

Striving for Rest
Hebrews 4:1-13
October 20, 2024

How many times have you seen a young person and said, “I wish I had half as much energy as they have?” They seem to keep going on and on, like the energizer bunny. But like the energizer bunny there is a limit to their energy, yes, even energizer batteries need to be replaced eventually and the child, he too, needs a new battery, sleep. The child seems to go on and on and yet when he or she reaches that point, maybe in frustration at not being able to keep going and get a little whiney, then they finally drop off to sleep.

I still remember our second son, Orlan. We would be busy with things in the evening at the ranch south of Vaughn. We would look around and he would be missing. Don't remember the first time it happened but the next times, we knew where to look. When he finally got tired, where did we find him? He had gone back to his bedroom and crawled up into his crib and gone to sleep. Yes, even little boys need their rest, eventually.

It isn't limited to just little boys either. After Cyndi and I got married, I would go out to the ranch, we would eventually end up on, to help out during the busy times of the year. The ranch Foreman, after eating lunch would take a power nap after lunch, just 15 to 20 minutes. He would then go some more until evening.

Yes, it helped to set the stage for the work in the afternoon. A little rest and the body is ready to go again. Some of you know about those little naps to refresh you for the rest of the day.

The texts for today talk of rest but also riches that seem to interfere with that rest. The texts point to the focus on riches, riches that interfere with the true riches that are not silver or gold, riches that are instead found in heaven and the rest provided by God.

The rest the text from Hebrews talks of the rest of the Lord, pointing to the first rest. This rest is the rest the Lord took on the 7th day of the first week. After all the creating on the 6, 24-hour days of the first week, the Lord rested. It wasn't a rest like we get, but a rest from creating, creating all, creating what the Lord said was not only good, but very good, essentially saying, perfect.

The Lord created all and then didn't create but used what He had created to continue on with His creation, even today. Yes, we talk of mankind creating things but their only creating is making use of what God created in the beginning. Mankind uses

what has been created, spending hours upon hours making things that aid in making life easier, more able to do more with the same waking hours.

We look back to the beginning to the fall of all mankind with Adam and Eve. The Lord came to them and instead of killing them on the spot as they had feared, He loved them enough to let them live for awhile. It is recorded that Adam lived over 900 years and yet as the Lord said, it would be by the sweat of his brow that he would provide for he and his family. Eve, she would be the mother of all those who would come after her. In her giving birth to those first offspring and all mothers giving birth it would not be easy but pain would accompany the miracle of birth. Yes, she too would give birth with the sweat of her brow as well.

The Lord rested but then He set aside the 7th day as a day of rest for man too. I guess it was for man to quit “creating” for a day, from his work of creating fields to receive seed, to create a better environment for that seed such as spraying for weeds or pulling weeds and then even creating as he used the seed harvested to provide food for those children that could go and go until at last, it was time to lay down and rest.

Not everyone is a farmer or rancher today. No, many do other things, creating as well but much differently than a farmer. Today, many work with their minds and maybe a keyboard to do the many things that can be done with computers or with other things that have been created. Even though people today may not expend energy by the muscle strength of their arms, they still get tired with that muscle between their ears.

We think of mankind working with hands and brains and at the end of the day, needing rest. In the text for today from Hebrews we see a little different kind of rest as the writer talks of a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

The Lord set aside the 7th day of the week for that rest but as Jesus came and fulfilled the law, those who wanted to celebrate and recognize Jesus’ rising from the grave that first Sunday after His crucifixion chose to have Sunday as the new day of rest. We have picked Sunday for ourselves but others choose other days as Jesus said in Mark: 2:23:28 *One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” And he said to them, “The*

Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

Jesus is Lord even of the Sabbath, the rest that God has now put in place. Now, it is not the day but it is in the Lord Jesus where we find our rest. We can rest knowing that all our striving in life leads to a rest that is greater than the rest of the head on the pillow. Jesus' rest is not the rest that the people looked to after wandering around in the wilderness those 40 years but was a rest, a Sabbath rest to come later and that was the rest we are talking about now, the rest in Jesus.

The writer to the Hebrew talks of the promise of entering a rest, a rest that still stands. It is a rest as the writer points out, a rest that those who in the desert failed to attain because they failed to believe the good news of what lie ahead as they lacked faith.

So may think that if they live a good life, working hard, by the sweat of their brow, they will work hard enough to please God and enter in to His good graces. They look to themselves for salvation, just like those who denied God in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula. Yes, the American story of success is paved on hard work and yet when it comes to the promise of eternal life, it can only be had on the back of one man, the man, God, Jesus Christ and His work for us on the cross.

It is Jesus who we look to for our promised rest. His is a rest that will last forever. Yes, Adam was to take care of the Lord's perfect creation even before the fall into sin. Here is how Moses put down what happened on the 6th day of creation:
Genesis 1:26-31 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And

God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. No sweat, no pain and yet it was all changed a little while longer as they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We know of those who traveled in the wilderness and did not find the rest that the Lord had planned for them and they rejected Him, their faith in Him. The writer implores us to listen to David who said “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”

Yes, there are those who have been baptized, who have been given faith who are turning their backs on the faith they were given. Are we in jeopardy of even ourselves rejecting that rest? I know we would all say we aren't as those who died in the wilderness but didn't enter. The writer to the Hebrews includes himself when he includes himself in the, LET US FEAR, lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

If you were there in the writer's day, writing to the Hebrews, do you think the Hebrews that were being written to would include themselves in those who would fail to listen? I don't think they would but as the writer puts up the possibility, there must have been some sign that there were those who were tempted, were being tempted to fall away.

The other lessons point to those who are dealing with wealth. Yes, compared to the whole world, we, each of us are wealthy. What if circumstances change and things get bad, like they did in the late 20's and early 30's of the last century? There were people that were going hungry, who didn't have enough food. We don't have soup lines but is there a possibility that the future might hold the same for us if things turn south?

Would you walk away if your life suddenly changed? Would your faith falter if you perceived that the Lord had abandoned you as Job was wondering when His world was turned upside down? We wonder about that. Would we stand strong? I know we would say we would from this vantage point but what if?

Rest, we think of it being needed after some hard work. The work we are tasked with is striving for that rest. In striving for it, we will encounter the work of dealing with others who do not know the Lord. In our striving, we will make known what He has done for us and them. In our striving we will hold to the commandments, recognizing where we fall short and then seeking His free forgiveness for us. Continue striving for that rest