

In Japan, it's called *karoshi*. Death by overwork. *Karoshi* deaths can be heart attacks or strokes caused by stress and lack of nutrition—there's simply no time to eat—or, rendered hopeless by their work circumstances, some choose to end their own lives. There may have been a time when that sounded extreme, but I think we're well past that point. These days, people just cannot seem to find rest. Too many worries, too many obligations, too much to complain about. Speaking into this mess, the letter to the Hebrews dares to claim that there is a rest that is possible. A rest you can experience now, without having to wait until the sweet by-and-by.

Last week, the letter to the Hebrews warned us that unbelief and ingratitude can cause us to wander in destruction, like the people of Moses' day did. Today, we pick up where that passage left off, and follow the fortunes of those who did not die in the wilderness but entered into the promised land with Joshua at the helm. Yet even here, where success is snatched from the jaws of defeat, no real rest was found. The Promised Land was only a shadow of God's true and lasting rest. Joshua fought and conquered on behalf of his people, but could not bring them rest or peace.

No matter the changing tides of success or misfortune in this life, there can be no true or lasting rest outside of that which only God can give. Rest doesn't come from reaching retirement or gaining the right frame of mind. And it certainly doesn't lie in the hands of any earthly government or leader to promise. True rest comes from hearing God's verdict over you. Jesus gives rest from the accusation of the Law. True and lasting rest is found in Jesus' completed work, credited to your account. Rest is found in hearing that in God's sight you are declared “not guilty,” acquitted of all charges, justified because Jesus has taken your sentence upon himself. This is not a peaceful place you must wait to enter; but a spiritual reality you can enter into now by faith in Jesus, a better Joshua than Joshua. The Lord saves, indeed.

From Hebrews: *For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ... 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.*

Here's the key to understanding the rest that God offers you today. It is a rest from your works. In other words, it is a complete break from the idea that you have to save yourself; you have to prove yourself; you have to show other people how good you are; how smart you are; how likable you are; it's rest from the idea that you have to show God how good you can be, or at least how bad you aren't; setting aside the concept that to feel good about myself I have to outwork, out hustle, out earn, overdo, and overload and then and only then will I deserve the things that I've got. God says, rest from your work. Put it down. Better yet, throw it out. And learn to regard yourself on the basis of the work that Jesus did on your behalf; to see yourself as God sees you in connection to Jesus, His Son: someone perfectly loved, simply for who you are.

To reinforce the rest He wants us to have, God embedded it in our weekly routines. In Mark 2, Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.” There is a rest for you here and now, even in the midst of your stresses and fears. Our heavenly Father desires that during this day of rest we draw near to the one who said, “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.” That’s the promise of Jesus, our Lord.

That’s why the observance of a Sabbath Day is so vital to those who can find so little rest in this world. Every single Sunday the Church of Christ gathers under Jesus the Great High Priest to receive again that forgiveness, life and salvation which are the only true and lasting peace. Each and every Lord’s day the benefits of Christ’s work completed in His life, death and resurrection, are once again received by faith and handed out in the Gospel proclaimed—in every baptism that takes place—at every altar where Jesus serves his people his own body and blood.

As it says in Hebrews: “...*the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*”

We are weak and restless and this make us an easy target for Satan’s temptations. Like the Israelites we are tempted to grumble and complain, to take shortcuts, and listen to those other than God. We simply are not ready to stick things out for as long as God sometimes requires. But the more we seek that rest on our own terms the less we find. Jesus knows the temptations of the restless heart. He’s been there. He knows what it is like. And He knows what you need to find true rest. You need a perfect performance. He’s done it. He aced the most important test ever given. Let him share His results with you.

Lay your deadly doing down/down at Jesus’ feet

Stand in him and him alone/ Gloriously complete