

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Executive Pastor Carey Dean
August 4, 2024
Enter God's Rest
Hebrews 4:1-11

School is beginning and that means summer is officially over. I am sure everyone in this room has used these long summer months to relax, sleep, read 10 books in a hammock, and is now ready for the fall with a clear mind and without one ounce of anxiety. Right? Isn't that what we always are hoping for summer to be?

But often this is the reality: You come home from a highly anticipated vacation only to realize you now need another vacation because of being exhausted from your vacation. One thing is true: Vacations rarely go exactly as planned.

Have I told you of the time when Amy, Corban, McKenna, and I went on a cruise, and I left every bit of my luggage at my house? Yep, I had nothing except the clothes on my back and flip flops on my feet. Needless to say, I humbled myself and begged the concierge to raid their lost and found closet on board. I am grateful for some European man who left clothes behind just for me. So much to tell and pictures you will never see, but that will have to be another sermon.

Anyway, there is a word in our vocabulary that only few have truly experienced. To the vast majority of people throughout the history of time, this word has been concluded to be an unreachable ideal, goal, and pursuit. The word is rest.

We know we need it, so we strive to experience it, but we always fall short of it. We try to schedule it through vacations. We try to buy it through sleep aids. We try to work for it through finishing a to-do list.

There is nothing inherently wrong with these things. I have a cruise planned in September, I take magnesium every night, and my to-do list, well, let's just say I have one! But when we try to exchange those things for the true rest God desires for our lives, then at the end of the vacations, at the beginning of the mornings, and at the conclusion of to-do lists, our unrest remains.

Why? Because the true rest that satisfies is not time away from something or someone, more sleep, or more completed check boxes in our life. True rest belongs to God, and it can only be found in Him.

Make no mistake about it. We were made for rest. That is why we long for it. The problem is that because of sin, you and I were born into a state of unrest. Therefore, we know we need it, but we will never experience it in, of, or from ourselves.

Today, we are learning about God's true rest. What is it and how do we experience it? Today's passage is Hebrews 4:1-11. Before we read it together, I need to set the stage.

The writer of Hebrews is using the Old Testament story when God did not allow Israel to enter the Promised Land because of their forty years of unbelief and disobedience. Their sin is a warning for us today. After being freed from Egypt, their hearing then rejecting God's word kept them from entering His promise of rest.

In this passage, you will hear warnings to not be like Israel in their lack of faith, but also listen for the invitation to enter God's greater promise of rest that still stands today. As we read through these verses, I want you to focus on the main character, who is God, and the key word, which is rest.

Hebrews 4:1-11

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,' " although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." 6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Let's not assume we understand the meaning of this familiar word called rest. The Greek word for rest is the act of resting, ceasing from labor, or the place of rest, dwelling, fixed abode.

God's rest involves all of the above definitions, but I want to focus on the part that involves the ceasing of labor. Hebrews 4 emphasizes this truth.

Hebrews 4:3 "...his works were completed from the foundation of the world."

Hebrews 4:4 "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."

Hebrews 4:10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

But Carey, isn't it true that God is still at work today? Yes! Everything about our life depends on that truth. Didn't we study Psalm 121 that said that God never sleeps or

slumbers? And that He is actively keeping me? Yes! We can sleep soundly knowing all is well because God never closes His eyes!

And what about a verse like Philippians 2:13?

13 or it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Yes, He does! Where would we be without the Lord working all things out for good for those who love Him? Be confident that “God’s rest” and “God’s work” do not conflict.

Here is the key. God is working from/out of His perfect rest and not working to get to a place of rest. Listen to this truth that is core to our believing.

GOD IS AT REST IN HIS COMPLETED WORK AS CREATOR

We are helped in our passage today by looking back to Hebrews chapter 3.

Hebrews 3:4

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

Let that phrase “all things” sink in. God is the builder of all things!

John 1:3

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Romans 11:36

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Is there still a part of your flesh that questions...

