

# Hebrews 4:1-11

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning, church. It's good to see you this morning. So we're going to continue our series in Hebrews this morning, looking at Hebrews chapter 4, verses 1 through 11.

That's page 1002 in your pew Bible, if you want to turn there. If you don't own a Bible, I'm giving you permission to steal that one. Go ahead, take it home with you.

I'm telling you to break one of the Ten Commandments. Just take it away. No, I'm just kidding. So page 1002. There we go. Hey, I'm on. All right. Good. Hebrews 4, 1 through 11.

Let me read this for us. The writer to Hebrews says, Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear, lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

For 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. For we who have believed enter that rest.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] As he has said, As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. Although his works were finished from the foundation of the world, for he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, and God rested on the seventh day from all his works.

And again, in this passage, he said, They shall not enter my rest. Since, therefore, it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again, he appoints a certain day, today, saying through David, so long afterward, in the words already quoted, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works, as God did from his.

Let us, therefore, strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. Let's pray together.

God, we thank you that your word is living and active, and that it uncovers the deep recesses of our hearts that need to be exposed, and brought into the light of your healing and sovereign grace.

[ 2 : 3 2 ] God, we pray this morning that your Holy Spirit would do his work in our hearts through your word, to draw us nearer to Christ, or nearer to our hope, and to the source of our joy in him.

Lord, we ask all this in Christ's name. Amen. So, one of the fun things about overseeing our youth ministry here at Trinity, is not that, not just that we get to go on fun retreats like we did last weekend, but I get to read all these great articles about adolescent culture.

And a survey was conducted not so long ago of high school students, and they were asked what their biggest problems were, or what did they see as their greatest challenges, what were the things that they were really struggling with and dealing with.

And I was really surprised by what was at the top of that list. It wasn't loneliness, or fitting in with their peers, and it wasn't family problems, even though massive numbers of adolescents today are coming from broken homes.

It wasn't dating or relationships, even though that seems to be what's on every high schooler's mind. That wasn't the thing that was their biggest problem as they saw it. The number one issue or problem that they identified was stress.

[ 3 : 49 ] Stress. Isn't that interesting? And of course, that's not just true of high school students, right? We live in a culture of deep, deep unrest.

We're busy. We're overworked. I mean, come on. When you ask someone how they're doing, what is the first thing that they say? How was your week? It's busy. Right? I'm guilty of doing that. What gives?

Right? I mean, the 40-hour work week is like a dinosaur relic that we go look at in the Peabody. Nobody works 40 hours anymore. We're deeply, deeply restless people.

And you know what's crazy about that? What's crazy about that is that we live in a society where for the most part, everything that we need is at our fingertips. Right? Like at no other point in human history, we who live in the West have unprecedented resources at our command to meet our physical and our emotional and our cultural needs.

Right? I mean, don't we have access to basic physical necessities like never before? Food, clothing, shelter. And don't we have, through technology, fabulous resources to connect us relationally with people here and all around the world?

[ 5 : 07 ] And can't we participate and enjoy cultural productions like music and art and theater like we never have been able to in the past? It's all at our fingertips. And yet, despite all of that, despite having everything, we still live lives that are deeply, deeply unrestful.

Which ought to point us to the fact that there's something much deeper going on. Right? If none of these things can sort of give us the rest that we need, then it must point us to the fact that we've lost something.

We've lost something that we can't seem to find and is producing in us this deep, deep unrest. So when we come to our passage this morning, we're coming to a text that I think you and I desperately need.

Because this text is all about what? Entering into God's rest. It's a phrase that's repeated over and over and over again.

And in verse 1, it just announces it. The promise of entering God's rest still stands. Now, if you're here last week, you'll remember that in this section of Hebrews, in 3 and 4, the writer to Hebrews is unpacking for us Psalm 95.

[ 6 : 39 ] He's kind of giving us a little sermon within the sermon here. And last week, we saw that this portion of Psalm 95 that he's unpacking carries this explicit warning against hard-heartedness and unbelief.

You can go listen to Greg's sermon online if you missed it. But now, in chapter 4, he's turning a corner. And he's saying that Psalm 95 isn't just this explicit warning against hard-heartedness, but it's an implied promise.

