

Speaking of the Sabbath rest the author of Hebrews writes:

*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one 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 spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 4:11-16

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

The Message of the Gospel today is so clear, we may wonder what is wrong with those who witnessed the reality and still failed to understand that Jesus is Lord. In Mathew's Gospel we are simply told that Jesus has crossed over and came to His own city. The paralytic man placed before Him and Jesus tells the man, your sins are forgiven.

The Jewish leads are astounded and angry. Who is this man what says your sins are forgiven; is he a blasphemer? To answer their question Jesus then does another impossible thing. He tells the paralytic man to get up and go home. And the man does. The proof of who Jesus is could not be clearer, but listen again to the last sentence of the Gospel. *"When the crowd saw it they were afraid and they gloried God, who had given such authority to men"* **To men** – they did not understand

If we understand from this passage the truth that Jesus is Lord and that the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the Scribes all denied the truth of what He taught and what He did, we also need to realize that many of the people did the same. They may have glorified God, but they did not understand that Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man, that He is God.

They couldn't take the next step. Like Peter at the Transfiguration they could see what Jesus was doing and they could witness the miracles that no man could do, but they still wanted to place Jesus into an easy to understand category.

They wanted to understand that he was a Prophet, a good man, one with whom the Spirit of God rested and was active. But they were not capable of surrendering themselves to the complete belief in Jesus as Lord.

There are many people today who do the same. Jesus as good man is a common understanding, both among people who profess no organized belief and those who belong to some type of religious organization. It is in fact an old heresy in the Church, Arius a Bishop of the Church convinced the majority of the people in his time that the Son and Holy Ghost were not one with the Father, but separate and not equals.

The writing of St. Augustine against Arianism and the Nicene Creed demonstrate to us the correction for this heresy in that time and for all time. Then why does this heresy still exist and why is it attractive?

My daughter in law is the most organized person I know. She has calendars, schedules, lists, labeled bins and boxes. I know that part of this comes from her need to get all the essential things done and in the right order. She is a working mother and for her, of many

of us, failure to be organized, to compartmentalize our lives would mean that we would fail to get everything done.

While this attitude of compartmentalization works well in our daily life, the failure to see and understand the central nature of God. Failure to embrace this understanding can inhibit our growth in faith and trust in the Lord.

We must understand the all encompassing reality of the God who is at once the creator, redeemer and sanctifier. Who is Father, Son and Holy Ghost in perfect unity while at the same moment of time available to us in the different persons of the Trinity to touch every aspect of our lives.

I chose the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews to begin our reflection this morning for two reasons.

First, in that passage the author is talking about the Sabbath Rest. This is the ultimate end of the faithful man. To enter fully into the presence of God to be at rest with God is what our Father desires for us and what we should seek. To enter into that rest we need to be faithful and part of being faithful is the understanding what God is doing for us in every moment of our lives.

God is the Lord who was sacrificed for us to be the one perfect oblation for the sin of the world. God is the Holy Spirit who has come into the world to be present to all who believe, to encourage, to instruct and to guide us. God is the Father and the perfect unity of the three in one and one in three and nothing is before or behind Him. Nothing is above or below Him for he is and was and will be forever.

The second message of the Gospel and the passage from the Hebrews might be summarized in the nature of the Word of God. We understand that Jesus is the Word of God, the Word made flesh, but the Word of God is not limited it is we are told.

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

We as human being and as part of our desire to be in control, to understand and categorize what is not in our control and beyond our ability to know, still want to reserve parts of our lives, parts of our very being from God. We fail to heed the warning that word of God is all powerful and all pervasive.

We may not think we would ever do such a thing and yet consider our prayers. So many times people have told me that they pray for others, but not for themselves. They believe it is improper and at some point of their religious education someone told them that it was prideful to pray for yourself. Or that God would hear the prayer you offer for others, but not prayers you offer for your own needs. This cannot be true, for where else do we go in our times of need, but to God.

Others have told me that they pray for many things, but they do not pray for their own health and healing. Sometimes it is because they fear the Sacraments of healing that the church offers. Unction is for the dying they say. Or they believe they are being faithful simply by trusting that God has given them life and will give them health if it is His will. Of course they are right, but when we pray we are changed by the experience we learn to truth and to trust more and more deeply.

Finally there are those who will pray for almost all things in their life and in the lives of others. Almost everything, but not for a happy or peaceful death, because there is a fear in praying for and about death. That fear is based in the last vestigial elements of thinking we are somehow in control.

If I pray about death I may die. Of course we all will die someday, but that day will come when God is ready to offer to us the eternal life His promise of eternal life is fulfilled, not when we say we are ready or even because we have prayed about death, but in His perfect time.

As Benedictine we end night prayer each day with this simple benediction:

*May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.*

In every aspect of our lives; in seeking the forgiveness of our sins, health in body and mind and looking towards the Sabbath Rest promised to God's People there is one source and one salvation.

There is One God to whom we offer all our prayers.

For He who is able to forgive sins can also heal our bodies and by His gracious Will and favor raise us up on the last day.

Amen