
Sermon Notes

February 19, 2017

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Missing Out Hebrews 4:1-13

What is Rest?

- ❖ Ceasing from work or any kind of action
 - stop doing what you're doing
 - distinction between rest and relaxation
- ❖ The rest God offers us means the end of "self-effort" as far as salvation is concerned
 - no more trying to win God's favor
 - God's rest is perfect
- ❖ The rest God offers us means freedom from whatever worries or disturbs us
- ❖ The rest God offers us means freedom from being so easily bothered and distracted by things
- ❖ The rest God offers us means to lie down, to be settled, fixed, secure
- ❖ The rest God offers us means remaining confident, full of faith and trust
- ❖ The rest God offers us means to lean on God now and for eternity

A Lesson From Israel's History

- ❖ The connecting word, *Therefore* at the beginning of chapter 4 reminds us that the information that's coming up is based on what the author lays out at the end of chapter 3
 - out of all who left Egypt under Moses' leadership, only Joshua and Caleb actually enter the Promised Land
 - don't fall into the same trap that Israel fell into
 - don't reject God's message like God's people did so many generations earlier (4:2)
- ❖ The good news of God's rest was fully and freely declared to those who lived before Jesus just as it is to we who live on the other side of Calvary
 - though the children of Israel heard the good news God had for them in the wilderness, it did not benefit them
 - they refused to believe what they were being told
- ❖ The message of God's good news
 - must be heard
 - must be received with faith
- ❖ Only when hearing is united with faith does the power of the gospel get unleashed in our lives (Romans 1:16)
 - what possible excuse can we have if we follow the poor example of the unbelieving Israelites?
 - John 12:48, *The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*

Psalm 95... Again!

- ❖ In vv. 3-7, the author of Hebrews circles back to Psalm 95
- ❖ For those who have heard the good news of God's rest but who have yet to receive it with believing faith, the opportunity still remains to accept what God offers
 - BUT, the opportunity does not remain indefinitely
 - v. 7, the time to receive God's saving grace and the rest that His salvation brings is **TODAY**
 - the time is coming when **TODAY** will turn into **TOMORROW**
 - *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.*

Strive to Enter That Rest

- ❖ There is a tremendous urgency about all this
 - *strive* = make haste, be in earnest, concentrate your energies on achieving the goal
 - God is not to be trifled with
 - God's rest is not to be trifled with
- ❖ All of us have an urgent need for ongoing spiritual surgery in our hearts
 - only the Word of God is capable of piercing into the innermost part of our hearts to evaluate whether our belief is real or not
 - the Word of God can never be disobeyed without consequences

- ❖ The Word is effective because it comes from God Himself
 - it is permanent and unchanging
 - it always accomplishes God's purposes (Isaiah 55:10-11)
 - it is more powerful, penetrating and precise than the sharpest instrument devised by man
 - the Word of God penetrates to the innermost depths of our personality
- ❖ Read the Word, meditate on the Word, memorize the Word, get the Word inside you so that its piercing, penetrating power can accomplish God's purpose in your life
 - *naked and exposed*
 - coming to God's Word on these terms destroys our pride and our misplaced beliefs in what we presume to be our wisdom and competence

Personal Application

1. Based on the description of God's rest given in this message, how well are you doing at resting in the Lord? What could you do better about that? What do you need to do in order for that to take place?
2. Are you aligned with the people in 4:3 who have believed and entered God's rest or are you among those in v.6 who have not yet responded to God's good news with saving faith? If you are in the latter group, is it time for this to change?
3. Do you come to God's Word each day and asking God to work through His Word to do spiritual surgery in your heart? If not, why not?