

God's Invitations, Part Six
John 6: 35 — 40
November 29, 2009

God's Invitation to Rest Easy

Thanksgiving has a special meaning for Americans; we all learn about the Pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving in elementary school, and the traditions surrounding the holiday have always been a part of life in this country. Yet there is a bittersweet aspect to Thanksgiving. It was not an official holiday until 1864, when President Lincoln proclaimed the fourth Thursday in November be recognized as a national holiday devoted to thanking God for the bounty of America's resources and the tireless industry of her people.

I find it inspiring that, in the midst of the horrors of the Civil War, President Lincoln found a reason for hope and confidence in the future. That inspiration echoed the Pilgrims, who were saved from certain extinction by friendly natives who taught them how to grow crops and harvest game, fish, and shellfish. That fall, the colonists hosted their Indian guests with a mighty feast, and gave thanks to God for bringing them through that first year in America.

On January 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave a speech before Congress. The nation was still struggling with the lingering effects of the Great Depression; war had already broken out across the world, and America could not remain neutral forever. Roosevelt, sensing the country needed to be reminded what were her guiding principles, spoke of the "Four Freedoms," which he said were being threatened by tyrants throughout the world. They were "Freedom of Speech; Freedom of Worship; Freedom from Want; and Freedom from Fear."

Two years later, in the depths of WWII, Norman Rockwell, perhaps the greatest artist of his time, decided he wanted to help the war effort. He was too old to serve in the military, so he decided to do a series of paintings based on the Four Freedoms the President had identified as our guiding principles.

The project took six tiring months, and when they were made public, made a sensation; eventually the Saturday Evening Post made them into four magazine covers, and they are to this day among Rockwell's most popular paintings.

I want to draw your attention to "**Freedom from Want**," which was the magazine cover on March 6, 1943. Rockwell's genius is immediately apparent. He uses the first person perspective – the viewer is sitting at the end of a family's Thanksgiving table as the mother places the large turkey on the table. Everyone is beaming at the prospect of the feast to come; all is pristine; light fills the room.

The point I want you see is that, in 1943, perhaps 2% of Americans could actually have that kind of Thanksgiving. Most Americans could only hope for a scrap of fresh meat on

their table, never a large bird! Most American families would spend Thanksgiving 1943 with simple fare, and they would spend their day praying for family members on faraway fields of conflict.

Rockwell understood this all too well. But his intention was to inspire his countrymen to take hope in a future Thanksgiving, when peace would have come, homes would be made whole, and America would realize that freedom from what the President had visualized.

Today, many Americans have precious little to feel hopeful about. In Brevard County, the unemployment rate stands over 11%. Families face foreclosure, and retirees on fixed incomes are pressed on all sides. Extremists actively seek America's demise, and hundreds of thousands of our best young men and women serve in harm's way.

I want to point you to an invitation Jesus issued in John Chapter Six, verses 35 through 40 (Read). The invitation is this: "*I am the bread of life; he that comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst* (John 6: 35)." Jesus was seeking to give hope for the future in a time of crisis and fear. He invites any one to come and find hope for their future. This is His invitation to rest easy about what the future holds.

Have you ever spent hours of your life feeling uneasy about some future event? Some of us do better at hiding our anxiety, but I dare say everyone has been concerned about something looming in our future to the extent it has affected how we go about our daily life.

God wants to take away one of the biggest concerns we have – the concern about the future, so in our scripture today, He invites us to rest easy about the future.

I can rest easy about the future because:

1. Jesus is already involved in my life on this side of eternity (John 6: 35).

A. Food and water are two basic human needs. Here He is saying, "I have met your most basic needs in life."

1. In fact, He has met my needs in two dimensions, because He meets my spiritual needs, also.

B. If you compare this side of life with eternity, which is the greater side? Certainly it is eternity.

1. And so if Jesus meets my needs on the lesser side of life, how much more will Jesus meet my needs on the greater side of life.

I can rest easy about what the future holds, because...

2. The Father has drawn me to Jesus (vs. 36 – 36).

A. We all probably have known of people who have experienced a miracle of God in their life, yet have not received Him as Savior.

1. Seeing God perform a miracle does not necessarily equate into a salvation moment.

2. There must be the call of God on your heart that draws you to come to God.

B. By God the Father getting involved in my salvation reassures me it wasn't just

me wanting to be saved; it was God Who made it happen.

1. And if God the Father was involved in my conversion experience, I can rest easy about the permanence of that conversion.

I can rest easy about what the future holds because...

3. Jesus never gets tired of me (v. 37).

A. Have you ever known someone who just gets on your last nerve? What do you do with that person? Why, you try to push them away!

1. It is especially trying when the stress-inducing person is a relative, and you know you will see them at most family gatherings!

B. But God is not like that about you and me; no matter how much you make a pest of yourself, He never tires of your company.

1. No matter how often you ask Him for something, He never takes the phone off the hook.

2. No matter how many times you mess up – right after He had told you the right thing to do – He never gets tired of speaking with you.

Finally, I can rest easy about what the future holds because...

4. Jesus and the Father are on the same page (vs. 38 – 40).

A. Some large churches have tried to use two senior pastors, but this has not worked well because inevitably a power struggle develops between the two men.

1. When two or more people share the same office and position of responsibility, human nature will create competition.

B. But not the Trinity: Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit are on the same page.

1. There is complete understanding between them. They in total unity; they are of the same mind.

2. They both desire that I spend eternity with them. Therefore, I can rest easy God the father and God the Son have the same plans for me.

This past Thursday, hundreds of our neighbors camped out overnight outside retail stores. They were focused on giving thanks for bargains only available as “door busters.” But months – and years – from now, when those items purchased on Thanksgiving have been long in the landfill, the invitation from God to enter into a relationship with Him will still be bringing great reward.

This invitation is to take in bread that never leaves us hungry – Jesus Christ Himself. And we can rest easy in the promise of eternal life that invitation offers. Have you RSVP’ed?

Let’s pray!