There's an implied promise. That entering God's rest still stands. Now, all commentators will agree, it was sort of funny as I was reading through the commentators this week, that these 11 verses are some of the most kind of logically and exegetically challenging of the whole book.

You know, sometimes as we move from verse to verse, maybe you thought this as you're reading, you're like, wow, how many non-sequiturs could there be in a single passage of Scripture, right? Those who believe enter the rest.

As he said, they shall not enter my rest. What? What? What's going on there, right? It's kind of like we're sort of in the race car with him and we're moving at 200 miles an hour and then he takes a turn and we sort of hit our head against the, you know, the window.

[ 7 : 52 ] Which doesn't mean that Scripture's, you know, wrong or fallacious, you know. It just means we have to slow down. We have to pay attention.

Because if we keep our sights on the main thrust of this passage of entering God's rest, I think what we see as we move through it that he's unpacking this promise for us in at least four ways.

And here are the four ways that he impacts it, I think. First, he's going to tell us who enters, who enters the rest, and then he's going to tell us what we're entering. What are we entering when we enter God's rest?

And then he's going to tell us how we enter, and then he's going to conclude by saying, what do we do about it? Make sense? Who? What? How? And what do we do about it?

So first, who enters? So it's clear from verses one and two in the first half of three, that it's those who believe, right? Those who have faith, those who hear with faith, they're the ones who enter into God's rest. We see that word again and again in these first few verses.

[ 8 : 53 ] Faith and belief in two and three, they're the same root word, both meaning to trust. And that sort of tricky quote at the end of verse three, I think what he's saying there is that if those who didn't believe will not enter God's rest, then it's implied that those who do believe will.

You see, there's the implied promise. And then he uses this example of the wilderness generation to bring something very important before our eyes. He brings forth the wilderness generation to show that it's not merely those who hear the good news who enter in, but it's those who respond in faith.

It's those who actually believe it and put their trust in it. Now think about that. The wilderness generation under Moses saw God's saving power in Egypt and at the Red Sea.

They saw God part a sea so they could walk through it. And at Sinai, they heard God's voice booming and promising that he would be their God and he would lead them into the promised land.

But sadly, that message, what they saw and what they heard did them no good. It didn't benefit them. Why?

[ 10 : 18 ] Because they didn't receive it with faith. Or more exactly, the way he puts it here, they weren't united by faith with those who actually did listen and believe and trust in it.

And that means you can be sitting here right now and you can have come to church your whole life and hear the message about Christ and the good news of entering God's rest and you can intellectually know that message forward and backward and you can listen to the preaching and you can see it displayed in the ordinances and baptism and the Lord's Supper and you can have even partaken of those things.

And for all that, you can still not be among those who actually enter in. You can still not be united with those who truly listen.

Because it's not merely hearing that gets you in, it's believing. Do you know the difference between hearing and trusting? It's pretty simple.

I mean, we know it every, we see it every day, don't we? I mean, it's like the difference between hearing that if you go down to the station, hearing, there's a train that will take you from New Haven to New York City.

[ 11 : 35 ] There's one there. They leave like every 15 minutes. And you can hear that and you can hear that and you can hear that. But the difference is is that actually trusting it is getting on one of those trains and letting it take you to the city.

Now, if we step back a moment, you know, this is why this sort of difference, this is why some of you may have encountered some very upright, morally respectable people, very religious people, who are very and truly just unrelenting.

In fact, maybe it's you this morning. Maybe you're keeping all the rules and you're showing up to church and you're working at being a very good person and you know the Christian lingo, but deep inside, there is no rest.

And maybe you've been at this for a long time. And maybe you've convinced yourself that that's all there is to Christianity, just a sort of laboring. And you've been lulled to sleep.

And yet there's a restlessness that still troubles you deep in your soul and it's telling you that there's something more. Or maybe you're, maybe you're pretty new to Christianity.

[ 12 : 59 ] Maybe you're still exploring it. Maybe you're trying it out. Maybe you're just getting a start. And maybe you've been going at it and honestly, you're just getting close to giving up and moving on.

Because it doesn't seem to work. You're trying this religious thing and it's not working. And you're starting to realize that the rest that your soul longs for isn't just found in the moral or religious routine that you think stands at the center of Christianity.

