

## Lenten Devotional March 31, 2018

### Scripture

#### Hebrews 4:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup>For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. <sup>3</sup>For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “As in my anger I swore, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” though his works were finished at the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup>For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” <sup>5</sup>And again in this place it says, “They shall not enter my rest.” <sup>6</sup>Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup>again he sets a certain day—“today”—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” <sup>8</sup>For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. <sup>9</sup>So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; <sup>10</sup>for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. <sup>11</sup>Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs. <sup>12</sup>Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup>And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. <sup>14</sup>Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

### Devotional

#### The Rev. Brenda Barnes '07, Pastor, NuValley Presbyterian Church, Rural Valley, Pa. / Doctor of Ministry Reformed Focus / Alumnae/i Council Member

Jesus was dead. There is no denying it. In words from the movie “The Wizard of Oz,” he was “spiritually, physically, positively, absolutely, undeniably and reliably dead.” His body lay in the tomb while his disciples mourned his death and, since it was the Sabbath, they rested. The women returned home to prepare the burial spices to honor him, and then they rested. At the tomb, the guards did their job of watching the tomb to make sure that none of Jesus’ followers came to steal his body. They rested in the grass at the rock, because the disciples were celebrating their Sabbath—they wouldn’t come.

But those pictures are earthly pictures—human pictures. While humans were resting on the Sabbath, Jesus was working. According to Paul’s letter to Ephesus, Jesus descended to the lower parts of the earth (Ephesians 4:9). Peter tells his readers that Jesus preached to the imprisoned spirits (1 Peter 3:19-20).

In chapter 4 of Hebrews, the writer reminds us that the promise of entrance into Christ’s rest “still stands,” and the promise is only realized when we remember the work of Christ on earth, below the earth, and in heaven. The whole Easter mystery of resurrection becomes much clearer in the context of Holy Lenten Devotional namely, that Christ’s work continued even in his death and continues even in his resurrection and reign. Salvation has been finished since the creation of the world (v. 3). That reality should give us rest and confidence, not in our works, but in the work of him who created all. Holy Saturday—Holy Sabbath.

**Prayer**

Holy, mysterious God: In your mercy, help us to find true Sabbath rest in you. Help us to rest in the promise of your glory here and forever. May our Holy Saturday truly be a day of remembrance in the promise of that glorious rest. For the sake of the One who died and rose again, Jesus the Christ. Amen.