

Entering the Rest of our Risen Lord

Hebrews 2:10 – 5:11

Halifax: 21 April 2019, 10:30 AM

Introduction

As most of you know, in this church, we do not follow the church calendar with all of the different holy days.

- Our Lord warns us about following the traditions of man.
 - He shows us how following them, though it may seem helpful to us, will actually lead us away from God's commandments and from God's ways.
 - And we can see how that has happened, both in the Old Testament and in the history of the church since the coming of Christ.
 - Once we start to follow our own holy days, we start to add various ceremonies and rituals and after a while the simple apostolic traditions that God gave us to follow in the church start to take second place.
 - Soon we are placing symbol over substance and worshipping more like the Old Testament—under shadow and symbol instead of in spirit and truth.
 - How often is it the case that churches will be full on Good Friday or at Christmas, which are days the apostles did not establish for us to keep,
 - but empty on the first day of the week which was the day Christ appointed through His apostles for us gather together as His people.
 - Invariably, the traditions of men become more important to us than the days that God has appointed.

At the same time, in our present society, we have days off work at Christmas and Easter and the wonderful truths of Christ's birth and Christ's resurrection are brought to everyone's attention.

- Therefore, in our regular Lord's Day services, I very often preach on these wonderful subjects, just as I preached on something like the terrorist attack on 9/11.
 - It was on people's minds so I addressed it in preaching.

This year, I was thinking of going on with my regular sermon series in Mark, but as my family has been reading through Hebrews in our evening worship,

- I was super encouraged by what it said about our risen Lord Jesus and about the rest we have in Him and I couldn't pass up the opportunity!
- So I am breaking from Mark to preach about the rest that our LORD Jesus has already entered into and which we have entered by faith and will enter at the last day when we are resurrected.

My Scripture reading is a long one, but there is a good reason for it.

- At the center of the reading, in Hebrews 3 & 4, we have the call to enter God's rest,
- But those chapters are flanked by a description of Christ our priest who has provided that rest for us and therefore I also want to include that in our reading.

Therefore, I will read from Hebrews 2:10 to 5:11. This is the word of God.

Hebrews 2:10 – 5:11: For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²

saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." ¹³ And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." ¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. ^{3:1} Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, ² who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all His house. ³ For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God. ⁵ And Moses indeed *was faithful* in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, ⁶ but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. ⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in *their* heart, and they have not known My ways.' ¹¹ So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" ¹² Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one

another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, ¹⁵ while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." ¹⁶ For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? ¹⁷ Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. ^{4:1} Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*. ³ For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' " although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; ⁵ and again in this *place*: "They shall not enter My rest." ⁶ Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹ There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. ¹¹ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and

marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account. ¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. ^{5:1} For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³ Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for

himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. ⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*. ⁵ So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” ⁶ As *He* also says in another *place*: “You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”; ⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰ called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” ¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

May God bless the reading of His holy and infallible Word.

It may be helpful for you to follow along in your Bible.

- And let me encourage you who have electronic Bibles to be careful of distraction.
 - It is easy to have a text message or notification pop up and take over your mind.
 - Remember that we are assembled before our Lord for worship and it is not the time to be texting or following social media.

So what is at the heart of this passage in chapters 3-4?

I. At the heart of this passage is an earnest appeal to enter God’s rest.

- You can see this, for example, in 4:11 where it says: **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience...**
 - But before we look at the appeal itself...

A. Notice first of all that it is referred to repeatedly as *God’s* rest.

1. In 3:11, God is speaking and He speaks of it as *My rest*.
 - In 3:18 and 4:1, it is called *His rest* where *His* refers to God.
 - In 4:3, God again speaking, calls it, *My rest*.
 - In 4:4-5, you have God resting from His works and then you have Him speaking of *My rest* again.
2. In every case, it refers to work that God has finished—a job completed.
 - Often, we speak of rest in the sense of taking a break, but when we speak of God’s rest, it is rest because He has finished doing all that He wanted to do.
 - a. The original work that God is said to have rested from is the work of creation.
 - It is referred to in 4:4 where it says: **For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.”**

