Give Thanks for Rest

11/22/26

As we get ready for a major holiday, one of the things we get ready for is food. Many will eat turkey this coming Thanksgiving Day. Last year, 46 million turkeys were killed and consumed during the Thanksgiving holiday in America. We spend most of the holiday eating and spending time with family. Britannica states Thanksgiving is a national holiday dedicated to expressing gratitude for the past year's blessings, sharing a meal with family and friends, and reflecting on community and generosity. I wonder what percentage of the day do we spend on Thanksgiving expressing gratitude for past year's blessings or even reflecting on them. What can we gives thanks for in the past year? Can we give thanks for the wars going on or maybe we can give thanks for all the political craziness or maybe we can give thanks for all the good stuff on social media (just kidding). Many people will celebrate Thanksgiving with a negative mind and heart this year. However, there is one group that should be able to celebrate Thanksgiving with much joy and expectation this Thanksgiving. Do you know what group that might be? If you said "Christians", I believe you made the right choice. The problem is many really don't know what to be thankful for. If one is going through trials and sufferings, it's not easy to get motivated to gives thanks. We may not be able to think of something to be thankful for. Well, as we continue with Hebrews, I believe we can find something in today's Scripture that we will be dissecting that will help us find something to be thankful for.

Let's turn to Hebrews 4: 1-10 where we read this, "**4** God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it.[2] For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God.[a][3] For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said,

"In my anger I took an oath:
'They will never enter my place of rest,'"[b]

even though this rest has been ready since he made the world.[4] We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: "On the seventh day God rested from all his work."[c][5] But in the other passage God said, "They will never enter my place of rest."[d]

[6] So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God.[7] So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted:

"Today when you hear his voice,
don't harden your hearts."[e]

[8] Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come.[9] So there is a special rest[f] still waiting for the people of God.[10] For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

As we look at this piece of Scripture, we see the author of this letter uses a term here repeatedly. That word is rest. To us, this term can mean rest from work or when we feel tired, we find a comfortable chair to rest in. When this letter was written, rest had a different view. The word "rest" was used many times in the books of the Old Testament. The writer here makes reference to one way it was used. In the Old Testament, rest would mean – Sabbath of rest. In fact, the Hebrew writer uses Sabbath -rest in verse 9. The writer also makes mention of Sabbath rest in verses 4 and 8 where God rested on the Sabbath. The Greek term used for "rest" in these two verses mean – to keep from; to give rest (Strong's Concordance). In other words, God kept from anything that would keep Him from rest on that special day. So, when many of the Christian Jews would hear about rest, their thoughts would focus on the Sabbath day of rest. If you remember, the Pharisees had issues with Jesus because He allowed His disciples to pick food in a field so they could eat (Matthew 12: 1-8). Jesus was doing that on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees wanted the Jews to not get away from observing the Sabbath like they did in the Old Testament times, so they added a lot of extra Sabbath laws to keep the Jews from doing any kind of work. If you go to Jewish hospitals, their elevators are set up to stop at every floor without stopping so you don't have to push a button on Saturday – their Sabbath. That is just one example of how important it is to them to do no work on the Sabbath. It was like that during the time this letter was written. So, the writer here is trying to get the Christian Jews to transition their view of Sabbath rest onto something bigger. That Sabbath rest in the Old Testament was just a foretaste of something better. In verse three, we see that the writer adds that Israel could not enter His rest. The writer here is talking about when Israel was to go into the Promise land with Moses (Hebrews 3: 16-19). The writer here now adds that rest for the Jews was also to be found in the Promise Land, even though they refused to obey God and became stuck in the wilderness for forty years. They were not allowed to enter His rest because of their unbelief. So, not only was there Sabbath rest, but the writer now adds rest in the promise land. What does that mean? It means that the Jews would find rest in the promise land – which was the will of God for them. We can find rest when fulfilling the will of God in our lives. However, they refused to believe that God would be with them to conquer the land, so because of their unbelief, they couldn't enter into that promise land until that old generation died off. Then, the writer adds onto this rest. Not only is there Sabbath rest and rest in the Promise land, but he states in verse one that entering His rest still stands. He adds in verse two about we also have the good news today. There still remains a Sabbath-rest today (verse 9). The writer is transitioning this rest into a new way through Jesus Christ. There is Sabbath rest, rest in the Promise land, and now rest found in Jesus Christ through faith (verse 2). Israel didn't have faith and couldn't enter the Promise land in the Old Testament until that old unfaithful generation died off. The same goes for today, we can't enter rest through Jesus with no faith. Faith is needed. Let's continue.

Go to Hebrews 4: 11-13, where the writer of Hebrews continues, "11 So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.

[12] For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.[13] Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Just like those in the wilderness, if we refuse to want to enter His rest, we will perish in our sin (verse 1). It is God's will for us to enter this new rest that Jesus has made available to us. However, God has allowed us to make that choice. He does give us grace to help us to get to the point where we can make a choice freely. Without that grace, our sin would not allow us to make that choice on our own. Plus, that door of opportunity is not always open. If you haven't allowed Jesus into your heart and you know Jesus is knocking on your heart's door, don't reject Him. His grace is helping you to see your need for His forgiveness. The writer here wants the people to understand that their rest now can be found in Jesus Christ. This rest is salvation through Jesus. The "rest" is having the burden of our sin nailed to the cross of Jesus. Those chains of sin can be removed and our rest begins through Jesus. Life is hard enough, why have all the weight of our horrible sin added to it. We need this new rest to help us to be able to survive our short journey on this earth. How do we find the instruction manual for this new type of rest? The writer tells us that the word of God is alive and active (verse 12). It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow and it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. The word of God is our instruction manual. It tells us through the Holy Spirit all about this rest that can be found in Jesus. God's word tells us about what will happen when we refuse His rest which only can be found in Jesus, not through doing only good works. Jesus is the only One who can fix a life that is filled to the brim with sin. Nothing is hidden from God's sight and we all must give account when we come to the final stage of our rest. What is the final stage of our rest?

Let's finish with Hebrews 4: 14-16, "[14] So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe.[15] This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.[16] So let us come boldly to the throne

of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com).

The final stage of our rest will be found in heaven. There, our rest will come to its final installment for all eternity. We will get to be with our High Priest, which is Jesus Christ for all eternity. But while we wait for that final fulfillment of our rest in Jesus, our High Priest will help us now with our rest on earth till we get to our heaven rest. The writer here is telling us even though we look forward to heaven rest; Jesus can help us find His rest here on earth. Jesus, who walked this earth, knows what we go through in every way. He knows all the struggles we go through – not just physically, but spiritually and mentally. I think we should stamp verse 16 on our smart phone screens to remind us every day the rest we can find through Jesus. Not only do we find rest through salvation, but also we find rest with everything that is a byproduct of salvation through Jesus. Let's read verse 16 again, "[16] So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com).That is part of our rest here on earth. We can find grace to help us when we need it most. Jesus tells us that plainly in Matthew 11: 28-30, "Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.' (NLT)" Again, that rest is not only salvation, but also the byproducts – Godly joy, peace, wisdom, etc.. Plus, that rest contains the understanding that He is by our side through thick or thin on this earth until His Spirit guides us to our final rest in Heaven. This may sound strange, but maybe we should spend time Thanksgiving Day in giving thanks for the "rest" we can find in Jesus. The rest we can find today, tomorrow, and for eternity. If you don't know Jesus, that rest is available to you. Jesus died on the cross so that His rest would be available to anybody – to all sinners. Let Him teach you all about His rest so that you can live this short life on this earth with the right mental focus. We do have much to be thankful for. Be thankful for the rest we can find in Jesus.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001.