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Finding Rest
Hebrews 4:9-11

⁹So then, a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God, ¹⁰for those who enter God's^[d] rest also rest from their labors as God did from his. ¹¹Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

I wonder—what does a restful day look like to you?

Watching TV? Reading a good book? Relaxing at the shore?
Or taking time for a hobby?
For me, it could be walking outdoors, or working on a quilt.
But sometimes what I really want and need is just a long nap!
What does rest look like TO YOU?
And what KEEPS YOU from resting?

I was talking to a church member recently

who took a message about Sabbath last year to heart—
and now she spends Sundays after church, just resting.
Not doing any productive, but just resting.
I love that!
That's God at work in her life!

Today we continue our study of the Book of Hebrews, and we come to a section about REST, that actually begins in Chapter 3.

And the author of this book has THREE kinds of rest in mind:

The rest of the Israelites entering the promised land
after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years,
after being rescued from slavery in Egypt.

The rest of the 7th day of Creation—and what was commanded to God's people in the wilderness through the **10 Commandments**.
That was, a Sabbath rest from work, one day a week.

And the third kind of rest is the **eternal rest of heaven**.
That rest that awaits us one day, when this life is over.

The ROOT of all three kinds of rest is the same—it all comes from God.

God was the one who led the people to the **promised land** of Canaan.
God was the one **who rested** on the 7th day of Creation,
and then commanded the people to follow this example of rest.
And God is the one who **raised Jesus** to eternal life,
and promises the same for us one day.

Here in Hebrews 4:9-11 the author is saying that a Sabbath rest

is available to all who believe,
but that we only enter that rest through **faithfulness**.
Which makes sense, because Sabbath is a commandment from God,
Not just a suggestion.

We know from Scripture that God's people were not always faithful,

And they did not always enter the rest promised by God.
For instance, the generation who left slavery in Egypt was not the same
generation 40 years later who entered the promised land,
and the Bible says that is because of their unfaithfulness and disobedience.

We know that even though God commanded rest through the 10 commandments, that people did not always rest.

And Judaism built this strong structure around Sabbath as a result—
all the things you could and could not do on the Sabbath.
Remember how many times **Jesus got into trouble** for healing on the
Sabbath, which was considered work?
That's because the Jewish laws were built up around the **letter** of the law,
and not the **spirit** of the Sabbath.

So, what is Sabbath Rest? It's rest from work.

We work throughout the week,
And then we take one day to rest from our labors, and spend time with God.
This is grounded in Genesis 2:2, when God rested on the 7th day.
It's also the 4th commandment, given to the Israelites in the wilderness.

But, why would it be a command, and not just something God asks of us?

Well, for one—we are made in the ***image of God***, according to Genesis 1:26.

So we are designed to not just work, but also rest.

And, God knows our tendency to work TOO MUCH!

In fact, for many of us the thing that keeps us from resting is just one little four-letter word: WORK.

Now, that work might look different for different people.

It might be work in an office, or a school.

It might be caretaking for someone in the home, raising kids, caring for aging parents.

It might be volunteering, as much as a paid job.

Work is often what causes us to ignore rest.

Unfortunately, our American society is built on work, not rest.

Work is how we usually identify ourselves.

It where we get a lot of our value from.

We are often known, not by who we are, but what we do for work.

Even leisure in this country is often filled with activity, and designed to refresh us—so we can get back to work!

A 2024 KickResume survey found that 40% of Americans work 41-50 hours per week, compared to only 26% of Europeans.

And 8% of Americans work over 51 hours a week, a rate far higher than Europeans.

European countries typically offer generous federally mandated vacation, sick days, and holiday allowances,

while the US has no federal minimum for paid vacation.

It's up to the employers, and even when we have vacation provided, Americans tend to NOT take all of their vacation or PTO each year.

American dedication to work is actually rooted in our Christian faith, especially the Puritan work-ethic of our founders.

And indeed, there are Bible verses like Philippians 2:12 that say things like: *work on your own salvation with fear and trembling...*

but then it goes on to say that this is not our own effort,

for Paul continues saying:

it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

In other words, it's NOT about our own work.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 says “For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat”.

But, the **actual context** of that verse is Paul telling the believers there that they **should not sit around expecting Jesus' return** any moment! He was correcting their desire to just wait on Jesus and not work.