This morning, we need to hear that it's not those who work, but it's those who trust that truly enter in. But you know, this first point about who are the ones who enter in, it really speaks to those who are, those of us who are overly casual and familiar with the Christian message.

For those of us who have maybe heard it time and again, but still hold it at arm's length. Those of us who might be hearing, but not really believing and not really trusting. And because of that, did you notice in these first three verses?

Because of that, because it's not just those who hear, but those who actually trust with their hearts. Because of that fact, he says, fear. Now you realize that there's a good and right kind of fear.

[ 14 : 21 ] Don't you? Not all fear is bad fear. How many of you saw the movie Life of Pi last year? Anybody see that? Yeah.

Oh, wow. A lot of you. Do you remember the scene where sort of the young Pi sneaks into his father's zoo and he wants to sort of connect on a deep spiritual level with the tiger? Remember that scene?

Am I the only one who remembers that scene? Okay, I'm going to tell it to you then. He sort of sneaks into the zoo and he wants to sort of have this, he wants to look into the eyes of the tiger and I don't remember if he wants to feed him something or just pet him. But you know, just as he's about to hold up his hand to the bars, his father races in and scolds him and stops him and says, what are you doing?

Don't you realize what you're playing with here? And then he proves the point, right? He takes a goat and he puts a goat in front of the cage and the tiger just rips it through the bars. Friends, you see, there's a right kind of fear.

The author of Hebrews is telling us that there is an earnestness. There is a sobriety and a seriousness, a right and reverent kind of fear that ought to attend what we're doing on Sundays and what we're doing throughout our lives with respect to the gospel.

[ 15 : 39 ] We are often much, much too casual and flippant about these things. Don't you see, there's a rest that we are able to enter, but a casual attitude, a comfort with just hearing the message and let it wash over us could devour our hopes of entering in.

So how about it, friends? Are you serious this morning? Or are we just playing games? Because it's not merely those who hear but those who believe, those who trust.

rest. Now there's this first way of unpacking this promise of the rest. Second, what are we actually entering? What's the nature of this rest that is open to us?

Now, to unpack this part of the promise, the author of Hebrews is going to engage in a little bit of what we would call today, biblical theology. Now here's what I mean by that and hang with me on this because you'll find it interesting.

You know, think about two related ways of understanding God's revelation. Two ways of doing theology, if you will, that go hand in hand, right? Roughly speaking, there's systematic theology on this hand and what that does is it sort of takes a topic like God or sin or humanity or creation and it goes through Scripture and it arranges what God has revealed about that in a very logical fashion.

[ 17 : 05 ] It moves through Scripture and says here's all we know about God and creation and sin, et cetera, et cetera. But what we call biblical theology on this hand is more concerned with how certain themes develop along the course of Scripture.

For example, biblical theology would ask how does the theme of the temple develop along the history of Revelation? How does the theme of kingdom and the king develop and progress through Scripture as we go along the sort of history line of Scripture?

Now both of these ways of doing theology are biblical in the sense that they're concerned with what God says in the Bible but systematic theology does it in logical categories, biblical theology does it in sort of a historical progression.

Now, that little nugget helps you to see what Hebrews is up to in the rest of this passage starting at the end of verse 3.

Verse 95 is talking about my rest, right? But when we start to look at the theme of God's rest as it develops along the course of the whole Bible, we realize that rest is something that's even bigger and more stunning than we could have ever originally thought.

[ 18 : 19 ] And verses 3-5 begin by taking us back to Genesis 2-2. Remember that after the six creation days described in Genesis chapter 1, we come to Genesis 2, right?

And there's a seventh day. And on that day, God rests. And here's what it says in Genesis 2. Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished and all the hosts of them. And on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it, God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. Now, God doesn't rest on the seventh day of creation because he's tired and he needs a break, right?

That's not what's going on. And God's resting doesn't mean that he isn't intimately involved in caring for and ruling over his creation. But the seventh day is God's way of showing that his creation is complete and whole and good.

It's like a composer who steps back from her score once the last part and the last note is written in because she knows it's complete and ready to be performed in all of its beauty.

[ 19 : 30 ] It's done. And that's what the seventh day is like. God steps back and is ready for his full symphony to begin.

