

Joshua 23:1-11

Pentecost 7, Supplement Series A, July 23, 2017

Theme: Jesus' rest replaces Joshua's

I. The LORD won the victory

II. The LORD gives the inheritance

III. The LORD motivates our love

INJ You know what it is like to be weary, don't you? The day was long and the work was hard. You have chased children and done a million things at the same time. All day with the doctors and in the hospital is exhausting. I hope there is relief in sight for you – a weekend, a helping hand, a good night's sleep, home. You are weary and you need some rest.

The people in our lesson were weary. Joshua had been their leader since they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Through many years they had fought their enemies, and still the war was not finished. The people wanted to go home and put down their swords. As an aged man now, Joshua speaks about the rest God provided for his people in this land.

We could all use some of Joshua's rest. No more exhausted evenings or stressful situations – wouldn't that be great? But Joshua's rest wasn't just physical. God's promise isn't about being weary of work or worn out by worry. He speaks to those burdened by sin and guilt. He gives us rest for our souls. In fact, Joshua's name in OT Hebrew comes out as "Jesus" in NT Greek. Joshua points us to Jesus, who said: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

What occurred in history with the people of God under Joshua's leadership was a teaching tool pointing to the promised Savior. The important part is not that Israelites lived in a particular space on the globe given to them by God. It is amazing that the LORD won the victory, and that he gives the inheritance, and that he motivates his people to show love for him! These timeless truths apply both to the Israelites and to us, but especially for us because Jesus' rest replaces Joshua's.

Joshua's rest was the end of formal warfare against the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Do you remember how those battles went? At Jericho, the LORD won the victory, as the walls came tumbling down. It was the same every time: Though the opponents were stronger and better supplied and though they outnumbered the Israelites, the LORD fought for his people and gave them victory. It wasn't Joshua's brilliant strategic maneuvers. It wasn't the bravery of soldiers or the skill of those who used their weapons. The LORD fought and the LORD won. No enemy could stand before his mighty power.

While not many of us have experience with the warfare of armies and artillery, we are all familiar with fighting the enemies of our soul each day. Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking to devour. The world tries to shatter our dreams with shame and guilt. Sin is a deadly intruder who wreaks havoc in our heart. Death is the stark reminder that we cannot overcome on our own, for we have not the strength.

Just as in our text, the LORD has won the victory for us. Jesus' rest replaces Joshua's. Satan must flee before the One who defeated him on the cross. Sin cannot condemn us, for its debt has been paid with the holy precious blood of God who came in the flesh. The world holds no power to undo what Christ has done. His resurrection declares that not even death can overpower us. The LORD won the victory! That is what his name means: the LORD is the God who saves.

The LORD gives you rest from all your enemies, yet you know how they still try to ensnare you. Do you feel guilty because you used to be so rebellious? Just a little temptation, and you give in so quickly! Repentance is a daily struggle — a wearying battle! You just want the worry and the fear to stop. What is going on? Where is this rest Jesus brings for your soul?

You have it in the simple sentence: Your sins are forgiven. Rest comes when you hear God's promise not to hold your guilt against you. You have peace when Jesus comes close in the Lord's Supper and assures you that he paid for all your sin completely. Rest from Jesus is the fact that he is your God and you are his dear child in Holy Baptism. Worry and fear have to evaporate when Jesus calms your soul. He comforts you with promises that never fail: There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! The LORD won the victory. You have peace with God.

No, the battles are not over. Joshua distributed the inheritance of the land to each of the Twelve Tribes, but the enemy was still around. Vigilance was needed so that God's people would not wander into danger. There were ongoing skirmishes, and sometimes people died. Yet the inheritance already belonged to the Israelites. They had a home and a place to call their own in the Promised Land.

So do we, but Jesus' rest replaces Joshua's. The LORD has given us the inheritance of heaven that replaces the property handed out by Joshua. The mansions prepared for us are our treasured possession even though we cannot see them yet. We live in expectation of entering our eternal home!

The parallel with our text is that the land allotted to each tribe was connected to the coming of the Savior. God told them to hold on to this land, to keep it in their family, to protect and preserve the property — because on this land the Savior would come. Throughout their history, the

land was for them assurance that God would keep his promise.

