss is actually broadcast so that everyone, including the boss, can hear it, two friends playing a video game turns into a broken big screen TV, the boyfriend has an incredibly romantic way of asking the girlfriend to marry him and she says no. After these situations turn bad the voice over comes, "wanna get away?"

There are always times in life that we wanna get away. Maybe something embarrassing has happened to us and we wanna get away. But maybe we just want to get away from life. Maybe we want to get away from the grind of work so we take a break and walk outside. We want a break from the activity of everyday life so we take a day to decompress with our favorite hobby. We want a break from the stress of life so we wanna get away on a vacation. We want peace in our life. But these kinds of peace don't last. The snack break ends, the day of fun is done, we have to travel home from the vacation. What we really want is permanent peace. We really want a peace that doesn't end.

In our sermon text, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that God gives us rest that never ends through his Word. God uses the Law to bring us low so that we do not lose our rest because we become conceited and full of pride and trust in ourselves and he uses the Gospel to raise us up to show us our Savior who gives us the rest we are looking for.

When we hear the Word Sabbath we might think about the third commandment: **Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it Holy** and rest that went along with that. God commanded that his Old Testament people were supposed to set aside their work for one day and rest. He even gave his people this example at creation. He created for six days, but on the seventh day he ended his work and rested from the labor of creation.

Part of God's command included the physical rest from their labor, but it was not supposed to be a day to sleep in and take it easy. God did want them to do something on this day. God wanted them to set this day aside as a day of worship and reflection to the Lord. On this day, they were to clear their minds and their schedules to worship the Lord and thank him for all that he had done for them.

Like many of things in the Old Testament, this Sabbath was a picture or symbol of things to come. God certainly wanted them to think about their blessings and thank him for them. But God also wanted them to think about the promises that they had not seen yet, but they knew by faith to be true. God had something much better in mind that he wanted his people to think about when they rested on the Sabbath. He wanted them to think of their Messiah who would forgive them once and for all who would provide for them an eternal rest from their earthly labor in heaven. The writer to the Hebrews shows us God's great blessing of eternal rest and

how he brings us into that rest and keeps us there. **There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;** ¹⁰ **for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.**

In His Law, God gave to believers his guidelines for life in this world. Many people don't think that God showed any love when he gave these commands. But, God did show love to us by not leaving it up to us to figure out what is right and wrong or how he wants us to live. Instead, he wrote this Law in our hearts and also gave a summary of that Law in the 10 Commandments.

These 10 commandments are not a way that we earn our way to heaven. That's what the Jews thought would happen. Instead, God gave these Laws with a different purpose. This Law helps to show us how we can thank, praise and worship God for the love that he has already shown to us. It is with this in mind that the writer encourages us ¹¹ **Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.**

While the Law serves as a guideline for our lives, it has another purpose as well. It points out to us our sins. It defines sin for us and shows us that we have not followed that Law. In Romans Paul says, **I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."**

When you are playing a game you usually play by a set of rules. But what if someone you're playing with says, "those aren't the rules." What would you do then?

Like most people, you would probably take out the rule book and read it closely. You might find you have been playing the game wrong. Maybe you didn't even know that a rule existed. But now you do and you see that you haven't been playing by it. Once we read the rules then we know what the rules are and how to follow them to play the game correctly.

In many ways, the Law also works this way. It sets God's guidelines for us and defines how he wants us to live. We may not even know these are God's commands. But the Law shows us where we haven't been following his guidelines and where we have been following our own.

While we're playing we can continue try to bend the rules, change the rules, or play by our own rules. That doesn't change the fact that the rules are the rules and we aren't following them. All this does is try to cover up our own rule-breaking.

We would like to think we can change God's rules, his Law in the same way. We can bend his laws to what we want, make up our set of laws which are similar but different, or through God's laws out all together. But this doesn't change the fact that God's Law and that God tells us what is right and wrong. We are not fooling God, we are only fooling ourselves, we are still sinners trying to cover up our sins. ¹² **For the word of God is living 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.**

While we try to turn the Law into some nice suggestions for our life, it is really much more. It is a sword that cuts us to the heart. It shows us that we have no excuse, we are sinners who do not and cannot follow God's Law or please him. God sees our true motivations, he sees our lies. The ones we tell to ourselves about sin and the ones we tell to others to cover our sin. The Law cuts us deeply to show us our sin and to bring us low so that we do not ever think that we can obtain God's, rest, his forgiveness or his eternal life on our own.

This sounds harsh. But God does not use the Law to cut us deeply over and over again so that we eventually bleed out and die. God uses the Law so show us the truth so that we do not become conceited and filled with pride and trust in ourselves. He uses the Law to brings us low to show us we are not perfect, we are not sinless, we are not going to heaven on our own.

Before we come to faith we need the Law to cut us deeply to show us our sin and to show us we need the help of a Savior. We also need the Law after we have come to faith to keep us humble and repentant. We need that sword to continue to cut to our hearts so that we do not become conceited, begin to trust in ourselves and lose the blessings of heaven which Jesus has given to us.

God wants one thing for us and for all people: he wants us all to be saved. God sent a Savior to bring us his peace and save us in a very special way. Unlike other gods, God took a personal approach to saving us.

All the other gods of this world have a similar problem. They do not want to get their hands dirty dealing with people. They are above the trouble and turmoil of this world. They are above the petty problems and issues. When you want these gods, you go to them and if they think you are worthy they might help you.

The writer to the Hebrews shows us that we have a Savior who knows our troubles and trials and our temptations and struggles because he has walked with us. **we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.** ¹⁶ **Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**

This personal approach that God took was very personal. Jesus stepped out of heaven to come down to to walk and talk and to save sinful people like us. He was there when people, even his disciples, showed their disobedience and defiance to his Law. He was there to rebuke and admonish, teach and heal, forgive and restore. But he was not there to force people to work harder. He was there to show the people that he was the rest, the salvation that they were looking for.

Because of our Savior's personal approach we can confident that God wants us to have our eternal rest because he is the one who won that rest for us by doing all that was necessary. Jesus is the one who has given us that rest freely as a gift. God continues to build us up in faith through the Word so that we continue to hold God's promise every day.

While the Law brings us low to show us we need help, the Gospel raises us up and shows us God's love in giving us a Savior who gives us rest.

When we are struggling for peace and looking for rest, we need to look no further than our Savior, Jesus. It is our Savior who has freed us from the sin that would destroy us. It is Jesus who has freed us from the guilt and despair over sin that the devil tries to force on us. It is Jesus who frees us from the worry and stress of this world by reminding us of the eternal rest that he has already given to us. When we need to get away and find rest, we need to look no further than Jesus own words and promises, **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”**

God wants nothing more than to give us the rest that Jesus has won for us. May we never tire of coming to the Lord's house to hear of our rest in his Word and may we continue to find our rest in our Savior, Jesus.