And you'll remember that the first six creation days all came to an end, right? There was morning and there was evening and they came to an end. But the seventh day doesn't end and it keeps going.

You see, God's rest is an eternal reality instituted in creation itself. And it's the thing that humanity, remember, created at the pinnacle of the sixth day what we were created to enjoy.

You see, human beings, you and I, were made in God's image to bear his glory in creation and we were made to work and to love and to create and to cultivate the earth all in light of God's rest on the seventh day, all in light of his enjoyment of standing before his creation and saying that it's good and perfect and whole.

Now, flash forward in the biblical storyline to the history of Israel. This is where the writer of Hebrews wants to take us. After delivering them from slavery in Egypt, God promises to bring his people into the promised land where they would worship God and have abundance and be free from their enemies and Deuteronomy again and again and again calls it a place of rest.

[ 20 : 56 ] And though the first generation failed to enter, the next generation under Joshua does. And that's what the first half of verse 8 in Hebrews 4 is alluding to. Occupying the land under Joshua, the land of rest.

And of course, it's not just the land, right? God didn't just give Israel the land, but he gave them the Sabbath day. And as you know, this was an ordinance in Israel that every seventh day would be a day of rest and not just a day of stopping from work, but a day of celebration and joy.

The Sabbath as originally intended was a great gift, rich with meaning. In Exodus 20, the Sabbath is connected to God's rest and enjoyment and creation.

And in Deuteronomy 5, it's connected to enjoying and resting in God's great work of redemption. So here's where he brings us. As the story unfolds, as we follow this theme of rest along the course of Scripture, we have God's people now celebrating a day of rest in a land of rest.

But, and here's where things get interesting, there's more. Now we go to Psalm 95, written in the time of David, hundreds of years after Joshua.

[ 22 : 09 ] They've been in the land for hundreds of years, they've been celebrating the Sabbath, or supposed to have been celebrating the Sabbath for hundreds of years. They're under a king, the best king that Israel ever saw or probably would see. And David's talking about entering God's rest.

As if to say that the real rest is still in front of them. You see what that means? It means that the day, the Sabbath day, and the land, that wasn't really what the rest was all about.

Otherwise, God through David wouldn't have spoken of another day, right? That day and that land must have been part of a promise, a signpost, a type, a picture, pointing ahead to something greater.

Or to use the metaphor we used a little earlier, the day, the Sabbath day, and the land, they were part of a melody line that the great composer was beginning to rewrite into his fallen creation to remind us of what we'd lost, and to point us ahead to what God would one day accomplish once and for all.

Otherwise, reasons the author of Hebrews, why would David be speaking of another day so long afterward? And in verses 9 through 10, Hebrews puts all the pieces together and he says, so then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

[ 23 : 47 ] In other words, there is a future, a festival joy that is coming for those who believe. And God wanted us to know that and believe that so deeply that into the very warp and woof of redemptive history, he put these unmistakable signposts for us to see, these unmistakable melody lines for us to hear that would draw our hearts back to creation and forward into the consummation, into the completion.

Back to the seventh day of creation when humanity enjoyed the presence of God and his rest and forward into the new creation where the real Sabbath celebration would be realized in all of its fullness.

Do you see? Do you see what he's weaving here? Do you see how he's reading Scripture? The promised land was just a melody line. The Sabbath day was just a melody line, a signpost, a sketch of the eternal festival joy that God holds out for those who believe.

The joy of his presence, the rest of God's presence. And don't you see that's finally what our hearts need and long for. If it wasn't the land and wasn't the day, then friends, surely it's not a bigger paycheck and it's not a larger house and it's not a more exotic vacation spot that's going to give you rest and it's not more obedient kids and it's not a more loving spouse.

Friends, none of those things will bring you the rest that you need because you can have all those things and be terribly tired and troubled and even tormented.

[ 25 : 25 ] What you long for is the rest of God's festival joy. Think about it.

Why do we bounce from one thing to another? Why do we bounce from one relationship to another? From one hobby to another? Why do we work like mad even though we know that we can't sustain it and it's not good for us?

Why are we so stressed and we see it and yet we can't step back and take a break? Could it be that our hearts are trying to create some kind of permanent rest where it just can't be found?

