

1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

Dear Christians Rejoice! You have Peace and Rest in Christ the King!

- 1. He guides you through this restless world.**
- 2. He will rest from his labors and you will rest with him.**

We have reached the end of another church year. But even though Christ the King Sunday is the last Sunday of the church year, things don't just stop, do they? On the contrary, the holidays are right around the corner. The hustle and bustle, the activity, the accelerated pace of life around Thanksgiving and Christmas is breathing down our neck and consequently we can become quite anxious. Our lives can become very restless as our minds jump from preparation to obligation, from appointment to party, this meeting to that gathering. And of course this not just something that is entirely unique to the holidays, this is often the stuff of daily life. While certainly not always this hectic, if there is not a constant stream of activity there is always a constant flow of time that pushes and pulls us through life. This continual current of life can become overwhelming at times, and so we are creatures who instinctively crave rest. We are people who constantly are in search of peace. Well, **dear Christians rejoice!**

For you have peace and rest in Christ the King!

- 1. He guides you through this restless world.**
- 2. He will rest from all his labors and you will join him.**

Our lesson for today comes from the great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15. In this section of Scripture Paul details the comfort, the conviction, and the peace that the resurrection of Jesus gives to the lives of Christians. Our faith is based on this central truth of Scripture; that Christ Jesus died and rose again. This good news gives us the

peace of knowing that our sins have been forgiven. Our Savior was punished in our place. The great King and Judge of all humbled himself; he was beaten and mocked and crucified to save my life. Our King laid down his life and took it up again to assure us that we will reign with him in the safety and the bliss of heaven.

This is the good news that daily gives us peace and rest. This is the good news we need to go back to time and again. As the problems of this life push on us, as the daily grind and the push and pull of life wears on us, as our sins shake us, we are often left feeling restless and troubled. The regular obligations of this life weigh on us and then more is thrown on top and we can easily become weary and burdened. An empty place at the temple around the holidays adds even more weight on our hearts and lives. But even in such trying moments our Savior speaks comfort to us through his word of peace and rest. "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." And this is the truth that sustains us and strengthens us, "Because I live you also will live." Jesus is the fruits of those who have fallen asleep. We trust that just as he rose from the dead those who die in him will live. We will all be raised from the grave and will join him in our place of eternal rest. God will gather us to himself and we will be with all the believers and with our Savior in heaven. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior supply us with the peace that we so desperately need. As we trust in God we are blessed with peace and rest. Trust in Jesus he is Christ your King!

Trust in God was a big part of the concept of firstfruits. In Old Testament times the people offered the entire first portion of the harvest up to God. This offering recognized that all things come from God and it was also a display of trust that God would bless them with the rest of the harvest. And so when Paul speaks of Jesus as the firstfruits we recognize how thankful we are for the blessings that God gives to us through Christ. And we trust that because Christ lives we also will live. We are blessed with peace and rest when we consider that Jesus Christ was chosen by God to carry our burden of sin to the cross. And we *trust* that just as he kept his promise to free us from the punishment and curse of sin so too he will free us from the curse and fear of death.

Jesus humbled himself unto death to defeat death for us. He was placed in a borrowed tomb and his body rested there on that most holy of Sabbath's. But on that first day of the week, on that holy day we call Easter he broke forth from death's cold grip. He emerged from the earth and brought life. And then after a little while he was gathered to his heavenly home. Christ is the firstfruits. Because he lives we too shall live. Just as Christ rose from the dead, there will come a day that bodies buried in the ground will break forth from the soil and stretch up toward the light and warmth of heaven and Jesus will gather his people to himself forever. What joy! You have the promise of eternal peace and rest through Jesus Christ. Rejoice in Christ, he is the firstfruits.

But, as we were reminded today, the Lord Jesus is also our King and Shepherd and he is there to guide us and support us until that final day. He is there to tend to us and guide us through the daily grind. He is there with us during the highlights and the joys, the sorrows and the troubles of this life. He blesses us, forgives us, guides us, sustains

us, and strengthens us. As we trust in him, who is the resurrection and the life, suddenly life is not so overwhelming; our existence is not quite so restless. We are blessed with peace and rest through Christ our King.