- He did not rest as one who was tired and needed a break, but He rested as one who had finished all that He was going to do.
 - Nothing else was created—His work was complete—and He appointed the cyclical seven day rest, the Sabbath rest, for us to remember that He made the world in six days and completed His work on the seventh day.
 - It is like a man building a house for his family.
 - When he finishes the house, he has a permanent rest from that work and his family is able to enter into his rest and enjoy living in the house that he built for them. They rest in his finished work.
- b. The next work that God is said to have rested from was the work of redeeming His people out of Egypt and bringing them into Canaan.
- This rest of God is referred to in 3:16-19 as something that the generation who came out Egypt were not permitted to enter because of their unbelief.
 - **Heb 3:16-19: For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? ¹⁷ Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.**
 - But notice the point here—even though the rest was for them to enter, it is called *God's* rest.
 - *He* was the one who redeemed them out of Egypt and who, after the first generation died off, brought the next generation into the land.
 - When the work was done and their enemies were driven out, God's work was done—He rested from it—and those who trusted in Him were able to enjoy His rest.
 - All the way through it is shown to be God's work; not man's work.
 - It is noteworthy that the fourth commandment was originally given to commemorate the finished work of creation (as Exodus 20:11 tells us),
 - but that when the Ten Commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy 5, the people who are brought out of Egypt are told to also remember God's work of redemption on the Sabbath Day:
 - Deut 5:15 says: **“And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”**
 - Now they were enjoying not only God's finished work of creation, but also His finished work of redemption from Egypt to Canaan.
- c. But the rest which Hebrews 3-4 is most concerned about is yet *another* rest from yet *another* work that God completes for His people.
- And that that is the work of eternal redemption.
 - 1) It is pointed out in Hebrews 3 & 4 that it was after Joshua had brought the people into Canaan that Psalm 95 warns them about hardening their hearts lest they fail to enter into God's rest.

- In 4:8 it says: **For if Joshua had given them rest, then He (God) would not afterward have spoken of another day.**
 - In other words, entering the land of Canaan was not the final work of redemption that God would do—there was a much greater work He would complete and then rest from.
 - Hebrews 4:9 adds: **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.**
 - It is this rest that we are urged to enter into.
- But what is this rest that was future to David?
- 2) In Hebrews 4:10, it is *Christ's rest* that is described—the first pronoun refers to Christ and should not be translated whoever as in some versions!
 - **Heb 4:10: “For he (Christ) who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His (at creation).**
 - John Owen gives three reasons that this should be understood as referring to Christ who finished His work of redemption... **who**, as Hebrews 1:3 puts it, **when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...**”
 - In other words, He entered into His rest.
 - a) First, it is rest that is said to be like God's rest when He ceased from His works of creation.
 - It is Christ who ceased from His work as our priest in the way that God ceased from His work or creation because the work was done.
 - A believer ceases from his works by renouncing them as worthless, not as one who completes a task!
 - b) Second, it is Christ that is referred to because the pronouns are singular.
 - It says: *He* entered into *His rest*, not *they* entered into *their* rest.
 - In the surrounding context, when the people of God are referred to, the pronouns are plural—*they, them, their, we, us, our...*
 - *He* and *His* show that it is talking about an individual who has finished His work—and that individual is Christ.
 - c) A third reason to understand that verse 10 speaks of Christ is that it speaks of the one resting as *already* resting...
 - whereas verse 11 and the overall passage refer to a rest that we are exhorted to enter into...
 - **Heb 4:11: Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**
 - So we conclude that the rest we are called to enter into is not our own rest, but God's rest—
 - We are called to rest in the finished work of Christ the Son of God.

B. Notice how strong the call to enter God's rest is!

1. We are warned using the heart searching words of Psalm 95 in 3:7-11.
 - a. As we have already seen, these words do not refer to God's work of bringing His people into Canaan, but to a work that He does after that (which we have seen to be the finished work of eternal redemption by Christ Jesus).
 - We are urged to enter into God the Son's rest from His work of redeeming us that He carried out as our Priest on the cross.

