

Entering His Rest

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, February 18, 2024
PASSAGES	Psalm 95; Hebrews 3; Hebrews 4
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:13:41 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Hebrews holds up the wilderness generation as a mirror: a people delivered out of slavery, walking toward an inheritance, tempted the whole way to stop believing. The rest they forfeited was never merely a plot of land — God calls it *my* rest. And it is still on offer today, entered by holding fast to Christ and by nothing we could add to him.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The gospel is rock solid and worth it because Jesus is rock solid and worth following. The author of Hebrews argues the trustworthiness of the message from the trustworthiness of the person.
- ◆ Psalm 95 is not two psalms stitched together. The God who made the mountains and the sea also made a nation out of a childless couple — creation and wilderness belong in the same song.
- ◆ Moses was faithful *in* the house as a servant. Christ is faithful *over* it as a son, because he built it.
- ◆ What we hold fast is not our Bible study, our prayer hours, or how good our week was. It is our boastful confidence in him.
- ◆ Israel did not fail to enter because they were not good enough. Hebrews says they were unable to enter because of unbelief.
- ◆ Miracles do not immunize anyone. That generation saw the outstretched arm of God and still hardened their hearts.
- ◆ God rested from his works and invites his people into that same rest — which is why it cannot be bought with ours.

► 1:13:41

Matt picked up the Hebrews series with a shrug at how little we know about the letter — who wrote it, we don't know; what city it went to, we don't know. What is unmistakable is what was on the author's heart: stick it out in the faith, and do not turn aside to the right or the left.

The author's argument, and the story he reaches for

► 1:14:22

The claim is that the gospel is rock solid and worth it. The rationale is Jesus himself — and the tools are Old Testament stories and specific psalms. The story here is the wilderness: Abraham's descendants go down to Egypt to eat during famine, settle, end up enslaved, and God raises a deliverer who is one of them and also a friend of God. Moses leads them out of a kingdom of slavery toward the promised land, and in the wandering that follows they are tempted to decide God is not trustworthy after all.

Which is, Matt said, exactly why the author of Hebrews reaches for it. The church is a community delivered from the dominion of darkness, walking toward an inheritance, and still asked to trust God through wilderness stretches.

Psalm 95, read out loud together

► 1:17:35

Before the quotations in Hebrews, the room read the psalm they come from — and Matt walked it in movements. First the greatness:

sing to the rock of our salvation, the great God and great King above all gods. Then the creating: the depths of the earth, the heights of the mountains, the sea he made and the dry land his hands formed — sea and dry land, he noted, being their own quiet echo of the exodus.

► 1:18:42

Then the pivot, and it is a sharp one:

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness.”

PSALM 95:6–8 ↗

► 1:19:25

Some scholars look at that hinge and wonder whether two psalms have been welded together — cosmic Creator in one half, grumbling in the desert in the other. Matt's answer was that it holds perfectly: he made the earth, he made us, and he made a nation out of nothing. The psalm ends with a warning — *they shall not enter my rest* — and that ending is precisely what the author of Hebrews wanted to say.

Greater than Moses

► 1:22:04

Jesus parallels Moses and then outstrips him. He represents humanity perfectly because he is one of us in real flesh, and he represents God perfectly because he is God. The greatness of the gospel is not that we now have more scripture, or that we are a more advanced people who will finally make the arrangement work.

“Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses — as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.”

HEBREWS 3:1–3 ↗

► 1:23:33

It makes sense, then, to think of Israel's birth as an act of creation. Abraham and Sarah could not have children and were old besides; a nation came out of nothing.

Hosea speaks of Israel forgetting its Maker, and

the song at the sea calls them a people God purchased and made. The body of Christ is the same kind of thing — a holy nation from every tribe and tongue where there was none before, delivered out of slavery, formerly leaderless and wandering.

Matt's image for the author of Hebrews at this point: he has become Jesus' hype man. But not the sort who pumps up the crowd — *you can do it, try harder, third time's the charm*. He is hyping Jesus, because Jesus is the one who is trustworthy.

What we hold fast to

► 1:25:47

“Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.”

HEBREWS 3:5–6 ↗

The thing held fast is not our Bible study or the amount of time we spend praying or how good we were this week. It is a stubborn, boastful confidence in him. And Hebrews keeps attaching that uncomfortable *if* — keep trusting him to the end, because there is no salvation anywhere else.

Matt was candid about why anyone would drift. Works righteousness feels good for a little while; it feels empowering to be a little in control. Some dabble in other things entirely. The temptations differ, the destination is the same.

Grumbling in a dry place

► 1:26:56

Hebrews then quotes the psalm outright — “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” — and Matt refused to let the room feel superior to the people in the story. They said out loud that God had brought them out of Egypt to kill them in the desert. It sounds absurd: why deliver a nation, promise it an inheritance, and then lose interest halfway. “But that’s the kind of thoughts they had,” he said — and ours run the same way. *Jesus redeemed me and has this inheritance for me, but did he forget about me? Is he busy in heaven building mansions, lost track of time?*

► 1:28:43

He tied it back to a line the worship team had sung that morning — *you’re never going to let me down*. The project for the people in the wilderness was whether they could still trust God while looking straight at hardship. The point is not that everything opposing us is good. Christ rules now in the midst of his enemies, and some of those enemies — death, for one — are not good things. The project is to remain steadfast and loyal in the face of them.

