

## ***“An Anchor for the Soul: Get Some Rest”***

*Hebrews 3:12-4:1*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • November 8, 2015

We live in amazing times. When you think about the technology that is available to us today that wasn't available even a few years ago and the things that technology allows us to do you can't help but be amazed. But it's not just technology. We have more options now than at any time in history, I think. We have options for where we work and the kind of work we do. It wasn't that long ago that you pretty much did the same kind of work your parents and grandparents did. The availability of leisure activities is staggering and technology allows you to connect with other people who have similar interests. The sheer number of products available to you is overwhelming. Our kids can now be involved in a wide array of activities and we have nearly unlimited options for entertainment through television and the internet available to us any time.

All of these options take time, however. It takes time to decide which activities we want to participate in or which products we want to purchase and then it takes time to actually do those things or use those products. As a result, many of us feel stressed out because we are just so busy. Most people these days, when you ask, "how are you doing?" will answer, "busy." If they're really honest they'll say, "crazy busy." We live in a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week world.

Kevin DeYoung, in his book *Crazy Busy*, says, "We wake up most days not trying to serve, just trying to survive." As a result of our busyness, anxiety is at an all-time high in our country. We are stressed out by all the commitments we have and we're stressed out about all the options we think we're missing. I think it's safe to say that what many people desperately need today is rest. We need a break. John Ortberg addressed this in one of his books several years ago. He said, "what you may need more than anything is to put this book down and go take a nap."

In the midst of our busyness, the writer of Hebrews brings us a warning. "While the promise of entering God's rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it." Instead of being anxious about all the things we need or want to do and don't have the time, God says, "be anxious about missing out on My rest!"

The writer of Hebrews goes on to prove his point by referring us to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for forty years. God had rescued His people from slavery in Egypt. They had seen the plagues and they had passed through the Red Sea. Their response was still to complain against God. They didn't trust Him to provide for their needs. This is what verse 2 means. "The message they heard (and seen) did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened." Joshua and Caleb had gone with the other ten spies into the Promised Land. They were the only two who believed that God would give them the land. The rest said, "the land is great but it's filled with giants. There's no way we can take it." As a result of their unbelief, none of that generation was allowed to enter. They spent the rest of their lives without the promised rest, outside the Promised Land, living with the difficulties of the wilderness.

We're told in verse 2 that the "good news came to us just as to them." You and I face the choice the ancient Israelites faced. We can trust God's promises or we can reject them. But every day that we reject Jesus is another day in our own wilderness. It's another day that will be harder than it has to be. Another day without God's promised rest.

As we study the Old Testament we discover that the Promised Land didn't provide the people with total rest. In fact, the image of the Promised Land points beyond the land itself to eternity in heaven. That's the point over verse 8. "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on."

Joshua led the people into the Promised Land but they were surrounded by their enemies. They had to fight and work and struggle. But God continued to promise His rest and He promises it to you and to me.

The way we enter the promised rest is through faith in Jesus. Verse 3 says, “For we who have believed enter that rest.” Faith is the key to getting some rest so let’s look at what we mean by faith. There are basically two parts to faith: belief and trust. We can define belief as mental acceptance of a fact as true. You and I may be willing to believe that skydiving is safe. We can hear the statistics that you are about 25 times more likely to die driving your car than jumping out of an airplane. We could see the safety equipment for ourselves. We could watch others make successful jumps. You could be absolutely convinced that it’s safe. That’s belief.

But belief is not enough. The other component is trust. Trust is basically belief in action. It’s standing at the door of the airplane at 15,000 feet with the parachute on your back and being willing to jump out. Faith in Jesus works the same way. You can spend your entire life going to church, reading and studying the Bible, even believing that what Jesus says is true. But the real test comes in whether you trust Him in every area of your life. James chapter 2 shines a light on this kind of trust. “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>1</sup>You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!”

It’s trusting Christ that gives rest to our souls. Trust in His sacrificial death gives us rest from the burden of guilt for our sins and trust in His character as the perfect, “almighty God gives us rest as we place our burdens on Him.” In Matthew 11 Jesus says, ““Come to me, all

who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” This promise comes right after Jesus has said, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father.” In other words, we can trust him to give us rest because He is truly God!

So what does that kind of trust look like for you and me? I think it comes down to trusting God to provide for our needs. Verse 9 says, “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” I think we have sadly lost the concept of Sabbath. These days most of the people who even worship at all will spend one or two hours a week at church. Some people get concerned if the worship service ends “late.” Yet God has commanded us to set aside one entire day each week for Him. The idea of Sabbath is a break from all of the busyness of our life to spend that day focused on God. It’s so important that it’s one of the Ten Commandments.

Here’s the thing. Taking one day to stop working and rest proves that we trust God with our time. Tithing proves that we trust God with our money. As 2 Corinthians 9:8 says, “God is able to make all gifts abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

So let me conclude with this: Every day is a new opportunity to trust Jesus. “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” “Today is the day of salvation.” Today the promise of entering his rest still stands. But it’s not enough to trust Him for one day. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint and as I said last week it’s a team sport. So verse 11 reminds us, “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience” as those who didn’t believe. Learn to rest in the confidence of salvation in Christ, and help others to find that same rest.

*Amen*