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Sexagesima
Hebrews 4:9-13
February 3rd, 2013

*“So then, there remains a Sabbath **rest** for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s **rest** has also **rested** from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that **rest**...”*

Perhaps no one during his time knew more about rest than Frederick Winslow Taylor. That name doesn’t ring a bell? Well, Taylor was a mechanical engineer for a large steel mill at the end of the nineteenth century who sought to improve industrial efficiency.

In those days there were no cranes with which to load steel beams on railroad cars. It was all done with backbreaking labor. After some experimentation, Taylor concluded that men could do more if they took rest pauses at definite intervals. He was able to entice some of the workers to try it by offering them a dollar a day more and flattering them by calling them his “high-priced men.” Under his new system a whistle was blown after the men had carried iron for 12 minutes. At the whistle they were to sit down and rest for 3 minutes. At the next whistle they were to resume work. The result: The amount of iron carried increased from 12 ½ to 47 tons a day. This astonishing outcome led to a new era of rest pauses.

Today offices and corporations encourage employees to exercise during the day. Some even have large fitness centers with all sorts of equipment to help increase productivity in the midst of the workplace. Times have changed as well as the way people take their rest since Mr. Taylor discovered how to make workers more productive. However, the idea of rest is as old as time itself.

Ever since there has been “work”, ever since there has been toil by the sweat of our brow, there has been the need for rest. Ever since labor has been a “must” do activity, ever since the fall of man, ever since sin has had its grip on humanity, all of us have become tired, exhausted, and in need of relief.

“Rest” is the word for today and is all over this Epistle reading from the book of Hebrews. We truly need to pause periodically. We all know that but we rarely do it. Sometimes I’m convinced we don’t know “how” to do it. Our bodies need to catch up with our tasks with much needed downtime. There is no human alive who can labor without resting. As the bit of history at the beginning pointed out, we are all more productive when we rest and replenish our vital strengths. Those strengths will include so much more than just our physical strength.

The writer of the Hebrews is concerned about more than physical exertion. Rather, it appears to be his purpose to point us even beyond this life to the next. Two Greek words are used here for rest. One refers to rest from toil while we are still doing it (katapausis) and the other deals more with rest when the job is done (sabbatismos). Mr. Frederick Taylor worked with the first in an effort to accomplish the second. The one is a pause in the midst of our labors, the other a true rest when the work is completed.

Of all places, and most appropriate as it is, we hear how the work is finished for the faithful at the Christian funeral. At a funeral the words are spoken during the procession, *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”* “Yes,” says the Spirit, *“They will rest from their labor, for their works do follow them.”* Part of the bliss of life eternal in heaven is total and complete rest. No more toil and tribulation. No more late nights at work or so much homework that your head explodes. No more running ragged from the time the alarm sounds and the time you fall into bed. No more heavy load on our chest and pressure from every side. The drudgery will end on the day of rest.

This is indeed what we have to look forward to on the last day. Some of us are ready for that rest right now. Some of us have more we would like to do here before that day comes. You

know, though, that with all we look forward to in this life, also comes the toil, hardship and drudgery – the times there is no rest. We take the bad with the good on this side of eternity – we have to. Because of the fallen world we live in, there is no Sabbath rest. Whether it be good intentions or even our sinister plans concocted in secrecy, we contribute to the hardships that press upon our hearts and our lives from every side. There is no rest for sinners. Even our day of rest today has already been filled with thoughts of what we need to get done and a burdened heart of what has been left undone. We can't escape this world while in this world.

But there is one place to be for rest – a place better than any other. You're in it. This is the place of our "Sabbath" rest – the place of the things complete. Remember what the text says, "*There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work.*" In this place we get our rest. This is the place where our Lord makes the Sabbath rest complete for Christians. It is true there is still much to toil over in this world when we leave this place today – but God has already accomplished our final Sabbath rest on the cross. We participate in that final Sabbath rest together on our day of Sabbath. In this way, Christ came and fulfilled the Sabbath. You see, the Sabbath for Christians today is not a day we put aside all work – a day we accomplish rest for ourselves. Rather, Sabbath is a completed rest done by Christ. The Sabbath was accomplished and fulfilled by Jesus dying on the cross for you.

This is a great place to be for Christians who toil about during the week. Who isn't that person? That's you. Do not ignore the opportunity that you have to be in the midst of completeness. Don't miss the opportunity to partake in the very Word and Sacraments that brings you right to heaven, our final destination. This is the place to be. And when you or anyone else misses that, an important part of your life – rest – is missing.

These days of "Pre-Lent" have us anticipate a time of the year where we reflect on a very "passionate" time for our Lord. There was no rest for Jesus on Good Friday. That was the day He went to work. That was the hardest day's labor that anyone has ever seen. It started in the dark early morning hours in a garden with teaching the disciples. Then the temple guard came and took him to stand before the Sanhedrin. They grilled Him with questions and they beat Him and spit on Him. He stood broken next to Pilate before that great crowd who wanted to see Him dead. More beating was to come. He weakened body had trouble carrying the cross on which He would die all the way to Calvary's Holy mount. He, of course, was nailed to the tree that day and died not long after. His hard work means our Sabbath rest. That's the meaning and that's the rest we have here in this place...His bloody work for our eternal rest.

Christ continues to cry out to us, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest*" (Matt. 11:28). The operative word is "give." As God gave us forgiveness, as He gave us strength to live our lives for Him, as He gave us eternal life, so now He freely gives "Sabbath-rest" to all who believe. So take a break. Take "the" break... the one Jesus earned for you. Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.