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PRESIDENT'S LETTER - AUGUST 06

"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God."

Hebrews 4:9

Summer used to bring a rhythm to life. In an agricultural society, there was a time to plant and a time to reap. There was a time to bale the hay. There was time to anxiously wait to combine the fields white for harvest. There was a time to rest the land and animals. The opening and closing of school revolved around the rhythm of the farm. I fondly remember summers spent on my grandfather's farm north of Watertown, SD.

This rhythm has been lost. Our Christian Day School opens next week. It seems that in spite of all our modern conveniences, finding rest for our bodies and minds has become hard work. People are increasingly stretched thin and are ready to snap. People don't have time for church and mid-week Bible Class. Families don't have time for family devotions. Church work days have very few people showing up on a regular basis. Congregations and church bodies tend to wear out the people that are willing to help.

Before we lament the state of our congregations and the CLC, we need to first examine ourselves. Pastors and teachers feel like there is not enough time in the day. Because of the nature of the work of the public ministry, the work is never done. Tending the sheep is an ongoing task for faithful shepherds. Many of our pastors and teachers, especially those with families, are seeking rest for their bodies and souls. It is easy to neglect your families or your work just because you feel burned out.

It is important that you find physical rest for your bodies. We sometimes forget how important the sleep the Lord gives to His beloved really is. We may be too busy for physical work and exercise. We may feel guilty if we take time out for our spouses and children. There was a saying at our recent family reunion in Missouri as we came to a state park two days after a tornado went through, "It's hard work to have fun." The Old Testament had the Sabbath Day which was an enforced day of physical rest for God's people. The book of Hebrews reminds us that the Sabbath Day pictured the eternal rest God's people will receive in paradise. Jesus spoke of bringing "rest for your souls." We will never achieve true rest in this world because of sin. There **remains** a heavenly rest for the people of God.

The book of Hebrews encourages us to lay aside our burdens of sin and run with endurance the race God has marked out for us. We are encouraged not to give up on Jesus, but we are to focus our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Completer of our faith. This reminder to continue, to endure to the end is especially needful for us who have been called into the public ministry.

It is a matter of priorities in our ministry and our life. Most of us are easily distracted. We end up doing things that really don't matter while we neglect the one thing needful. The remarkable labor-saving, technological advances of the last fifty years can be a trap. The car and transportation advances enable us to spread ourselves too thin in our work. The computer

with all of its help in our ministries can consume an inordinate amount of our time. The TV and DVD can become a mind numbing escape from reality. We look for rest in all the wrong places.

Entering into God's rest is easy because of Jesus, our Great High Priest. However, it is not easy for us as evidenced by God's Old Testament people Israel. The book of Hebrews encourages us, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11). We have to work at entering this rest.

The key is to read, study, and inwardly digest the Word of God. We will find rest in the saving message of the Bible. Our ministries also need to center around the rest-giving words of our Savior God. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Let us take the time to read and proclaim Jesus' life-giving words. Where else can we go to find rest for our souls? It will not be long until we enter into God's eternal rest.

May God give you rest for your our souls.

John Schierenbeck