

Prayer of the Day:

Lord, keep your household, the Church, in continual godliness and set us free from all adversities that, under your protection, we may serve you with true devotion and holy deeds; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Alleluia. (Ephesians 2:10a)

Sermon Text:

Are you tired? Record high job openings in our nation means that those who are working are running long hours trying to span the gap. More and more people are crazy busy and their bodies are tired from the long hours of work. Are you tired? Oh, not physically but mentally? It's such an odd time in the history of the world. Every single step you take seems to be another decision, another suspenseful, anxious thought about what will happen next. Is this okay or isn't it? Should I do this or stay away from that? Was that cough allergies, a cold, something worse, just a cough?

Are you tired? Not physically or mentally but emotionally? We are a world divided, anger, hate, rage seem to be the only language people are speaking anymore. We are a world that has come face to face with illness and death, with the fact that in the end, we pose very little control over all of it. Turns out we are not Lords and masters of our destinies, never have been, never will be. Everyone is in some form of grief as they come to terms with that blunt reality. Yes, we are tired and tired people crave rest.

⁹ 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. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

I would theorize that another issue underlies all this tiredness which finally leaves us feeling even more frayed under the pressure of it all. Americans have long identified themselves with who they are and what they do. If only I throw enough effort at a problem, spend enough brainpower thinking about it, really put my heart and soul into it, maybe even throw a little money at it, well then, I can do anything, be anything, overcome anything. In reality, that just isn't true. We have collectively willed for illness to be gone since the first head cold set in somewhere on the outskirts of the garden of Eden. How's that going? We've spent billions to irradiate death and fix the problems of the world and society, yet here we sit. We work ourselves to death physically, mentally, and emotionally because we think that ultimately in the end God will care about whether or not we were richer, smarter, or better than our neighbors. He doesn't but loves all people and wants them to come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4). And that truth is what brings us to the real rest which God has designed for us all.

Hebrews 4:9-16

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But before we can revel within it, we have to shatter the false dream that we can do anything to earn it. We have to come to terms with the fact that work amounts to anything when it comes to our salvation. And, dear friends, there is a reason for that!

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God's Word cuts deep! Like a scalpel in a surgical room, it gets right down to the heart of the matter. Sin isn't just an outward reality. It's never been about the perfect law or the right fence that would keep the evil at bay so that people who were basically good otherwise might go about their perfect little lives in peace. Sin is an inward reality, outwardly visible because the thoughts and attitudes of the heart have finally come bubbling to the surface. We are not basically good but infected with the soul-killing disease of sin. This is why no amount of work or effort will earn the rest we crave. Even when we think something good, do something good, evil stains it. Isaiah once lamented *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away* (Isaiah 64:6). No one save God knows you better than you. Satan banks on it. Plagues you with it. Parades the endless line of sin in front of your eyes. Yes, God sees everything, knows everything. Has given His Word that it might expose everything to shatter the false notions of work righteousness, that I can earn or deserve anything when it comes to salvation.

So what hope do we have? Are we simply hamsters trapped on the wheel of life destined to run as hard and long as we can before our bodies give out and the fires of hell overtake us? Oh, no dear friend.

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An honest assessment of our condition leads us to the joyous reality of what we have. Jesus knows us. He has been us. He took on flesh and ran the wheel of life but He did it without becoming trapped by the sin which rages within us all. Dear friends, He didn't do that like some opposing team showing us that they were better than us after all. No, He did that on our team so that His victory might belong to us all. He was perfect, He won and dragged us all along for the ride. While my work and effort were never enough to overcome sin, conquer Satan, or defeat the power of death and hell, His was. So a new reality stands open for you. In His righteousness, you can approach the throne of grace with confidence. God isn't out to get you. He loves you. Not because you are better, smarter, or richer than someone else, it's a throne of grace, undeserved love which is expressed for you and to you in the work of Jesus Christ. We approach it not to earn anything nor because we were finally good enough to do it but that *we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*. Mercy is the judge in the courtroom who doesn't throw the book at us but grants the help and rehabilitation souls racked with guilt need. Grace, the undeserved love of God which sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for every sin. The cross is the highest expression of it as Jesus suffers our hell that we might have the heaven that rightly only belongs to Him. You don't earn it. You don't deserve it. It is given, provided in love by God.

So dear friends. Are you tired? How could you not be? It has been over 100 years since humans have wrestled with the things we are wrestling with today. How are we supposed to deal with it all? Today God provides hope. While we crave rest: physically, mentally, emotionally, He would have us find solace, no salvation, in the Real Rest He provides, purchased and won for you. May it shatter the guilt of your sin. So that you may stand before the throne of God's grace with confidence. Your Work is Done! Amen!!