

## Hebrews 4-1-11

Announce- schreiner's book on perseverance...

### Sermon introduction:

Several years ago, I was at a Shari's restaurant enjoying a meal with a friend. I could not stop staring at an older gentleman sitting in the booth next to us, by himself. Why? In between bites of broccoli, he kept falling asleep, literally. He would take a bite, chew for a few seconds, fall asleep mid chew, and then wake up 45 seconds later, take another bite of food, chew, and then fall asleep. This went on for 30 minutes. I asked the waiter if he was ok, and she said, "yes, he is a regular. He has narcolepsy."

**What is Narcolepsy?** It is a chronic sleep disorder in which patients fall asleep at inappropriate times for a few seconds or 30 minutes.

This is one of many sleep disorders. There are others...

**Insomnia**- the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep.

**Sleep Apnea**- you stop breathing for short bursts while you sleep.

**Restless Legs Syndrome**- the feeling of creeping, crawling, prickling, burning, itching, or tugging sensations in the legs while resting or sitting for extended periods of time.

**Periodic Limb Movement Disorder**- is characterized by sudden, involuntary, and repetitive leg jerking that occurs at the onset of sleep as well as during the course of sleep.

Others find it hard to sleep because they are worried about their job, their kids, their finances, their health, or their relationships.

Rest is hard to find! Isn't it?

While physical rest is hard to find, spiritual rest is even harder to find.

We can sleep 10 hours a night, and still not find rest for our souls. Or we can rest on the beach for six-months in Hawaii and still not find rest for our souls. Or we can smoke lots of pot or drink lots of alcohol and still not find rest for our souls.

How do you find rest for our souls? Rest is mentioned ten times in our passage.

Our text not only tells us how to find rest, it commands us to find rest. Rest is serious business.

The author of Hebrews exhorts us to *strive to enter God's rest!*

To do this we must understand two things-

*The promise of rest*  
*The receiving of rest*

### First, the promise of rest

*Hebrews 4:1-9...*

These are complicated verses. Why? The author of Hebrews has a very intricate knowledge of OT details, timelines, and theology. Many of us don't.

With that said, the point of verses 1-9 is very clear, there is still a promise of rest for God's people.

The author of Hebrews proves this by looking at five periods of Israel's history. For the sake of simplicity, we are going to look at them chronologically, not in verse order.

### **Period 1- the promise of rest at creation.**

**Hebrews 4:3-4 (ESV)** — **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."

In the second half of verse 3 the author of Hebrews quotes psalm 95, reminding his audience that Israel's unbelief kept them out of the promised land.

The word "rest," in verse 3, brings up Genesis 2:2. In Genesis 2:2 we read, that God rested on day seven of creation.

What is the point? Our rest is grounded in God's rest. Notice that it is God's rest. Verse 3 says, "they shall not enter my rest." God's rest is a superb rest. It is rooted in the satisfaction of a job very well done. Furthermore, it is a rest that leads to great joy (Job 38:7).

It is God's rest!!!

### **Kent Hughes writes,**

"To catch something of the idea here, imagine yourself invited by Prince Charles to enjoy his "rest." You are picked up by the Royal limo at Heathrow and whisked into London and through the gates of Windsor Palace where you are shown its glories. Then the two of you motor north in his 1968 Aston Martin to Balmoral Castle where you relax before a fire, scratch the ears of the royal hounds, and don a kilt and explore the royal trout streams. You are sharing what Prince Charles calls "my rest" - his personal rest."

Our rest is rooted in God's rest.

### **Period 2- the promise of rest outside of Canaan.**

**Hebrews 4:1-3 (ESV)** — **1** 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. **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.

Verse 1... The word "therefore" in verse 1 indicates that the author is applying the story of the wilderness wanderings from the previous section.

Verse 2... The Israelites are on the edge of the promised land (Numbers 14). They heard the good news that God will give them the promised land. All they had to do was enter it.

But... the Israelites did not believe God's promise to give them the land. They said, "there are too many Canaanites, they are too big, they are too powerful, there are too many cities, God can't help us."

Verse 2...

But, they did not believe the good news like Caleb and Joshua.

"the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened."

