

**Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

<sup>9</sup> There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup> for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. <sup>11</sup> Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. **This is God's Word.**

**Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

Have you ever wished that we could go back in time and have things the way they were 20 years ago or 30 years ago or even 50 years ago? We sometimes yearn for the "good ole days," and yet as we yearn for those days we often are remembering the good times and somehow forgetting about the difficulties and troubles we might have had.

And then if we went back in time, what about giving up some of the nice things we consider necessities today. Would you be willing to give up your cell phone and texting. Would you be satisfied with a 19" black and white TV that only gets 4 channels? Would it be okay if all the stores closed at 6:00 PM and nothing was open on Sundays? What if none of the homes in your neighborhood had air conditioning? Present or past – which is better? I guess age and current circumstances might dictate your answer. Many Jews, at the time this letter was written, wanted to stay in the past when it came to their worship life but then they would miss the blessings of the present.

As we consider the portion of scripture before us today we have to, **"Recognize the great realities in our lives."** **"What are the perils we face,"** and **"What is the power that carries us through."**

**I. "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup> for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his."** We all need rest. If we don't get a good night's sleep it affects our day and our attitude and our relationships and our

health. But we also need spiritual rest – rest for our souls. That’s where we also come up short at times.

The Jewish people had distorted God’s Sabbath rest so that the focus was on what they had to do rather than on what Christ had done for them. Thus they missed out on the spiritual rest God wanted them to have and wore themselves out trying to be “good people” and work their way to heaven.

So how do we get this rest – God’s rest – that the writer is talking about? It can only come through faith. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Ephesians, **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.”** (Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith brings us spiritual rest because it lifts the burden of our sins from our hearts. People try to get rid of their guilt by balancing the scales with their works but all that does is wear you out. We can never do enough to pay for our sins – plenty of people try but all their efforts are useless. Only Christ could pay the price God demands and he did for each and every one of us so that we can enter God’s rest – that peace for our soul we all need.

That doesn’t mean we no longer have to do good works. We still want to listen to God and to do what pleases him but our motivation is to do these good things as a way of saying thank you for the gift of salvation that he has given to us. And so our work for the Lord is done with joy – it is a labor of love.

**“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”** We can’t save ourselves – only God can do that but once we have been brought to faith we work with the Holy Spirit to keep God the number one priority in our lives so that we don’t fall away from the one who can bring us this spiritual rest.

Recently I had someone tell me they were a ECWF Lutheran. They attend church on Easter, Christmas, Weddings and Funerals. Is that enough? I don’t know about you, but for me it isn’t. I need to be filled with God’s love daily. There are a lot of difficulties of life that drain me every day and my sins add to those difficulties as well as the influence of the world in which I live. So I look to God’s Word to refresh me and remind me of my Savior’s love. I look to God’s Word to assure me my sins are forgiven. I look to God’s Word to pick me up and support me as he promises to walk with me every day.

And God does that for you too. There are many things that can make your day somewhat challenging. Maybe your kids don't always listen to you and then they make poor decisions and complain because life is so unfair. Maybe your relationship with your spouse or your boss or your parents isn't what you want it to be and you wonder why life can't be easier. Maybe you are finding out that the "Golden Years" aren't so golden – as one member told me, "They can be somewhat rusty," and you are getting tired of seeing your doctor so often. Maybe you have lost friends and loved ones and you don't like the loneliness you now face. These challenges can easily take us down a path away from God before we even realize it.

But the reality of life is that this is when we need God the most. When we need him to talk to us through his Word and assure us of his love that comes to us as he forgives us our sins. This is when we need his reminder to forgive as we have been forgiven. This is when, no matter what is going on in our lives, we have his assurance that he will not leave us or forsake us but he will help carry us through whatever is eating away at our soul and he will. He is the one who can bring us true rest for body and soul because he has the power to do immeasurably more than we could ever need or ask for. How does that power of God come to us?

**II. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."** God's Word is filled with the vitality of God. That is how he comforts us, how he strengthens us, how he brings us peace and contentment – through his Word. God's Word isn't just a book but it is active – working to change hearts. The writer says that it is sharp like a double-edged sword. I like to think of it more as a surgeon's scalpel cutting to the very heart of my soul to expose my sin and then to cut that sin out and cast it away from me through the healing of forgiveness. The consequences on my sin might be painful, but once it is removed I can heal.

The writer points out that God wields the sword of his word to make those fine cuts – so small we can't see them but God can for he knows all and sees all. That's why he can judge the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. That is a frightening thought – nothing is hidden from God but the writer soothes us with these words, **"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our**

**weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”**

Jesus is our perfect high priest who sacrificed himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He knows each sin we have committed because he suffered for each one in our place. He's not like the Old Testament priests who could only enter the holy of holies once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people. No, He has gone through the heavens directly to the throne of his Father on our behalf.

He knows the temptations we face because he, himself faced those Some kind of temptations when he was on this earth but he never gave into one – he was perfect in everything he did so that we can have forgiveness and the sure hope of eternal life. That is why we can approach God's throne of grace with confidence – because of everything that Jesus has done for us.

So the reality of life is that we need our God because only his power, love and mercy can save us. We might think we can take care of ourselves and do enough for our salvation but we can't. Only Christ could take our place and be perfect without any sin. Only Christ could meet his Father's demand of perfection for us.

So be happy that God is so active in your lives. As you read, study and hear his Word speaking to you, soak up the relief, the comfort and the joy that comes from a living and active Word. As you face the realities in life – face them with Jesus at your side – listen to him speak to you and look to him to guide you. And when times get tough let him wrap his arms around you through his Word. Amen.