Sermon Notes

Speaker: Patrick Mead

1/19/25

Moving on and Resting in Him (Hebrews 4-6)
(Numbers 9:15-23)

1. Church people who know the stories often refer to the 40yrs the Israelites spent in the desert as “wandering” and that is fair, but not a complete picture. They had the presence of God with them, moving them when it was time to move, keeping them in place when they needed to be kept in place.

2. Exodus 13:21-22 and 40:36-38. In Exodus 14:19, we learn that the Angel of the Lord was in the cloud and fire. And then…in First Corinthians 10:13, we find out Who was really in the fire. Jesus led the Israelites in the desert.

3. This is important to remember and the concept is one we need to grasp before we can harvest riches from the sermon we call the Book of Hebrews. The idea of moving – and resting – at the speed of the Spirit of God is not just in Numbers and Exodus but throughout the scripture. Jesus put it simply in Matthew 11:28-30.

4. An experienced ox would be paired with an inexperienced one so that the new ox could learn the pace. If you’ve ever gone horseback riding in a group setting, you know that the horses know exactly where to go and how fast to go. Try to make them vary their pace or direction and they will fight you. They KNOW the pace. They KNOW the way. Why? Because they have been led at that pace and in that direction for years. They know the stopping places, too.

5. Let’s look at Hebrews 4:1-7. There is a way of life that God is calling us into. He describes it as “rest.” This Sabbath rest of one of the heart, a calming of the soul, an assurance of deliverance in the face of the storm. This is not a “pie in the sky” or “wait until death” rest but a present rest. If God is with us, and if we believe that He is with us, we can rest in the moment even when the winds are tearing at our houses and crises tear at our lives.

6. Entering into the rest of God requires us to allow God to permeate our lives. By that I do not mean self abasement or some harsh set of disciplines that break our lives and steal our joy. Neither do I mean that we are to walk away from joys, pleasures and beauty. God created such things to be used in their time and place. What I DO mean is that we invite God into every aspect of our lives.

7. Look at this: Hebrews 4:12. We are often told that this means the Bible, our 66 books, but this writer was delivering this sermon when most of the NT had not been written. He was talking about some very Good News, a Gospel that HAD BEEN PREACHED to them back in the wilderness. Read on a few more verses to see what the Word of God means. Hebrews 4:13-16.

8. Jesus is the creator, He is the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud, and it is He who directs our paths, enters our lives and helps us make our decisions, not only about what to do but why and when…and when to rest. Remember, he even told us to limit our words and say less than we want to, less than we think. (Matthew 5:37)

9. I used to write a blog called Tentpegs. I named it that because I believed then and still believe that there are times to nail things down and mark out a place where you will stand, where you will live, but that there are other times when long held beliefs need to be pulled up so that you can move at the speed of the Spirit of God.

10. For we are all wanderers in the wilderness. They called theirs the desert. We call ours, life.

11. And it is a struggle. Hebrews 5:7-9. If Jesus had to learn through struggle, what makes us think that God owes us a struggle-free life?

12. Perhaps this hard lesson is why the writer of this sermon challenges us rather bluntly in Hebrews 5:11-6:3. Notice that we only get to this point by "constant use." All skills are perishable skills. If you don't practice, you will go backwards. Like playing the guitar, learning chords is tough but you only have to learn them once…but you have to practice them forever. The difference between a pro golfer or a pro basketball player and the weekend athlete has a lot to do with genetics, to be sure, but it has more to do with dedication and practice.

13. Even the great cellist, Pablo Casals, had to practice the scales again and again.

14. Christianity is not something to be merely believed, but practiced. That requires learning when to move and when to be still. When to speak and when to be quiet. When to drive the tentpeg down into solid ground and when to wrench it free.

15. In the religious tribe in which I was raised, baptism was preached at every sermon and the outer forms and required beliefs were drummed into us every single week. It was, therefore, quite a shock to come across Hebrews 6:1-3 and see him seem to toss those aside. He is NOT tossing them aside but putting them in their place: these are beginner things. It is time to learn how to use them and develop spiritual muscle memory.

16. Salvation is something we all want and God has assured us that we have it already through Jesus, but there are many, many gifts that accompany salvation. THAT is what we are in danger of losing. Hebrews 6:9-12.

17. Jesus told us to ask God for our daily bread, but we were then told to work for it. God told Joshua that He would give him the land of Canaan, but Joshua had to fight for every inch of it. God told Abraham that He would bless the whole world through him, but Abraham had to pack up his tent, pull up the tentpegs, and move his entire family into a new land where they would wander for the rest of their lives, following the Spirit of God.

18. Being faithful when all we can see when we wake up in the morning is desert and storm…that's tough. It seems to be a major part of God's plan for us, this learning by struggle. Babies struggle to control their muscles, to walk, to talk, to button their shirt or tie their shoes. They get frustrated…but you only have to learn it once. THEN, you have to do it again and again.

19. How can we keep our faith in these times? We have to trust the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. We have to trust the One who made the promises that keep us going. Hebrews 6:16-20. We follow Jesus as he moves from here all the way through the curtain, into the inner sanctuary. In all things, we remember the command that came to the apostles at the Transfiguration: "listen to Him."

20. And what is up with all this talk about Melchizedek? That's next week.