- are God's plans at risk because of today's news? No! God is at rest.
- is God fearful of the evil plans of man or scheme of the enemy? No! God is at rest.
- does God's throne have moments of worry, fear, anxiousness? No! God is at rest.

This is what is true about our God.

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him.

God's rule and reign over all things flow freely from His place of settled, eternal rest. Our faith can be placed in our God who is at rest because His works of creation are completed.

This is a really big concept. And the fact that God is at rest in all things invites me and you to believe that. And when believe that, our view of all things changes. The way we pray changes. We no longer project our flesh's weaknesses onto God: stress, fear, worry, or anxiety. Instead, He invites us to enter into who He really is...a God at rest.

There is another element of His rest which is the Gospel we have heard and believe.

GOD IS AT REST IN HIS COMPLETED WORK AS REDEEMER

Let's continue with the Hebrews 3 passage:

Hebrews 3:5–6

Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 6 but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Jesus is not a servant in God's house like Moses, but a Son over God's house. And we are His house. Did you hear that? And we are His house.

Ephesians 2:22

In him (Christ) you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

As the Son over God's house, Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. God's house will not be incomplete and built to fall apart at the slightest wind or wave. God's house will stand today and throughout eternity.

Continuing the imagery of a building built by God, Jesus also said in *John 10:7*, "*I am the door.*" Concerning entering God's rest, He is the only door provided for entrance.

His death's cry was for your heart to hear and believe, "It...is...finished." His being raised from the dead on the third day was for your heart to hear and believe, "I am the resurrection and life."

Salvation is complete in the death, burial, and resurrection of God's Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. There remains no work for you to do. God's rest in salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone.

Upon completion of making purification for sins, what did Jesus do upon re-entering the throne of Heaven? He...sat...down at the right hand of the Father. Redemption's work was complete. From this completed work of salvation, we hear and respond.

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

With the foundational truth of God being at rest in His completed work as both Creator and Redeemer comes an invitation demanding a response.

The promise of entering God's rest still stands. Listen to the warning that begins our passage.

Hebrews 4:1-2

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

The warning: Let us fear failing to attain God's promise while it still stands open. What is the promise? The entrance into God's rest is prepared and available.

To the wilderness generation of Israel, rest meant entering the Promised Land of Canaan. But to the readers of Hebrews and to us today, this greater rest we enter is the salvation of God through Jesus Christ. This salvation enjoys God's rest now and for all eternity.

The writer of Hebrews is saying, "Don't fail to reach the promise." The word picture for this one who sees a company of soldiers marching faster than you can keep up. You are working hard but you just can't do enough to stay with the community in front of you. The company and community of soldiers are those who heard the good news and united it with faith. They have entered God's rest. They move by the power of God and not of themselves. Those who do not walk by faith cannot keep up. Their hard work is useless and will not benefit. They will fall behind and ultimately fail to reach the promise.

Because of Israel's unbelief and disobedience, God declared, "They will not enter my rest." One day Jesus will return for His own. When that day comes, the door to God's rest will be closed. Many will hear what Israel heard, "They will not enter my rest."

But the greatest news I have for you is that today the door is open. Jesus is saying, "Come." Come, enter it by faith. Come, do not harden your heart. Come, place your trust in the finished work of Christ, your Redeemer, and enter into His salvation. Come, God's rest will be your rest for today and all of eternity.

And this morning let me exhort the believers. Listen to what is true about you.

Hebrews 4:9-11

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Rest from your works. Don't be foolish in trying to finish in the flesh what was begun by the Spirit!

Trust Jesus just as firmly as when you first believed. Can you go back to that moment when you trusted Christ? You knew that He was your only hope. All of your faith was placed upon Him. Nothing has changed. Are you in a really hard moment in your life? Take a breath and rest in Christ. What is the motivation for this firm trust? You have gained Christ! Your rest is found in God Himself. Don't get casual about that glorious truth.

Remain faithful to the end. The only way this is possible is for Christ to live his life through you. Be encouraged to let your obedience flow from abiding in God's rest instead of trying to get to a place of rest.