God promised Israel that they would experience rest in the promised land, but they refused to believe God's promise, so they were not allowed entry.

Later on, some other Israelites finally entered the land. This brings us to the next period.

### **Period 3- the promise of rest in Canaan.**

**Hebrews 4:8 (ESV) — 8** For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

Finally, 40 years later, the Israelites enter the promise land. They experienced real rest!

**Joshua 21:44 (ESV) — 44** And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.

See also Joshua 22:4, 23:1

But was this the true promised land? Verse 8b indicates that there was something more to experience. "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on."

The physical promised land gave Israel rest from their enemies, but it points us to something much greater, the eternal promised land, the spiritual Canaan, Heaven.

This brings us to the next period.

### **Period 4- the promise of rest under David.**

**Hebrews 4:5-7 (ESV) — 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."

Verses 5-6 quote psalm 95:11, warning us that unbelief will keep us from experiencing rest.

Then in Verse 7 the author of Hebrews quotes from psalm 95:7 written by King David. Why is this important? This psalm was written at least 300 years after Israel inherited the promised land, the land of rest. And David says that rest is still available for the saints. Implying that Canaan was not the ultimate place of rest.

What about today? This brings us to the last period....

### **Period 5- the promise of rest today.**

After a long and complicated section (Hebrews 4:1-9) the author of Hebrews tells us, that there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God.

**Hebrews 4:1 (ESV) — 1** Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands,...

**Hebrews 4:6 (ESV) — 6** Since therefore it remains for some to enter it,...

*Summarizing the whole section...*

**Hebrews 4:9 (ESV) — 9** So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,

***There is a promise of rest for us!!! For you!!!***

**Illustration:**

Have you ever wanted rest so bad you could hardly think about anything else?

I was at a men's conference and a friend of mine was stuck in a hotel room with a snorer. At 2am he got up and purchased his own room. He wanted rest so bad he was willing to pay \$150 for it.

Hell weak...

**“Navy SEAL Hell Week is a five-and-a-half day stretch in which candidates sleep only about four total hours, run more than 200 miles and do physical training for more than 20 hours per day.”**

It is normal for these guys to fall asleep standing up. The key is to keep moving...

All they can think about is rest!!! Sleep!!!

Do you want rest??? Not physical rest, but rest for your soul? God offers it to us. But how do we receive it? This brings us to the next point.

*First, the promise of rest!*

**Second, the receiving of rest!**

**When can we rest? Now!**

We can receive it right now!!!

**Hebrews 4:1 (ESV) — 1** Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands...

**Hebrews 4:3 (ESV) — 3** For we who have believed enter that rest...

**Hebrews 4:6 (ESV) — 6** Since therefore it remains for some to enter it...

We can receive rest for our souls right now, when we believe!!!

If we can't find rest for our souls right now, the emphasis on finding rest "today" in verses 6-7 makes no sense.

But there is mystery.

***This rest is an already not yet rest...***

Joshua led Israel into the promised land. Israel eventually experienced real rest, from real enemies, in a physical land, in the middle East. But it was not the true and final rest.

In a similar sense Jesus gives us real rest now.

The name "Joshua" (in the Greek) is spelled in Hebrews in the exact same way that Jesus is spelled in Greek.

Jesus is the new and better Joshua. Joshua led the people of God into the physical promised land, where they experienced some rest.

Jesus leads the people of God into the eternal promised land through his life, death, and resurrection.

The promised land was never meant to be the place of ultimate rest, it points us beyond, to the eternal promised land.

Jesus leads us into the eternal promised land, Heaven, but we can experience that rest now to some degree if we know Jesus, at least this is what Jesus says,

**Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV) — 28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

"As he looks out on a desert-wandering humanity, his solution is 'come to me.'

Not, 'come to a set of teachings (Although Jesus does call us to that as well);  
not, 'Come to church' (although Jesus does call us to a community of faith);  
not, 'Come to your psychologist' (although God can use gifted counselors);  
not, 'Come to a vacation' (although an evaluation of our tendencies to work too hard and a reassessment of our life priorities may be in order).

