

## **STOP and REST – Sermon for Third Sunday in Lent – March 15, 2009**

By Pastor Vern Oestmann

**Rest is important for the wearied traveler. Along major highways and interstates there are rest stops.**

**When the Pony Express was used, rest stops were very important for the survival of the riders and their horses. Communities also became associated as rest stops for travelers.**

**As walkers and hikers, rest stops are vital. Lactic acid builds up in the body and can cause a lot of pain and severe damage, if rest is not taken.**

**Our bodies need rest, that's why we take a portion of the day to sleep, giving rest to the body so it can properly function.**

**Today's Old Testament Lesson included the Ten Commandments. The third Commandment has to do with rest, remembering the Sabbath – a day of rest. God rested after creating the world. The command was that man worked six days and rested on the seventh day. Land was given a rest period of a year after six years of tilling and reaping.**

**Now, we know we need rest, so what's the message? The theme is "Stop and Rest, Fevered Child." When you have a fever, it is a sign that something in your body is not functioning properly and it is calling out that it needs attention. Fever, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary is:**

*Abnormally high body temperature. Any of various diseases characterized by abnormally high body temperature.*

**The disease can vary, but the showing sign is a fever – the abnormal high body temperature.**

**What causes this? Several things can cause us to have a fever. However, most likely it comes to us when our immune system is weak or when our body is weak and has not had enough rest.**

**The same can be true when we have not built up our immune system of faith to thwart Satan's temptations. When we neglect to "rest in the Lord," we make our selves vulnerable to the threats and viruses of sin.**

**Our spiritual body becomes weak when we are not receiving the Word of God to nurture it and the means of grace to protect it. The spiritual body, like our physical body, gets attacked every day by all kinds of dreadful and harmful diseases.**

**God is fully aware of what happens to us. That is why God provided a healthy means for our spiritual body – the family of God. It is when God’s family gathers together to be nurtured during the busy week that we stop and rest – to rest in the Lord.**

**In the book of Isaiah we read, “There is no rest, God said, for the wicked/” (Is. 48:22)**

**In Paul’s writing to the Corinthians, our Epistle Lesson for today, he says that “the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing.” When someone withdraws from worshipping God and loses focus on the cross of Jesus, soon the word of the cross becomes folly – foolishness and therefore not worth remembering or celebrating what God has done. The desires of the world soon become more important and the desires of one’s own heart take over and soon the spiritual body becomes weak and susceptible to the disease of sin, breaking the third commandment.**

**And the Gospel Lesson for today reminds us that even when we are so religious that we try to keep the Sabbath but the zeal to do what was thought right became an obstacle to the real meaning of God’s House. Jesus came and cleansed the Temple of the religious zealots.**

**So what does this all mean for us today? First, take time to rest, not just any rest, but take time to rest in the Lord. Second, take time to rest in remembering what God has done through Jesus Christ – making us wise unto salvation. Third, rest by being in prayer, relying upon God to take the burdens of our life and refreshing us with His peace.**

**Stop and rest, fevered Child of God, for as our Lord Jesus Christ said, “Come to Me, all who are burdened, and I will give you rest.” Our rest is in the Lord! Amen.**