We're trying to find or even create through our own efforts the place where our souls can rest and be at home but it never works and it always slips through our fingers.

The money's not enough and the kids aren't enough and the spouse isn't enough. Because there's a deeper thing going on and God in his mercy and his love for you has been writing it into history for you to see with a promised land and a Sabbath day and all those little glimpses of rest that God gives you from time to time that are so sweet but so fleeting pieces of music that the divine composer has been writing into history and into your life bars of the symphony that we lost but towards which God is taking those who believe.

[ 27 : 04 ] Augustine famously wrote at the beginning of his confessions you've made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you.

So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Yeah? Now as we've seen Hebrews is the great book of perseverance.

And don't you see if this is what is out ahead of us if what we are entering into is the festival joy that God created us to have.

What wouldn't you be able to face now for his sake? Beth and I love to do pre-marriage counseling with couples and one thing we've learned as we've done this again and again is that it's amazing what couples will face in light of the coming festival joy of their wedding day.

They will face pressure from family and financial stresses and sleepless nights and long hours making completely tedious decisions. What color should we pick?

[ 28 : 17 ] Right? They will endure days apart. They will endure unfulfilled longings because it's all worth it when the music starts and the bride walks down the aisle and they enter into their union and the reception the party begins.

But doesn't that doesn't that day pale in comparison to what God has in store for those who believe?

Couples plan a wedding for what? Six? Okay, that's kind of short. That's how Beth and I did it. Six months, twelve months maybe you take to plan a wedding celebration. God has been planning his festival joy for you from the beginning of creation ever since the seventh day.

And even more than that, Hebrews 13 talks about an eternal covenant. Friends, if human beings can throw a pretty great party in six months, just imagine what God has in store for you from all eternity.

if you knew that was out ahead of you, wouldn't you be able to face another year of singleness without chucking your trust in Christ?

[ 29 : 32 ] If you knew that that is what God had in store for you, couldn't you face another round of job searching without doubting God's love for you?

wouldn't you be able to face the fears of retirement and growing old if you knew that that's what was to come? Friends, couldn't you even face death itself if you knew that there was a Sabbath rest for the people of God?

Friends, hold on to that hope and you can face anything with courage and with joy and with rest. I promise you. But third, how do we enter?

How do we get in? Because you know this theme of rest, it goes even deeper than we've been touching on. Because when you think about it, rest always comes at a cost, doesn't it? When humanity fell and we lost our true rest in God's presence as a result, our work being filled with toil and sweat and our relationships were fraught with conflict and our identity becomes restless with guilt and shame and ever since then, any rest that we get in this life comes at a cost.

Think about it at the most mundane level. You want to take a rest from work and either you have to work ahead before you take that rest and pay the cost on the front end or you've got to play catch up when you get back, right?

[ 31 : 00 ] Then the cost you have to pay for a week's vacation is the mountain of email that's waiting for you when you get back in the office. 3,000 new messages in my inbox, how is that even possible? Of course, it's pretty easy to pay that cost, right?

You just hit the delete button hoping you miss the important ones. Done. Cost-borne. But think more deeply than that. What's the cost of getting rest in a relationship?

Especially relationships where we've hurt one another. It's a deep cost, isn't it? Sometimes it's the cost of tears. most certainly the cost of forgiveness, the cost of long, hard talks late into the night, the cost of time to rebuild the trust.

And that's a cost that's much, much harder to pay. So it makes sense, doesn't it? When the gospel tells us that our rest with God comes at an infinite cost.

rest. We read earlier the words of Jesus from Matthew 11, 28. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[ 32 : 16 ] Jesus says, I'm the true rest giver. That deep and lasting rest that you were created to enjoy, that was lost through the fall, it's in me. The rest that was written into the history of redemption and that I've been speaking into your life, it all comes together in me, Jesus says.

Come to me and I'll give you rest. And how is that so? How does he grant it? How does he pay the cost? It's through the cross.

At the cross, the source of our deepest and most troubling unrest, the unrest of being sinners before a holy and just God. At the cross, those sins are paid for and taken away and in their place were given the true rest of forgiveness and eternal life.