Our Lord God reminds us through the apostle Paul that the same Jesus who lived a perfect life, died, and rose again to accomplish our salvation is now the ascended Lord who rules over all things for our good. Our ascended Lord is our conquering King, who has defeated all our enemies. He has defeated the devil. He has defeated and removed the curse of sin. Rising from the grave he has taken away the sting of death. And now our Jesus, the one God chose to save us, sits at the right hand of God as the one chosen to rule over us. All things are under his feet. His role as the suffering servant now completed, his work in heaven very much continues, and he is ever vigilant. He does not slumber or sleep but he watches over his creation continually. He watches over this restless world and like a shepherd he tends to each one of his sheep. This is his ongoing work that brings us daily comfort. We are forgiven and saved by our Savior and we are also daily tended to by our Good Shepherd. He serves us with his word and he assures us that we are guarded and protected by our powerful king who watches over all things. He does this so that even though this life may be filled with activity or difficulty we may lie down each night in peace knowing that our Lord reigns. He is King of our hearts and lives. He is ruler of the universe. He is King of all.

What a task that must be! Consider the work that our God takes on as our ascended king. We often consider what great pains he bore, the physical and emotional toll of his work to save, but let us also consider the intensive labor of love that our Lord daily endures for us. Consider his watchful eye scanning over the events of this world through time and eternity. *All* authority in heaven and earth, *all* dominions, *all* powers, and every authority, it is *all* under his feet. And all souls are under his watch and in his care. What comfort is found in knowing that our Savior Jesus is the one who rules over all things! In this restless world, with all the events, and lives, and situations that he oversees we are absolutely blessed to have a Savior who rules with power and justice, with love and care! What a task this must be!

As we try to wrap our minds around this tremendous work of Christ our King perhaps it would be helpful to consider the role of an earthly king, or a president, or leader of an entire nation. What an exhausting, taxing role this must be, especially for a ruler who cares about his people. Such a king is constantly working for his people. He is constantly working for victory or for peace. He is constantly addressing issues and confronting crisis and resolving problems. This is tireless work that calls for continual dedication. And never in the history of the world has a king or a president or a ruler been able to lean back in his chair or throne and say truthfully, "My work here is completely done." There will always be work to do. In this sinful world, even in our rather ordinary lives there will always be issues to address, problems to fix, adjustments to be made, things to do. Time marches on, the current of life continues to flow, the push and pull of life wear on us.

But what would it be like if that changed? What if problems and time itself just stopped? This is the type of peacefully placid picture that Paul dares us to consider. The constant current of time and life will cease, and our existence will no longer be like a rushing river, but it will be like a crystal clear sea of tranquility and peace. A time will come when the ongoing torrent of life and history and time will halt and complete serenity will be the hallmark of our existence. Consider, in all their beauty, these words of God, these words that flow through his blessed mouthpiece, the apostle Paul, sent to bring us comfort and peace and rest. Paul writes, “then the end will come.”

Then the end will come... Things as we know it will come to end. The hustle and bustle, the push and pull of life, the sin and guilt, the pain and sorrow, the anxiety and fear, it will all come to an end. Then the end will come and we will be with God and he will be with his people. Paul speaks of this change and then goes on to describe a scene that encapsulates this different and wonderful relationship that we will have with God. It is something that is so entirely different for us and therefore difficult for us to understand, so difficult, in fact, that Paul warns us not to get the wrong impression. Then the end will come... he writes, and Jesus will hand over his kingdom to the one who put all things under his feet. Now, Paul is not saying that Jesus be less than God or no longer equal to the Father in honor or power, but in a way that we can't fully describe or comprehend, the Son himself, will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God made be all in all.

This may seem like a difficult passage, but it is given to us so that we may rejoice in a simple and moving picture. One day we will enjoy a place of perfect and eternal rest! The Son of God will rest from his work of salvation. He will rest from his role as King of the heavens and the earth. He will rest from all his labors and we will rest with him. There will be peace and rest for all. The work of redemption that he has been completely invested in since the fall of man, the work as King and Shepherd that he daily carries out for us, it will be over, and on that day he will be able to truly say, “My work here is done.” Then the end will come and we will be with our God and he will be with his people. The kingdom of heaven will be a place of perfect peace and rest. Rejoice in this peace that will come to those who are his. Rejoice and praise the name of Jesus for you are blessed with peace and rest through Christ your King.

We are creatures that crave, that need, peace and rest and Christ our King provides for us. Christ our King gives us the peace of forgiveness. He gently guides us through this life as our loving Shepherd, and one day he will raise us from our graves and he will gather us to himself in the perfect peace and rest of heaven. Trust in the Lord Jesus. Rejoice in his name! He is the firstfruits and we are the harvest. Come Lord Jesus, as you have promised, to bring us true and lasting peace and rest. Amen.