

Shepherd of the Springs Lutheran Church

Good Friday, 2011

Text: Luke 23: 44-49

Theme: Its Time to Rest

Father into thy hands I commend my spirit

When the work is all done, when the task is completed, when what has needed to be accomplished is achieved, when all is finally finished - well then, its time to rest. With the sixth word spoken by our Lord on the cross, *It is finished!* - well it was. He who knew no sin became sin for us. Finished. He poured out his innocent blood and gave his body as a holy and perfect sacrifice for our sin. Finished. The wages of sin is death - Jesus paid them. Finished. God was in the crucified Christ reconciling the whole world to himself - the work of full and complete redemption from sin, death and the devil. Finished. Jesus then spoke his seventh and final word from the cross when all things had been accomplished: *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.* ...Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we listen to His last word this evening, as all things for us and for our eternal inheritance have been completed, accomplished, *finished* It is time to rest.

When God's finishes His work, He takes a rest. In this completion of our Lord of His work of redemption, we hear an echo from His work in creation. In six days, the Lord our God labored to complete a masterful plan of creation which was climaxed by that sixth creative word, *Let us make man in our own image - male and female.* God sculpted and refined Adam's body out of the clay of the ground and then committed to him a spirit from his divine breathing Spirit and the human being became a reflection of God himself. It was finished - there on the sixth day. And on the seventh day, having completed His creative work He set out to accomplish, He rested from His labors. When the work is all done, its time to rest. The Lord God then sanctified the seventh day - He made it a day of rest for his children of Israel under the Old Covenant. Let six days be enough for the week's worth of labors; in the fields, with the herds, with the commerce of the cities and the towns, in the home. After six days of labor in the week, *call it finished!* -- God spoke to his people through Moses about the seventh day, the Sabbath day - *My children, its time to rest.*

But for we sons and daughters of Adam, what does the old fleshly Adam in all of us do? We take our labors of life into our own hands and we use them to try to fashion something by which we can commend ourselves. We would make of our labors, not the service for meeting our neighbor's needs, but goals we need to accomplish to make life come out right for us. Like Adam tried to do, we commend our spirits and welfare to our own hands - and take charge of our own existence, that we might justify ourselves and as we say today, *get a real life.* And in response to these our restless struggles, God's Law consigns our whole effort to sin and wickedness, and as they say,

there is no rest for the wicked. God's Law has made a squirrel cage out of life for us. We run frantically through life, we run in circles, we muster all our work and labors into one giant campaign to get a life... and it isn't working. We redouble our efforts, we stress out over our failures, we stare at despair for the work that is not done. we are exhausted . . . and we need rest.

But there is no Sabbath Day of rest from the work God requires in his holy Law! It has been with us relentlessly as a constant demand, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When Adam and Eve shook their fists at God and through their rebellion said to their Creator, *into our own hands we will commend our spirits* - sin entered the world and death with it. And then because of sin, the Law was added. God said: *well now - if you want to commend your spirit by your own hands - if you want to be like me and be in charge of your own existence, if you want to put your ultimate trust in your own hands, here is what you must be and do in order to live and have a happy forever. My holy Law shall be your labor - this is what you must do to justify your existence - These are My commands that shall comprise for you the spirit of life - blow them off, fall short at any time, take a rest from what they demand, and you die of your own doing.*

Dearly beloved in Christ, its time to rest. But where can we find a Sabbath rest and one that can last more than a few hours? Do we not find it in the seventh word of our Lord from the cross? *Father into thy hands...* Remember the sixth word - *It is finished!* We discover our rest in the bloody hands of Christ on the cross which we have joined in our baptism. God has reconciled you to Himself in the bloody cross of Christ and He no longer counts your trespasses against you. The wrath of God toward you and your sins has been stilled . . . it is finished in the finished work of the crucified Christ. He rests now, and you may rest now in Him also.

Father into Thy hands I commend my Spirit. As the Son commended His spirit to the Father, He commends our as well. It is time to rest. . . .They took our Lord's dead body off the cross and laid it into the donated tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. How fitting . . . the Sabbath day of rest was about to begin. How ironic . . . they have declared this day to be Earth Day. The only thing about this Earth Day that can give us any relief is that Jesus was finished with his redemptive work for all of us and He and our sins were put into the earth and laid to rest. The earth is the designated place to rest from the death to sin. The Man who knew no sin, Who became sin for us, who took our sins upon himself and paid the price for them . . . that man's body has been laid to rest in the earth, and with his body, our body of our sins were also laid to rest in that dark cold tomb as well. Moreover, as the Apostle has taught us . . . our old Adam was crucified and buried with Him in our baptism and we can therefore reckon ourselves dead to sin permanently. The death He died, He died once for all, so you may rest from the penalty of your sins forever.

So here this Good Friday night, our sinful selves and all our sins may rest with

Jesus here in his tomb. Our sins have been fully atoned for. Our enslavement to the Law has been overcome. God has become completely reconciled to us, just as we are. We rest in these amazing realities as we are here joined to the crucified, dead, and buried Jesus. We must understand that for Jesus, however, this is just a short nap. He is not long for this tomb. He will be proclaiming the Hell of it all to the Devil and all the souls in prison very soon. And then he will make our ears burn as we behold Him in flesh and blood. But for our old sinful self and our sins, they will remain here buried in his tomb forever. They are finished and we may rest on that. Its all over but the shouting . . . and we can start with some of that tomorrow night.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. A-men.