

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday after Trinity, June 10, 2018**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 9, 238:1, 293, 334, 410.

Lessons: Psalm 95:6-11, Hebrews 3:1-19, Matthew 11:28-30.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:1-11.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ our Savior:

Our Savior asked this question about the Last Day when he comes again: ***“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”*** Luke 18:8b (NIV) Will there be anyone who believes in Jesus when our Lord returns for the last judgment? The answer is Yes. There will be all the elect of God eagerly waiting for the return of their Savior. For the Bible assures us: ***“Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*** Romans 8:30 (NIV)

While the believers in Christ have this comfort, Jesus’ question should be given serious consideration. It is not given serious consideration by the great majority of people. Many have the sentimental idea that everyone will finally be saved. It is often said of people who suffer much in a fatal illness that they’re much better off after they’re dead. “Rest In Peace” is a common inscription on many gravestones, and some think that death in itself brings peace and rest. But the fact is that no man ever attained rest or peace simply by dying. Not every sick person is better off dead. That blessing is only for the believers in Christ. The Bible says: ***“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*** John 3:36

The scoffers will continue to insist that there is no such place as heaven or hell. The self-righteous will continue to dream that because of all their efforts in doing what they consider good works, God will surely take them to heaven. And the sentimental will continue to insist that a loving God could not possibly send anyone to hell. But contrary to these human opinions, the fact is: ***“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son does not have life.”*** I John 5:11-12 Therefore those who have despised preaching and the learning of God’s Word should give very serious consideration to the admonition in our text. From our text we learn that there is a very real danger of slipping back into unbelief, and never attaining eternal rest in heaven.

Let us then consider this theme:

**LOOKING FORWARD TO GOD’S REST IN ETERNITY**

- 1. There remains a rest for believers in Christ; and,**
- 2. Let us make every effort to enter that rest.**

Our text contains a quotation from the Book of Genesis. It says: ***“Somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: ‘And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.’”*** After the six days of creation, God’s work was completed. He had created all things in heaven and in earth by the power of his Word. Then he rested, that is, he ceased his work of creation. Later on, the Lord instituted the Old Testament Sabbath as a time of rest on the seventh day of the week. ***“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.”*** Exodus 20:9-10 (NIV) The observance of a day of rest on Saturday in the Old Testament was to continually remind the people of the rest for their souls in receiving forgiveness of sins in the coming Messiah. Now that the Savior has come and done his work of redemption, the Old Testament Sabbath law has been set aside, and we worship on a day of our

choice. Generally we worship on Sunday, not by command of the Lord, but because this was the day the early Christians chose, since Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday, the first day of the week. The day on which we worship is not important, and so the apostle Paul writes: ***“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”*** Colossians 2:16-17 (NIV)

What is important is that we receive rest for our souls through the precious message of the Gospel which tells of sins forgiven because of Christ’s work of redemption. Jesus’ work of redemption includes that he as our divine Substitute took our place under the Law. Paul writes: ***“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*** Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV) As our Substitute Jesus also suffered for our sins, our transgressions of God’s Law. He shed his holy blood, died for us, and rose again. He redeemed us in the full sense of the word from all our sins, from Satan’s power and from damnation in hell. Therefore in the Gospel he invites us to believe in him as our Savior, saying: ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*** Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

As believers we can look forward to God’s rest in eternity also. It 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, just as God did from his.”*** This is God’s promise to us, and we look forward to it eagerly. The Book of Revelation tells us: ***“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’”*** Revelation 14:13 (NIV) This will be true rest for the believers in Christ, for in heaven there is deliverance from all evil, from all tribulations, from all trials, temptations, afflictions and miseries of this earthly life, from all cares and pains and troubles. Then there will be perfect rest and peace in the presence of God.

This is truly something to look forward to eagerly. It is of great comfort in our journeying here below in a place where we are strangers and pilgrims.

The Christian poet gives us this comfort:

“A rest remaineth for the weary;  
Arise, sad heart, and grieve no more;  
Tho’ long the way and dark and dreary,  
It endeth on the golden shore.” (The Lutheran Hymnal 615:1)

If there is to be more than a mere sentimental feeling we have when we hear these words of the poet, we also must heed the exhortation of our text: Let us make every effort to enter that rest.

2.

In making this exhortation, the writer refers back to the example of Israel’s disobedience: ***“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”*** And again in our text: ***“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”*** The people of Israel in the desert are referred to when our text says: ***“The message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.”*** Again our text says of those who did not enter the promised land: ***“Those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience.”*** The people in those days had the Gospel of the promised Christ proclaimed to them. They learned from the Lord’s prophets of the coming Messiah, and salvation in him. But they did not believe what they heard. The message, our text says, was not combined with faith. Our text quotes from the 95th Psalm which says: ***“For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”*** v. 10-11 (NIV) The descendants of the Israelites, the Jews, for the most part rejected the Gospel of Christ when Paul preached to them. He told them finally: ***“We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”*** Acts 13:46

The writer of Hebrews brought the matter home to his readers when he quoted from Psalm 95: ***“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”*** v. 7-8 (NIV) And those same words apply to us today who are hearing the exhortation of our text. We who hear this exhortation are people who have been baptized and

instructed in the truth. We have had ample opportunity to hear, as our text says: ***“We also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did.”*** The warning is that we do not become weak, quit using the Word of God, and then make excuses for staying away from church. This is a very serious matter that involves our soul’s salvation. The danger of being lost in hell eternally is very real and very great. Surely no one should want to hear the just God speak as he did of Israel: ***“So I declared on oath in my anger, they shall never enter my rest.”*** The warning of our text is also against what is called carnal or fleshly security. Such a false sense of security does not take God’s warning seriously, or thinks that there is plenty of time yet to hear God’s Word and repent. But our text says: ***“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”***

So the exhortation is given: ***“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”*** ***“Make every effort”*** means to be diligent, not careless, in this matter. The effort and diligence referred to is the clinging to the Word of God in true faith. Paul wrote to the Philippian believers: ***“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”*** Philippians 2:12 (NIV) God the Holy Spirit must work the faith in our hearts through the powerful Gospel word, but he will not work in our hearts if we do not hear the Word. One of the commentaries gives us this exhortation: “Let us exercise diligence to enter that rest which awaits the people of God. God’s grace alone can bring us into that glorious rest, but it does so by the objective means of his Word which we must diligently hear and receive, and by the subjective means of faith which the Word kindles and increases, which we must constantly exercise. To be diligent is not to grow cold, slack, or give way to doubt. Diligence keeps to God’s grace and Word and thus enters into the promised rest, its labors then being completed.” (Lenski, p. 138)

Let us, then, remember: The road of unbelief does not lead to eternal rest. To be indifferent to this warning, and neglect the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, to grow weary of suffering and affliction for the Savior’s sake, to yield to the temptation of sin, and to forget the living God, is to travel on the road that leads to eternal unrest in hell.

May God graciously give us the gift of faith in Christ our Savior, so we can say with Paul: ***“Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there.”*** Philippians 3:20 (NIV) At our last hour may we be able to say:

“I fall asleep in Jesus’ wounds,  
There pardon for my sins abounds;  
Yea, Jesus’ blood and righteousness  
My jewels are, my glorious dress,  
In These before my God I’ll stand  
When I shall reach the heav’nly land.” Amen.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 585:1)

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