

AUGUSTA, RESTING IN JESUS

Hebrews 4:9; Augusta Stusse Funeral; August 22, 2018

Every once in a while we are given reminders that God's time is not always our time. As Augusta's health and strength started failing, all of us were sure that her life on this earth was going to be over soon, and family and friends began their vigil of waiting for the end. And then she rallied. Then she weakened, and the waiting for the end started again. There were so many "downs" then "ups" the last couple of months. But Augusta feebly struggled on until it was God's time, early evening on Friday, August 10th. In life and in death, Augusta walked with Jesus in God's time.

Do you remember what day it was that Jesus died on the cross? It was a Friday, late in the afternoon. The last hours of His life were a struggle. His body had been beaten and broken even before His crucifixion. Carrying His own cross was too much for Him earlier that Friday morning. Jesus' death came fairly quickly; they didn't need to break His legs to hasten His death on the cross. After He died, some secret disciples of His, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, requested His body to be buried before the Sabbath began, when no such work should be done by faithful Jews.

The Hebrew word "Sabbath" means "rest." After God finished creating the universe in six days and giving life on this earth, He rested from all His work. Later He commanded that His people observe the Sabbath, the Day of Rest, on the seventh day to remember all that God had done and continued to do for His people. After the world fell into sin and death came into the world, God promised that He would send a Savior from sin and death. This work to save fallen creation would be done by His Son, Jesus Christ, and it also would be completed on the sixth day, and God would rest again on the seventh, the Sabbath.

God's time in the Bible is divided into days, which begin and end in the evening at sundown. "**And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day**" (Gn 1:31). In God's way of keeping track of time and days, the work week ended at sundown on Friday when the Sabbath began. Jesus worked until He died on Friday, the sixth day, and was buried, beginning His Sabbath rest in the tomb.

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us of the significance of this for Augusta, who lived and died in God's time. **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.** The Old Testament laws about not working on the Sabbath have been fulfilled by Jesus' work of salvation, death and burial. The Sabbath has always been about the work God has done for us, not about what we do for God. From the very beginning God the Father knew that His Son would need to work His salvation, and the Sabbath observance from then until Jesus suffered and died, pointed forward until that work was done – **"It is finished!"** we hear Jesus cry out on the cross– fulfilling and completing the Sabbath for all eternity.

The Old Testament Sabbath laws have been fulfilled for us because Jesus has kept them for us, but that does not mean that there is no more rest for us. Jesus is our Sabbath rest no matter what day of the week it is. **There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.** We rest in Jesus.

For as long as Augusta was physically able, she took advantage of resting in Jesus. Her Lord, who finished His work of salvation on a Friday, died, was buried and rested in the tomb on the Sabbath, rose again on the First Day, Sunday, the Lord's Day. Augusta was a worker in life, but her faith was in Jesus who worked her salvation. She was faithful in worship because she knew she needed her rest in Him. She wasn't here to work, she was here to rest. She came to rest in the arms of her Good Shepherd. She rested in the forgiveness of her sins through Jesus' words. She rested by feeding on His body and blood in the Lord's Supper to strengthen her in this life and the promise of life everlasting.

This is something all of us can learn from her. So often we make it seem like coming to God's house on the Lord's Day is such hard work. Many people find it too hard to make it to church on a regular basis. If only we remembered that the sins and sorrows of life that wear us out every day have been lifted from us and placed on Jesus, who carried them to the cross so we can rest in Him. Some people claim that they are too tired to come to church. The opposite is true: they are tired and worn out because they don't come to church. Being with Jesus gives us true rest, now and forever.

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that those who enter God's rest will rest from their works as God did from His. This implies that there is work for us to do in this life, though it is not a work that saves us from our sins and death.

Augusta was a hard worker her whole life. If hard work alone made someone rich, she would have been a millionaire. But God did not bless her with earthly riches. Her work was being the helpmeet of Roscoe as God intended. She worked on the farm and raised faithful, Christian children. She did not have a lot to give in worldly or monetary things, but she gave of herself, and her time.

An example of this I'm aware of was when her sister's husband became sick and died at a young age. Even though she had family responsibilities at home, she came to her sister's aid and helped her with the care of her children. She is a reminder to us that God gives us family, not for what we can get from them, but to love and care for each other. Such work is hard, and it can be thankless. We give thanks to God today that, now that Augusta's work in this life has come to an end, Augusta has entered God's eternal rest.

As her bodily has died and will rests in the ground, her soul enjoys eternal rest in heaven with Jesus. Her work on earth is done and she rests in Him. But we remember in faith that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, the Lord's Day, promising us that those who faithfully rested in Him in this life, who rest in their tombs, will one day rise from the dead like He did.

The account in John's Gospel of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead points toward that day. That family had been waiting for Jesus to show up to help, hopefully before Lazarus would die. Jesus came in His own time, after the death had taken place. Today, we are waiting for when Jesus will show up at Augusta's grave. Our faith is that on that day He will cry out with a loud voice, "Augusta, come out!" In God's time, Augusta, who has died, will come out, her Sabbath rest in the tomb over, and her life continue forever in her resurrected body.

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for [Augusta], for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from [her] works as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest. Amen.