His rest, not theirs

► 1:29:23

Then a word Matt wanted noticed. God does not say *they shall not enter their rest*. He says *they shall not enter my rest*. There is something uniquely personal about the inheritance being offered.

► 1:30:12

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

HEBREWS 3:12-13 ↗

Deceitful is the operative word. Matt wished aloud that every temptation announced itself honestly — *come do this thing that won’t even be fun, and will hurt, and you don’t actually like it* — and prayed for eyes to see how disgusting the thing luring us into darkness really is.

► 1:31:26

And the challenge in [Hebrews 3:14](#) is the same one: hold the original confidence firm to the end. “The day you were saved and trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you came bearing nothing and he gave you everything,” Matt said. “That still needs to be true twenty years in, thirty years in, forty years in. We’re not working our way up from the basic plan to the platinum plan with our good deeds.” And do not walk away from Jesus — not chiefly because his feelings would be hurt, but because there is no other salvation.

They were unable to enter because of unbelief

► 1:32:07

Who rebelled? [All those who left Egypt led by Moses](#) — the ones redeemed with great power and public miracles. Being delivered in a way that would make headlines does not guarantee faithfulness for the rest of a life. The congregation [Hebrews](#) was written to had known the sacred moments too, and were still being tempted back toward another kind of faith, or toward taking on the whole yoke of Torah to earn God’s favor.

“So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.”

HEBREWS 3:19 ↗

Not because they were not good enough. [Hebrews](#) shoehorns the whole wilderness story into the dimension of faith, and hammers the point until the letter’s subject is unmistakable.

The promise still stands

► 1:34:20

Chapter 4 opens with the offer still open — the promise of entering his rest still stands, and good news came to that generation just as it comes to us, but it did not benefit them because it was not met with faith. The way to miss it is not to underperform. The way to miss it is not to believe.

► 1:35:42

“Who’s the *we* who enter the rest?” Matt asked, pausing on the phrase. We who have believed. And the argument then loops back to Genesis on purpose — not, he insisted, as an author mining for religious-sounding verses:

“And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.... 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.”

HEBREWS 4:4-10 ↗

If Joshua had given them rest, God would not have kept speaking of another day so long afterward through David (Hebrews 4:7-8). Joshua did lead them toward the land. Something deeper was still unfulfilled — God’s own personal rest.

A word that is living and active — and is a person

► 1:37:41

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

HEBREWS 4:12-13 ↗

► 1:38:15

We usually quote this as a defense of the inspiration of the Bible. Matt asked the room to look at the actual language. Discerning the intentions of the heart — man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart. Naked and exposed to *his* eyes, to whom *we must give account*. Are those words on a page? One of Jesus’ titles is the Word of God, and he is living and active. We can search the scriptures thinking that in them we have eternal life, when it is they that bear witness about him — and it is to him we must come to have that life.

It is free, and that is not a sales pitch

► 1:41:28

Matt landed where the whole argument had been heading. In the gospel we enter into the fruit of Christ's labors — his rest. Timeless perfection, union with God, freedom, love in abundance, favor, grace, forgiveness, all by his blood on the cross and nothing added.

"Here's the catch," he said, and then caught himself, since calling it a catch was pure clickbait: he insists that all of it is free. The miracles, the Holy Spirit poured out, all of it. And the problem with trying to purchase these things with our good deeds is not that it ruins the vibe. They literally cannot be purchased. That is his program, and as the author of Hebrews points out, there is no other program.

So the closing charge was the one Hebrews gives: strive to enter that rest. His rest.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Psalm 95:1–3
- Psalm 95:6–8
- Psalm 95:9–11
- Hebrews 3:1–3
- Hosea 8:14
- Exodus 15:16
- Hebrews 3:5–6
- Hebrews 3:7–8
- Hebrews 3:11
- Hebrews 3:12–13
- Hebrews 3:14
- Hebrews 3:16–18
- Hebrews 3:19
- Hebrews 4:1–2
- Hebrews 4:3
- Hebrews 4:4–10
- Hebrews 4:7–8
- Hebrews 4:12–13
- 1 Samuel 16:7
- John 5:39–40

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where in your life right now does the wilderness comparison land — delivered, but wondering whether God has forgotten the inheritance he promised?
2. Matt said what we hold fast is not our Bible study or our prayer time but our boasting confidence in Jesus. What have you been quietly holding onto instead?
3. Hebrews says they were unable to enter because of unbelief, not because they were not good enough. How would it change your week to take that sentence seriously?
4. God calls it my rest, not their rest. What do you think he is actually inviting you into, and what makes that hard to receive?
5. Name one place where you have been trying to purchase something from God with your good deeds. What would striving to enter his rest look like there instead, starting this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYiEjEcizWQ&t=4421s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.