

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 24) – October 20, 2024

“Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

– Hebrews 4:11-12 –

Often is the time that I’ve been asked just how much work we can do on the Sabbath without breaking the Sabbath. I work six days, am I breaking the Sabbath by cleaning my house? Sunday is my only day off so that is the day we do things as a family. Pastor, what about those who must work on the Sabbath, nurses, doctors, police officers, etc. Like little children, we test the limits of what we can get away with that isn’t breaking a rule or law.

What we frequently miss regarding the observance of the Sabbath and the memes on Facebook that suggest it’s okay not to be in church because the church is not a building, is that Sabbath rest is time with the Lord. Sabbath keeping is not sitting on the couch binge watching your favorite television show. To observe the Sabbath is to be in the presence of the Lord.

Martin Luther wrote this explanation to the third commandment in the Small Catechism. “We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” (Luther’s Small Catechism as printed in the Lutheran Study Bible, Concordia).

To hear the Word of the Lord is to be confronted with the law that cuts to the heart, convicts us of our sin and drives us to confess, seeking the forgiveness of God. The law leaves us “naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13).

The Good news is that the Word of the Lord points us to the “...great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,... (Hebrews 4:14).” Because Jesus was faithful to God, endured temptation yet remained without sin, we can come before him with confidence, “that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

In your Sabbath keeping, join in the Psalmist who prays “I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word” (Psalm 119:16).