When Jesus entered our world, that aspect of the land's meaning ended. There is no lasting significance to the rocks and hills of the violent Middle East. We have something much better: The inspired words of Scripture proclaim rest. Hold on to the Word! Remember the promise: You have as your guaranteed possession a place in the presence of God forever. The inheritance is yours because God accepted Jesus' blood as payment for your sins. It is yours because Jesus rose from the dead. Because you are baptized into Christ you are his dear child. You have rest for your soul. Hold on to the Word! God has given you the inheritance.

Like with Joshua in the land of Israel, God does not promise smooth sailing along the way to heaven. Enemies remained in the land, down in the valleys or around the bends. They would cause problems. If you remember anything of Old Testament history, you know the constant trouble caused by those characterized by unbelief: Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites. Those who were led away from the word of God forfeited their inheritance, and they lost God's gifts. The Second Lesson recorded this warning: "Therefore, let us make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall into the same pattern of disobedience."

The troubles we face are persistent and can damage our faith. We need to remain vigilant! Are we? Though the LORD urges us to drive out of our lives what is corrupt, we make it our regular entertainment. We have been cleansed of our sin, but we wallow in it again. How alluring is the call of addiction! We imagine the pleasures that await us are immense, but then the horror of our guilt crashes down on us. We need the rest God promises, but we lose sight of it so often.

This is important to remember: The inheritance does not depend on our performance. Joshua said that the LORD would drive out all the enemies that remained in the land. The people couldn't and didn't do it. Yet the inheritance was already theirs because God gave it. Though they were weary and burdened, they could return to God's Word for a needed reminder: He keeps his promises. You have rest for your soul.

When you are weak and heavy laden, come to the refreshing waters of the same Word. When you are broken and beaten, hear the Savior's declaration of forgiveness. When you are weighed down with worry and fear, look at your Jesus. His rest replaces Joshua's. The inheritance is yours. It is secure, made so by Jesus' death and glorious resurrection. Find rest in God's promise: He will keep you as his very own all the way to eternal life.

I find it interesting that the rest Joshua announced and the rest Jesus gives is not the kind of rest that does nothing. Rest for your soul is not

inactivity. Joshua says "You must be very resolute in carrying out all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses by not turning from it to the right or to the left." Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you." A yoke is not for laziness, but it is a tool for productivity! Jesus' rest replaces Joshua's as the LORD motivates our love to serve him.

It was a First Commandment issue for Israel: "Do not intermingle with these nations that remain with you. Do not ever call on or swear by the names of their gods. Never serve them and never bow down to them. But hold fast to the LORD your God, just as you have been doing to this day." Isn't it the same for us? The gods of our age are the pursuit of wealth. Attempting to be comfortable. Playing on our phones. Taking our children to the next activity. So much of our life intrudes on the #1 spot that ought to be reserved for our LORD God!

The LORD who forgives our sin motivates our love. He captures our attention with his promises. We don't even want to be deterred from worship or our home devotions! Our words reflect our status as baptized children of God. With our choices and our habits we proclaim that the LORD is our God. And it all starts with God doing his work through his word and sacraments. When our soul is fed, we have rest from Jesus, and he motivates us to love God and one another.

Our fear is that when the LORD can be seen in our actions and heard in our words, people will attack us and we will be hurt, shamed, defeated. Listen to another promise: No one will be able to withstand you when Jesus is your rest. No one. The LORD says, "One of you would put a thousand to flight because the LORD your God himself was fighting for you, just as he promised you."

Are you brave enough to stand out in this dark world? Don't let the rat race run you. Don't get caught in a cycle of dependency. Do fill your life with God's Word. Do support and encourage and serve God's people. It seems like you are one against a thousand, doesn't it? But look! The LORD fights for you. He has forgiven your sin, provided peace, opened heaven. You have the victory and the inheritance! Don't serve those empty idols, but love the LORD your God who gives rest for your soul.

I know it gets wearying and tiresome to continually be opposed by the Devil, this world, and our yown sinful flesh. The battles won't end until you enter heaven. So for your own sakes be very careful to love the LORD your God. You will not lose when the LORD motivates your love. You will not lose out, for Jesus' rest replaces Joshua's. When life gets crazy, stop and listen to Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." SDG Amen.