

**“Shelter-in-place” Devotions – By Pastor Ed Weber**

**“O Lord, in You I take shelter” Psalm 143:9**

“A Time of Rest”  
March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Yes, our entire Rio Grande Valley has now been ordered to shelter in place to try to slow down the spread of Covid-19. Yes, our lives have been interrupted in many, many ways from our normal routines. It's a serious virus that has caused much suffering and death in the world. We shelter to try to remove ourselves from harms way. And yet, while we shelter, it is also the perfect time to pause and reflect, on how God is also giving us many, many blessings in the midst of this pandemic! Have you thought about how God is working good even in this time of upheaval?

Every day, try to add to your personal list of how God is using this "upended season" in your life for His good, for the good of others, the good of the country and the world!

One blessing that I'd like for all of us to think about this day is the blessing of a **"time of rest"**.

***And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. (Mark 6:31)***

Jesus recognized that His disciples, including you and me, serving in Jesus' ministry, also need to be encouraged to "rest a while".

Jesus, Himself, took time to be alone to pray.

***"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there." (Matthew 14:23)***

Our bodies need time for physical rest (especially, to keep our immune systems in top form), our bodies need time to eat well, and time for exercise. But most importantly, our souls need spiritual rest that can only be found in the life-giving nourishment of the Word of God and His Sacraments.

A TV host, the other night, gave advice to her viewers to just read a book during this locked-down time...any book! Sure, reading is good, but not any book can truly lift your soul. There is only one book that can give true rest for the soul – THE book, THE Bible.

Take the "time" to meditate on this passage that we often use in our confession and absolution. It's today's verse of the day on Biblegateway.com, a great online Bible.

***"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)***

The word "if" reminds us that the Christian, led by the Holy Spirit, needs to consciously and purposefully take the "time" to examine oneself...to admit one's sins.... how I have not loved God with my whole heart and my neighbor as myself. And then like the publican in Luke 18, cry out to the Lord, ***"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"***

And after you've confessed your sins to God, then take much "time" to hear God's response to you! ***"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (see also Matthew 9:2, Isaiah 1:8)***

God is faithful! God is just! He cannot and will not allow Himself to do but one thing! "Forgive us our sins"! He doesn't pick and choose which ones to forgive. And He doesn't prioritize sinners and put you in a waiting line after others. No! He immediately cleanses us from **ALL** unrighteousness... not leaving a single uncleansed hard to reach part of your soul.

Since this pandemic began, we've been reminded many times to wash our hands often. There's even a video which you can click on in this message that shows you how to properly wash your hands so that you don't miss any spots.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbX0xwKORjk>

God doesn't miss any spots, but He cleanses us of all our unrighteousness, for Jesus' sake! ***"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*** (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Take the time to remember the cleansing of your baptism and God's promise to you ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."*** (Mark 16:16)

So, during this shelter-in-place season, take extra time to confess! Take extra time to hear God's faithful pronouncement of His forgiveness to you!! Take extra time to pray! Receive this extra blessing of a "Time of rest"... "This Jesus time" with grateful hearts! ***It's time very well spent with God! "O Lord, in You I take shelter." Amen.***

We pray...

Dear Heavenly Father, our days are in Your loving and merciful hands. As we daily confess our sins to you, we thank You that we can trust You to be faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We thank You that Your Son, Jesus suffered the terminal disease of our sin so that we can have healthy souls and eternally healthy bodies. Protect us from bodily harm from the Coronavirus and help those who are sick, and end the spread of this virus by Your gracious will. We thank You for the extra time to receive rest for our souls in Your Word. We thank You that we are sheltered by Your love, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.