

WE SEE JESUS ~ Giving Us Rest

† We will rest in holiness.
 † We will rest in eternal life.

In the name of Jesus, our promised Rest, dearly redeemed believers:

Remember this one? “You deserve a break today. So get up and get away to MacDonald’s.” Southwest Airlines has been asking, “Need to get away?” Each commercial has somebody doing something dumb, like the referee showing up at a coin toss with only a dollar bill. We can all relate. I can only write so many sermons or make so many calls before I need to get away too. Jesus actually told His disciples, “*Come away by yourselves...and rest for a while.*” (Mark 6:31 NASB) We all need rest.

For the last forty days during this Lenten season we’ve been looking at Jesus through Old Testament laws, sacrifices and ceremonies. Like a summer evening with someone’s shadow coming around a building, we’ve heard the voice of God in living prophecies of the Christ to come. God’s long range planning is one of the things that makes Him so dear to us. We are not an afterthought. Such love makes us want to listen and learn and grow in our faith. In the Sabbath law before us this Easter morning, **WE SEE JESUS Giving Us Rest**. Each time an Israelite family observed the Sabbath, they were seeing another living prophecy only fulfilled in Jesus, the Blessed One, the Christ of God. Today **We See Jesus Giving Us Rest**. **We will rest in holiness. We will rest in eternal life.** But is this just physical?

† We will rest in holiness.

This command is so easy to misunderstand. Some people even say, “I don’t want to live where everyone is holy or perfect!” That’s like saying, “I always want my roof to leak.” Or, “Give me at least one flat tire!” Or, “A perfectly peaceful neighborhood – bah!” “One disease – is that too much to ask?”

The only thing wrong with **holiness** is that we can’t be holy on our own. But church people sure want to try. For instance, when God said, “*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy,*” the Jewish people messed up on what God said He meant by that. They made up strange laws about not dragging a stick on the ground because they said that would be “plowing.” Or 99 steps from the city wall was okay, but 101 was more than a “Sabbath Day’s journey.” They kept working so hard at their own rules and regulations, they became exhausted like a basketball team running plays every which way except to the hoop. The best spiritual athletes cannot achieve God’s **holiness**. We’re all too blind to score.

We all need God to say again, “*Let there be light.*” We need Jesus to heal our eyes with His Word and help us see Him. Ancient Romans thought Jews were lazy and blasted them in the media for taking Sabbath rest. But God had hidden a promise in this law that everyone kept missing. Do you see it? This was truly awesome and unprecedented. God actually commanded: “*The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.*” Slaves worked every day of their lives. Sons and daughters were only as valuable as they were profitable. Animals never got a break until the gracious LORD God of the Bible gave the Sabbath law to help us **See Jesus Giving Us Rest**. The Sabbath pictured God’s **rest in holiness** for our souls as He said through His holy writer to Jewish Christians troubled by persecution: “*There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.*” (Hebrews 4:9f)

What’s going on at work or in school right now? What has your stomach tied up in knots? What wakes you up at night in a cold sweat? What do you really wish you could stop? All these worries and cares trace back to our sin. God created a perfect world where none of these effects of sin could happen.

But Adam and Eve rebelled. Now all of us trying hard to live life right, fail miserably. Sin and its consequences have ruined the holy rest God intended for His creation. Where is this **Sabbath-rest**?

Every Sabbath Day was another spotlight on Jesus. God's people were not to sit at home and just watch TV or only rest their bodies at the lake. God commanded a "**holy convocation**," a worship service for His people every Sabbath to come and find rest for their souls. Each time they heard God's Word it was like the angel rolling back the stone on Jesus' grave. We're here this morning to look inside again as the angel tells us, "**He is not here. He is risen as He said!**" Death itself could not keep Jesus down. All our sin heaped on Him by God could not keep Him dead. Our struggling in this life could only end shamefully in hell. But Jesus got it all right, then suffered all our wrong. Now that He has risen again, His new life of victory over death and sin is ours through Baptism. Jesus explains through His Apostle Paul: "**We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**" (Romans 6:3-4 NIV) "**New life**" is a gift of God we can never earn. We keep coming to Sunday worship to rest in Christ's **holiness** because here we hear God say, "Look! The tomb is empty. Your sins are all forgiven."

† **We will rest in eternal life.**

That's the only way to get to this true **rest** where mind and heart are truly at peace and your body doesn't feel the need to struggle anymore. You can only get to **eternal life** through the empty tomb of Christ's resurrection morning. Watch His disciples and the women stumbling along without faith and hope. See them scurrying about all stressed out until the Lord Jesus convinces them with His Word that He truly has risen as He promised. Jesus put them on their way to the eternal Sabbath rest of God.

700 years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah was inspired by the same Holy Spirit to end his long prophecy with this description of heaven: "**From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,**" says the Lord. "**And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.**" (Isaiah 66:23f NIV) Wait a minute! That doesn't sound so good. Endless centuries of Sabbaths worshiping God and enjoying His company sounds great. But going out to look at dead bodies still burning in a garbage dump of crawling worms? God wants us to see that there is no **rest** without Jesus' resurrection. All who refuse to repent of their sins continue Adam's rebellion by their unbelief. "**There is no rest for the wicked,**" says Isaiah again and again.

Sometimes people wonder why we try so hard to bring people to new life in Christ. It's not to pay our bills or make our church bigger and bigger. It's love. We marvel at God's gorgeous love for sinners like us who truly deserve an eternal prison term in the burning garbage dump of hell. Instead God has rescued us by His own Son dying our death on the cross and rising to life eternal. And God says He did this for everyone, as if He wrote out a check for **eternal life** and signed it with the blood of Jesus. And just to make it easy, He did not hide the check in some mountain stream or one of 10,000 lakes in our land. He put the message in His holy Word and commanded His church to preach it faithfully.

Here our worship only gives temporary relief because every believer still has an old sinful nature, a traitor inside trying to join with the devil and the world to spoil everything and land us huffing in hell. But Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection. He raised Himself, He can sure as heaven raise us just as He promised. With no more sinful nature holding us back, we will sing God's praises as easy as an eternal championship after a hard fought fight. **We See Jesus Giving Us Rest** as no ancient Sabbath ever could. **Holiness** and **eternal life** – are better than a full tank of gas, or freedom from computer viruses. Good health and happy times can't hold a candle to such kindness from God. We cannot earn this, but God proved by the cross and the empty tomb that He wants to give it. There may be stormy seas ahead before we get there, but this cruise ship won't stop until the bell sounds in paradise harbor. Thank God for a Captain like Jesus who will not rest until we can be there with Him forever. His nail-pierced hands are at the helm. Those wounds from the cross are trophies of His love for you. Keep coming to worship because here **We See Jesus Giving Us Rest**. Glory be! His grace I see – now and eternally. Amen.