Americans clearly have a pull-yourself-up by your bootstraps mentality, which easily leads to being workaholics.

We value work—we are our work—we live to work.

Not rest.

What is the number one thing people say when asked, ‘How are you?’

It's some version of this: I'm so ‘busy’, ‘stressed’, or ‘overwhelmed’.

How often do you hear people say, “I'm great—I'm so rested”.

I'm so calm.

I'm just taking my time in life.

We smile and laugh at that, but it's not really very funny.

The truth is-- according to God's design,

we are not meant to be exhausted and burned out!

We are not meant to be stressed and overwhelmed.

Exhaustion and overwork is actually a consequence of **sin and brokenness**, not wholeness.

It is NOT God's intent for us.

Working, without rest, is a consequence of sin—***not a badge of honor!***

God has better ideas for our lives.

God values rest—divine rest,

and rest for all of us, as God's beloved children.

And not just on a vacation once a year, or occasionally,

but a pattern and rhythm of rest—the 7th day of every week.

This kind of regular rest is important—for our BODIES.

Americans with their longer work week,
also struggle more with health issues
that are caused or exacerbated—by stress.
Work is certainly a common cause of stress.
Perhaps the most common cause of it in this country.

Regular rest is also crucial—for our SOULS.

Our souls need rest—so that we can stop producing,
and start finding calm and peace, in the arms of God.
We need time to rest in God, to enjoy God, to worship and praise God.
This is why coming to worship is so important—it's part of our rest on the 7th
day.

Regular rest is vital—for our FAITH.

When we rest from our labors, we are forced to depend upon God,
Not ourselves.
Resting, true rest, is trusting God for what we need.
Because when WE stop working,
we have to trust that God's action continues as we rest.
When we stop working, we have to trust that God is God and we are not.

Psalms 46:10 says Be still, and know that I am God.

That word "I" is so important—God is God, we are not.
Believe it or not, it's easy to get that confused.
We tend to think we are needed to do everything.
We tend to think we are indispensable at our jobs, in our homes, and
communities.

***But truth be told, we are not needed to run the world,
or even our little corner of it.***

God is actually in charge,
and we are mere instruments and co-laborers with God.
But God is in charge of all Life, all of Creation, and all of our Work.
And God is ***trustworthy***.

Jesus had a lot to say about rest as well.

In Matthew 11:28-30 he says:

*Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

I love how Eugene Peterson in *The Message Bible* puts it:

*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out? Come to me.
Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.
I’ll show you how to take a real rest.
Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.
I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

I wonder what YOU hear in those verses?

Are they comforting? Refreshing?
When I hear them, I want to just run into the arms of God.
And REST.

***This weekend at our officers retreat,
we talked about what a busy church we are.***

And we are TOO BUSY in many ways.
The hours worked by our leadership are far too many each week.
We fill our church calendar with meetings and jobs and mission and ministry.
And much of it is great, and worthy of our time.

But we need FOCUS, so that we can have times of REST.

That’s God’s will for us as a church—to have rhythms of rest and peace.
To respect people’s time and work/life/church balance.

So we started conversations about doing LESS, and doing it better,

As opposed to doing the same thing we’ve always done,
Or doing MORE, and being less effective.
We will have to make hard decisions about what’s most important—
but we all know that when we do that in life, it is the path ***to meaning, and joy.***

And JOY is God's will for us.

Finding rhythms of rest in our personal lives, in our work,
And even in our church---***helps us find the JOY.***

***Sabbath rest is not just a law or commandment, it is a beautiful GIFT—
for our flourishing, and God's glory!***

It is a gift that we must accept and unwrap!

We don't want to just keep this gift in the corner and look at it from afar.

We want to unwrap this treasure.

We need to rest.

We need to stop our work, at least one day a week,

And take little pauses of rest throughout the day.

Rhythms of rest are GIFTS of God.

So, how will YOU incorporate rest into your life—today? This week? This year?

How will you commit to Sabbath rest?

I want to encourage all of us to ask the Holy Spirit to help us---rest.

***Now, I would like to invite anyone who is interested
to come forward to this bowl***

and take a ***marble*** out and drop it into the large clear bowl—

and as you do this, imagine giving your work to God,

so that you can rest.

In fact, let's say that together.

Repeat this after me:

I give you my work

That I might rest.

Thank you, God!

For the gift of rest, all God's people can say together, Amen.