

40.day 2020

IN THE LONG RUN

WEEK 1: ON YOUR MARK

JULY 4

THE OFFER STILL STANDS

HEBREWS 4:1-16 | 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.¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience....¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession...¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the heart of God.
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the heart of God. (MCAFFEE)

Rest is a place. In the Old Testament, it's in the Promised Land. It's also in the Sanctuary where God himself reposes (1 KINGS 8:56; PSALM 132:8, 13-14).

Salvation is a journey to the heart of God. *Our hearts are restless until they*

rest in thee (AUGUSTINE). The wilderness generation failed to enter that Rest. But the offer still stands. Jesus has gone ahead of us into the Heavenly Sanctuary. He has opened the way for us to follow (HEBREWS 4:16; 6:19-20).

Rest is a posture. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (:10). We sample this Divine Rest when we pause from work and keep the Sabbath holy in worship. For the rest of the week, if we stop working in the flesh and rely on God's energy instead, we will enjoy a Perpetual Sabbath (MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR).

Rest is a practice. It's not inactivity, but activity performed from the place and posture of quiet rest. Jesus said, *My Father is working and so am I—* even on the Sabbath! (JOHN 5:16-18).

God created us to work (GENESIS 2:15). But work became irksome and fretful because of the Fall. Work done in haste irritates the soul and rattles the nerves of those around us. But if we drop out of the rat race, and do our work prayerfully unto the Lord, he will give us Rest. Work done in prayer and peace sanctifies both the worker and the work (ELDER PÁISIOS OF MT ATHOS).

Rest is a promise. We are given a foretaste of it here and now. But perfect and eternal Rest awaits us in the future, in the City of God (HEBREWS 12:22). Let us fear, says the Preacher, lest we fail to reach that Rest (4:13). The offer still stands. Will you take it?

*There is a place of full release,
Near to the heart of God.
A place where all is joy and peace
Near to the heart of God* (MCAFFEE).

PRAYER TRACK

Picture this. When resting in God, we are like cars that run quietly on batteries instead of burning up fuel and polluting the air. We are charged up by the divine energy of Father, Son and Spirit, instead of the human energy of hype, hubris, and hoopla. Lest we drift, let us pay attention to this extraordinary offer of Divine Rest by choosing to do the right things:

■ *Let us fear* lest we fail to enter God's Rest (4:1). A holy reverence of God is essential to a healthy relationship with God. The virus of Casual Christianity is ever present and very real. The fear of the Lord is a vaccine that sanitises us from the inside out. Ask God for a double dose for yourself, your family, your church. Ask for a triple dose for Gen Z. Why triple? Because they are the true digital natives, most vulnerable to the onslaught of lies and lust online. Plead with God for a revival marked by a holy fear of God to sanitise our city deep and wide.

■ *Let us strive* to enter God's Rest (4:11). Grace and effort are not mutually exclusive. Effort is essential for a healthy spiritual life. Ask God to expose and refute the fallacy of fake grace that dismisses human effort. Embrace the true grace that enables us to make the right efforts that produce the right result: Divine Rest. Keep a posture of total dependency on God. Pursue a lifestyle of *quiet wonder and glad surrender* in the presence of God (RICHARD FOSTER). Return to the ancient art of silence and solitude. In a world addicted to noise and show, it takes great effort to *discipline ourselves so that our words are few and full* (RICHARD FOSTER).

■ *Let us hold fast* to our confession of faith (4:14). Singapore's policy of religious freedom guarantees every person the right to profess, practise, and propagate his or her faith. Are we making the most of this opportunity? Or have we been diluting or muting our confession in order to secure social capital or economic advantage? Resist this spirit of

compromise. *Whoever confesses me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven* (MATTHEW 10:32-33).

■ *Let us draw near* to the throne of grace (4:16). Are you awed by the magnitude of this privilege? We can have a personal conversation with the Ruler of the universe anytime, anywhere. The pandemic has given many of us more time than ever to seek the Lord. Did we make the most of it? Or have we squandered it? The offer still stands. What's bugging you today? What angsty emotions are you suppressing? Draw near. Pour out your soul. Receive mercy. Find grace to help in this time of need.

■ *Let us fix our eyes on God* for the coming election. Rest in his sovereignty. Online and offline, pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands to God, free from anger or contempt or quarrelling (1 TIMOTHY 2:8).