- b. Listen to the appeal and notice how strong it is:
- **Heb 3:7-11: Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in *their* heart, and they have not known My ways.’ ¹¹ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ ”**
 - The warning is against being excluded from heaven just as the first generation that came out of Egypt was excluded from Canaan!
 - It is to be excluded from the house that Jesus is building for God and to cut off without hope in condemnation forever.
 - There is no greater tragedy than to be excluded from this rest or our gracious saviour and redeemer.
 - The divine work that Christ performed was a work that nobody else can do—to miss it is to miss salvation.
 - Nothing is so important as to enter into His rest.
2. And look, the warning against an evil heart of unbelief is given to professing Christians—those who are called *brethren*, who profess the true religion.
- Look at 3:12: **“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;”**
 - As we saw in the parable of the sower, there can be those who profess to believe who in fact have a superficial faith that is actually an evil heart of unbelief—a heart that after a time rejects God’s saving work.
 - This *evil heart of unbelief* is what ruined those who came out of Egypt.
 - They did not believe that God’s promised inheritance was worth all the trouble they were experiencing as His people, bound for the promised land.
 - They did not see the value of His inheritance.
 - And in addition to that, they did not believe that God was able to give them the inheritance He had promised.
 - They looked at their own strength and resources, they looked at their enemies, and they said, “We cannot do this.”
 - They failed because they looked at it as something they had to do instead of something God had promised to do.
 - As 3:19 says, **So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.**
 - See that there is not an evil heart of unbelief in you—an evil heart that departs from the living God and rejects His promises as of little value and as unrealistic.

3. Hebrews 4 explains that if you do not believe, you will not enter God’s rest just as the first generation that came out of Egypt did not enter into Canaan.

 - In 4:1-2: **Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.**
 - You who attend this church and hear even this sermon—you have heard the promise, but what a tragedy it is if you do not believe.

- Again, 4:11 says: **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**
 - The word of God has a way of getting deep down inside of you to expose your sin and your danger of punishment so that you see the need to enter into the rest that Christ has procured.
 - Heb 4:12-13: **For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** ¹³ **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**
 - Make sure that when God's word cuts in like that you do not harden your heart. That is when the danger is the greatest.
 - And also make sure that you do not harden your heart so that the word never pierces you like that.
 - Beware of using drugs (even prescription ones), alcohol, entertainment, distraction, work, and anything else to keep the word from cutting into your heart so that you see your desperate need to come to Christ.
 - Many will be in hell for this reason.
 - Entering God's rest is so important. Be diligent to enter it.

TRANS> Now let's look at the work that God the Son did—that work that is now complete that we are called to enter into.

II. The work that Jesus has now rested from (finished) is the work of a priest who saves His people from their sins.

A. We have seen already how this work is described at the beginning of Hebrews...

1. It speaks of how He, the divine Son of God, obtained an inheritance for us in God's house by purging our sins...
 - He is referred to in Heb 1:2-4 as God's **Son whom He has appointed as heir over all things, through whom also He made the worlds,** ³ **who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,** ⁴ **having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.**
 - This shows Him as the one who finished the work of purging our sins so that He might have us as His inheritance.
2. The rest of chapter 1 speaks of His superiority to the angels because He is the Son of God. He is able to save because He is the Son of God.
3. And then in chapter 2, we are exhorted to hear Him and His call because there is no way for us to escape if we neglect so great a salvation.
 - We need to hear His call that awakens us, exposing our sin and our need, and showing us the effectiveness of His work and the glory of our inheritance so that we won't reject Him in unbelief.

B. Jesus is the High Priest who was perfected for us by His work.

- Our text speaks of Him as being perfected several times.

1. When it says He was perfected or made perfect, it means that as our priest He became exactly what we need and all that we need for our salvation.
 - Before He came into the world and died on the cross, He was not yet perfect or complete as our priest.
 - In other words, He had not yet completed the work by which we would be saved.
 - He became perfect or was made perfect as our priest by doing that work.
 - He became perfect when His work was completed and He entered into His rest form that work,
 - sitting down at God's right and after He had purged our sins.

