

Pastor T.C. Arnold
Sexagesima
Hebrews 4:9-13
February 4th, 2018

The Epistle text appointed today says, “*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.*”

Even after the establishment of the Hebrew synagogues as places to worship the Lord Jesus Christ on the Sabbath, the Israelites usually celebrated weekly Sabbath by rest from work in order to enjoy a special meal in their homes with good food and fine wine. It was only when the Sabbath fell on a pilgrim festival that would bring the people of God to the Holy City of Jerusalem and into the presence of God at the temple would they have the opportunity to bow down before God and feast as His guests on the holy bread and holy meat from their offerings.

But now in the New Testament age the “temple city” of Jerusalem becomes the city of Zion for all people. Here is where you sit today is the joyful place of Sabbath that incorporates both rest and worship. So today, when we speaking of keeping the Sabbath holy we do so not just by resting and enjoying our day of leisure at home but also this rest is worship – a place to meet with Him in his heavenly House for joyful adoration and communal celebration.

When God entered rest after the creation of the world, He did not enter rest passively. He did not sit back after creating the world and think, “well, now I’ve done that it’s time to do nothing.” No, God’s rest was active. He entered in to the activity of caring for His creation, immediately. When Jesus completed the work of salvation of all sinners on the cross and rose from the dead, He did not passively sit on the sidelines and let everyone see the wonder of His great and glorious work. No, He was active with His people. He showed himself to the disciples in the upper room, on the road to Emmaus, and other places. He made Himself visible to Mary in the garden and to many others after the resurrection until the day of the Ascension. Today our Jesus is not passive. He is active coming to you in the Divine Service and giving you His life through the means of grace by way of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Earlier this week they put up a statistic on ESPN about the Super bowl. New England has something like 31 players that have played in the big game and 34 players that have been on a team that has played in the Super bowl. The Eagles have something like only 6 players that have been. The point is there are players on the Patriots team that have been to a Super bowl, but they have not actively played in a Super bowl game. Do you suppose those three men who did not play in a Super bowl are not allowed to be considered Super bowl champions? Do you think when they passed out Super bowl rings that they didn’t get one? Of course they did. They were not passive observers on the team, merely decoration on the sideline. They worked their tale off every week making the starting players better at practice. Maybe they contributed to victories that helped them get into the playoffs earlier in the season. Their Super bowl experience was not passive but active.

This is you, no matter if you were a bench warmer or a starter. The team that God has assembled, the faithful in Christ, are never passive but always active. They are not passive in life six days a week and they are not passive here. Our Lord is not passive here either. Today the Lord comes to His people and feeds them. Often times worship is understood by our world as something we go and do on a Sunday morning. Beloved, God does not need your worship, that is your work, on Sunday morning. He does just fine without it. That’s not the reason for your presence here today. It’s not about what God needs it’s all about what you need. You need what God actively gives. We pray and

praise our Lord today in response to the blessings He affords us today. The Sabbath day is a day of active rest. That's what real rest in the Lord is all about.

In Christ, we as God's people enter into God's day of rest and experience the peace He gives. If ever there was a time God's people needs peace it is today. Peace is what we seek. Peace is what we desire. You know, it would be great to have world peace and no more wars and things like that. But I imagine that we would settle for peace in our individual lives. If work would just settle down and give us a break for a little bit. If family strife were to settle down a bit, that would be such a huge improvement. If our feelings of anxiousness about health, our kids, our parents could just subside for a while and at least get better a little, we would think that a major victory. But the struggles of life continue. When one problem gets resolved another one takes its place. It seems as though when we finally feel like we are climbing out of that hole we've been stuck in, the hole gets deeper and we go backward instead of forward.

Chaos will continue to rule our lives and our world as long as sin is around. The question is: are you helping to facilitate the chaos in your world by the way you choose to live? If it's a life that is not according to the Word of God, then chaos is what you bring... to your life and to the life of others. Our sins bring trouble and upset our lives constantly. They bring discord where there was peace. They bring hardship where there was once a much easier way. It's true that not all the chaos in your life right now is your fault. Sometimes it's because we live a world that presses this chaos upon us. Our lives are one huge struggle because of the sins of others. Yet while we might not be able to control what other people do, we can live like Christians and ensure the greatest level of order for ourselves and our family in the midst of all the trouble. Repent, beloved in the Lord. Rest in the Lord. Be in His active rest for you as the Lord desires to come and put salve on your open wounds and cleans our sin-laden lives.

You see, by grace through faith God puts you in His rest. In other words, we can rest confidently that our life eternal in heaven is secured because Jesus, our Lord and Savior, has accomplished the work of forgiveness by dying on the cross for you. We are grafted in "the rest" of Jesus. Now, remember what true rest is. It is active. So, as we can "rest assured" our salvation has been secured through Jesus' dying on the cross, we Christians have been given the blessed vocation to work in service toward neighbor. So, remember, dearly beloved in the Lord, your rest is active. It accomplishes wonderful things for your neighbor. Your neighbor, your community and your church thrives when you live in active rest.

These days of pre-lent and on into the season of lent will give us time to reflect on our lives in light of "the" life of Jesus. I hope you take time for that restful reflection during lent. It comes early this year. Ash Wednesday is only a week and half a way now. I know Ash Wednesday is Valentine's Day, but wouldn't it be great to begin a celebration with your beloved with a time set aside to receive the mark of ashes on our foreheads reminding us that this life is only temporary. Our sins cause death and we so desperately need a Savior to raise us from the ashes of death into new life. And then this new life we have in Christ can begin anew in the life you have with your beloved, your family, or even a life with friends.

We are grafted into the rest of Jesus and that rest is active for the sake of those around us, for the sake of the work of God's Word to be shared to the nations through you. We rest together knowing that our salvation is secured through the gift of another that came from unconditional love... the kind of love that only a God like ours could provide. Amen.

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