You see, like verse 8 says, Joshua couldn't give the people rest. Because even in the land and even celebrating the Sabbath and even with all our gadgets and gizmos today, we still have to contend with our sin.

But he's telling us that the true and better Joshua has come. Jesus Christ. That's how we enter into the rest.



[ 33 : 40 ] Through the person of Jesus. He's the one we trust. It's not just a general belief in something, it's a trust in him. That he's our rest and he'll take our sin and he'll give us his righteousness so we can finally know rest.

So lastly, what do we do about all this? What do we do? What do we do in light of this? Well, the passage ends somewhat paradoxically, doesn't it? Verse 11, here's what the author says.

Strive. Wait a second. There's a whole paragraph about rest and now you're telling us to strive? That doesn't seem like the right conclusion. What does he mean? Of course, as we just saw, he can't mean that now somehow we have to earn our way into the rest.

We have to keep our noses clean so God will accept us. We enter always and only through believing the good news of Jesus Christ, through faith in what Christ has done for us. So, this exhortation to strive doesn't throw us back on some sort of form of works righteousness.

Rather, here's what he must mean. He must mean this, that if we enter God's rest through faith in Christ, then this exhortation to strive must mean that we should make every effort to keep the fires of our faith in Christ burning bright.

[ 35 : 09 ] That's how we strive. Not at works, not at moral performance, but keeping the fire of faith burning bright. And that matches what he goes on to say in the rest of the verse.

So that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. What's that sort of disobedience? He's referring back to the wilderness generation. Look at the end of chapter 3. What was their type of disobedience? It was unbelief.

Not believing what they heard. Which just confirms that the striving, verse 11, calls us to, is a striving to keep our faith in Christ awakened and alive.

Now, this doesn't mean that the author of Hebrews thinks or is afraid that genuine Christians can lose their salvation. So you better keep believing or else you're going to fall away.

But he does mean two things. First, a genuine saving faith is persevering faith. Hmm? A faith that doesn't persevere wasn't saving faith to begin with.

[ 36 : 14 ] But, when you really come to know the rest that we have in Christ, it breaks in and you want to strive after it more and more and make it more and more your center.

Second, when we make every effort to keep the fires of our faith in Christ burning bright, it has an effect on the people around us. You can read verse 11 this way, can't you?

You, strive to enter that rest. You, keep your faith in Christ burning bright so that others might not fall by unbelief. So, not only is saving faith persevering faith, but persevering faith is a means of bringing others to believe.

As we set our eyes on the great festival joy that Christ has purchased for us, as we allow his everlasting rest that we have in him to be our all-consuming passion, others will start to catch that vision and the hope will become infectious.

So, as we, as we strive to keep our faith in Christ passionate and hot through, through reading and through prayer, through, through giving sacrificially, through fellowship with one another, right?

[ 37 : 31 ] Through creative witness to our neighbors, through, through heartfelt worship, through acts of mercy and justice and love, when hope fuels all these things, when we gladly strive to keep our faith in Christ rich and alive, when others see that in us, God uses it as a means to turn mere hearers of the gospel into genuine believers in the gospel.

So, friends, what are you striving after this morning? Are you striving after mere temporary rest? Are you putting all your energies into a rest that's only going to last for a week or two over the summer?

Are you putting all your energies into a rest that's only going to last for a handful of years when you retire? Are you striving for the rest that truly lasts?

The rest of God's festival joy that He's purchased for us through the work of Christ? Friends, that's the only striving that will bring you peace.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, this morning, Father, we want to pray for those who are in our midst who are experiencing this deep restlessness.

[ 39 : 08 ] Lord, you know their hearts. God, we ask on behalf of those that they would come either for the first time to put their trust in you, Lord Jesus, or they would come to realize what they have in you for the first time.

Lord, we pray that we would become a people who so grasp and know and look forward to that coming festival joy that you've purchased for us, Christ, that our lives would be marked by a deep and abiding joy and peace and endurance, God.

Lord, many of us this morning are facing hardships and troubles and trials. Lord, and we're tempted to doubt you, and we're tempted to have our faith waver.

Lord, we pray for those that in light of all that you are doing in us and you have prepared for us, Lord, that we would be able to hold on with courage and joy and fearlessness.

Lord, we ask all this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.