2. Look at how His perfection is described in our text.
 - a. First, His perfection is said to be God's intention for Him.
 - Heb 2:10: **For it was fitting for Him (God), for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation (Jesus Christ) perfect through sufferings.**
 - In other words, He was not complete for us as a Saviour until He suffered for us.
 - He had to suffer the pains of Hell for our sins so that we could come to God. The sacrifice He had to offer for us was Himself.
 - Until He had done that, until He finished that work and entered His rest, He was not yet all that we needed—potentially so for all the people of old—but not actually so until the work was actually done.
 - b. Second, for Him to be what we needed, He had to become human flesh.
 - As God the Son in His divine nature, He could not represent us or suffer for us, so to be what we needed as our priest, He took human form.
 - Heb 2:14-18 explains this: **Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, [as people, we are flesh and blood] He Himself likewise shared in the same [He became human flesh and blood], that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren [to become flesh and blood], that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**
 - *Propitiation* means that He appeases the wrath of God as a just judge.
 - God, as a judge, must punish all sin—
 - He must show by punishment how wrong it is for us as human beings, to disregard His authority as God—and how wrong it is for us to step aside from the love He has appointed for us.
 - By punishing sin, the world, the angels, and God Himself who is truth, will see the truth about God and about the wretchedness of sin and rebellion.

- As one of us—who is also the Son of God—Jesus was able to be made perfect for us (as 2:10 says) through suffering on the cross.
 - He was able to pay for our sins completely.
- c. Third, in 4:14, we are told how He, having done this was accepted by God as our High Priest. His work was accepted.
- It says: **“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.”**
 - Holding fast our confession means that we keep on trusting Him as our Saviour... we keep on believing in Him and do not turn away...
 - but what is the reason given?
 - It is because as our High Priest, He has passed through the heavens!
 - As the Son of God, He had already dwelt in heaven from all eternity.
 - But now as our High Priest He has passed into those same heavens—all the way into the presence of God—not now as merely the Son of God...
 - but now as our High Priest who has been made perfect through His sufferings.
 - That He has passed through the heavens is shorthand for saying that having been raised, He ascended into heaven to the throne of God.
 - By receiving Him after He died for our sins, the Father shows that His sacrifice for us as our priest is completely acceptable.
 - He has finished His work as our priest and entered into His rest.
 - He has been made perfect as a priest for us through sufferings.
 - He is all that we need for salvation and forgiveness of sin that we might be His inheritance and live with Him in His Father’s house—even though we have sinned and made ourselves obnoxious to God—He has made us acceptable as our perfected priest.
 - He has entered His rest.
 - He is risen and that means that all those who are in Him are accepted because our priest in whom we trust was accepted.
- In chapter 5, we are given even more assurance that He is our priest who is perfect and complete.
- d. First, it tells us that He was called by God to represent us as our priest.
- There is a lengthy explanation of this that begins in 5:1 where it says: **“For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*”**
 - As a fellow man, He can understand our desperate situation as those who are cut off from God and He can offer sacrifices for us.
 - But no one has a right to appoint himself to do this.
 - You can’t just say, “I am going to offer sacrifices for sin to make everything right with God.”
 - That is what people try to do all the time, but you can’t really ever pay for your sins or for anybody else’s unless God has authorised you to be their, or your, priest.

- God has to initiate the whole thing and appoint the priest by His own authority in His mercy—only if He is willing.
 - Verse 4 says, “**No man takes this honour to himself,**” and then verse 5 & 6 explain that even Christ was appointed by God to be a priest.
- But Hebrews 5:7-9 explains what makes His work as a priest acceptable!
 - He might have been appointed by God and failed in His work... but He did not.
- e. He was an acceptable priest because He alone understood our desperate condition so that His prayers were heard and His offering accepted.
 - When He became flesh and became one with us, and when He went to the cross to bear our sins, He fully understood and experienced our guilt and the wrath of God upon us.
 - This mighty lion of the tribe of Judah was made desperate when He undertook this work of representing us.
 - Heb 5:7-9 explains it all: “**who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest...**”
 - No other priest had godly fear like Him—no other priest knew the depths of the sins He was interceding for—no other priest could truly have compassion and no other priest could suffer (they were not even called to pretend that they could) as He did when He became sin for us and felt the consequences of our sins.
 - He was, as verse 9 says, *perfected* by His sufferings.
 - He did the work that was required for the remission of our sins.
 - And because He did that work, He is here called (v. 9) **the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him...**
 - What a wonderful name—the author of eternal salvation!
 - Obeying Him means that we obey His call—we hear Him and we come to Him in true faith...
 - Recognising how important it is to have forgiveness by Him...
 - And recognising that He really can save us as our priest who has been made perfect.

Conclusion:

- So see that you enter into His rest!
 - **Hebrews 4:11: “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest.”**
 - If you do, you will live forever.