No. Rather, he says, 'come to me.'" (NIVAC)

### **Application:**

Christian, where do you find rest? Vacations, wine, retirement, binge watching, parties, beaches. Some of these things are good things, but they will not give you true rest.

True rest is found in relationship with Jesus.

Why can't our souls rest? They are looking for rest in all the wrong places.

When we realize that we are loved and accepted through Jesus we don't have to strive to find acceptance and meaning in money, work, relationships, or things.

In the fourth century **St. Augustine** said to God, “you have formed us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you oh God.” (Book I.1.1)

Christian, you know where to find rest. Are you telling others where to find rest?

People in our culture are so worn out. They are totally exhausted and unfulfilled in their pursuit of sex, money, pleasure, power, vacations, influence, and perfect health.

In an interview Madonna said,

*“I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy. . . I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being, and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting. . . . Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still have to prove I'm Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.”*

No rest. . . for Madonna, the idol of success will not let her rest.

We don't have to prove to anybody that we are somebody because we are somebody in Christ.

We know where to find rest, don't we? Let's tell others.

*When can we rest? Now!*

**When can we finally rest? When we die!**

**Hebrews 4:9–10 (ESV)** — **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.

Before I really studied verse 10, I thought it was about resting from a lifestyle of works righteousness. But God did not stop working to earn God's favor. While I think we should rest from a lifestyle of works righteousness, this is not what verse 10 is about. What is verse 10 about?

The author of Hebrews says that God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day. According to verse 10, we stop working in the same way that God stops working. When does God stop working, when his work is done. When do we stop working, when our work is done. When is our work done as Christians? When we die.

This makes sense in light of the context. The author is writing to Christians who want to give up. They are not struggling with work's righteousness, they are tired of being persecuted. He tells them to hang in there. There is a day coming when they can stop toiling, striving, and working hard. When is that? When we die!!!

**Revelation 14:13 (ESV)** — **13** And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

Isn't this good news?

When you enter the eternal promised land, the land of rest, there will be no more toil!

No more fighting to believe...

No more fighting against sin..

No more fighting to read your bible and pray...

No more fighting against anxiety, pride, anger, etc..

We will celebrate the sabbath for all eternity, in the eternal promised land, that Jesus the new Joshua has secured for us.

That is why it is not death to die!

It is not death to die  
To leave this weary road  
And join the saints who dwell on high  
Who've found their home with God

It is not death to close  
The eyes long dimmed by tears  
And wake in joy before Your throne  
Delivered from our fears

It is not death to fling  
Aside this earthly dust  
And rise with strong and noble wing  
To live among the just

It is not death to hear  
The key unlock the door  
That sets us free from mortal years  
To praise You evermore

When we die, we can finally rest!!!

*But who receives this rest???* This brings us to the last question.

*When can we rest? Now!  
When can we finally rest? When we die!*

**Who receives rest? Those who believe!**

**Hebrews 4:1-3 (ESV)** — **1** 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. **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.

This takes us back to Israel waiting outside of the promised land. Only Caleb and Joshua believed that God will help them take the promised land, Israel did not. Therefore, only Caleb and Joshua entered the promised land and received rest.

We must believe the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ to receive rest.

Not only that, according to verse 1, we must be terrified of not believing God's promise of rest. "Let us fear..." Do you fear not believing? You should.

This is the good and healthy fear that causes a rock climber to check his or her harnesses and ropes before he or she climbs up a 2000-foot rock wall.

Believing is hard... isn't it? Therefore, we must strive to believe God's promises of rest.

**Hebrews 4:11 (ESV) — 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.**

We have to strive to enter this rest by faith because we are so prone to want to earn God's rest through our efforts.

But we must strive to enter this rest by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The word for strive is also means to work hard, apply oneself diligently, or do one's best... (NIV app)

The more we trust, the more we rest!!! You can take this saying to the bank!

Conclusion:

We looked at two things-

*First, the promise of rest!*

*Second, the receiving of rest!*

Physical rest is elusive.

It is elusive for college students.

It is elusive for parents of young children.

It is elusive for parents of teens.

It is elusive for the elderly.

Fortunately, we know how to find the rest that matters. We can find rest for our souls in Jesus Christ. let's pray...