

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, July 26, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Born to Run”

READING: Hebrews 12:1-3 – Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race set before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

A couple of weeks ago I was running my usual four miles on a hot, miserable Tuesday morning. I had about three miles already behind me, and I don't mind saying I wasn't enjoying the run. On a day like that it's just work and misery. I do it because it is good for me, not because it's a lot of fun. What did I see? Oh, a young man in his late twenties, tall, lean, bare chested, with long legs and not an extra ounce of fat on him. He was running at a rate two or three times mine. He took long strides and just loped along like some kind of greyhound. It was sickening!

That fellow, God bless him, was born to run. His length and body style were perfectly suited for hitting the pavement and making a mockery of four or five miles of roadway. He just ate up the distance and didn't seem to be in any particular pain. Not so me! I was not born to run. I have big thick thighs but fairly short legs. I am 20-30 pounds heavier than I should be for my height. I have feet that get ever flatter and longer as I get older. I have a short stride and a slow gate. And, oh by the way, I am 68 years old! I was not born for the roadway. I was not born to run!

On the other hand, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that all of us were born to run a race. It's a cross country race with lots of ups and downs, some twists and turns, and it lasts for many years. It is strewn with obstacles of various kinds. It has places deep and dark where it's hard to know the right path. In some places there are pitfalls and dangerous drop offs to be spotted and avoided. Sometimes we have companions running with us. Sometimes we find ourselves all alone. Shoot, sometimes there are even hecklers who tell us we'll never make it; we're not good enough; we need to quit and give up. Sometimes we have to choose the right path when we come to forks in the road. It isn't easy. There's pain and fear and sadness at times. It's a tough race to finish.

But the writer to the Hebrews says we can do it! He says we can persevere and win the prize at the end of the race if we do one thing: fix our eyes on Jesus! That's right! That's the way! He says that by fixing our eyes (and our hearts) on Jesus our Savior, we can finish the race in good order. When the hard patches come, he says we should remember the hardships Jesus faced and overcame. He had hecklers in the hundreds. They were even there as he hung dying on the cross. They heckled him and laughed at his agony. But he kept his eyes on the prize: salvation for you and me and the eternal joy that would be his when he gathered his church from around the world and across the ages on that last day. When he finished HIS race, he sat down at the seat most honored by God. There he remains, interceding on our behalf and planning with the Father his final act of redemption when he gathers together all of his beloved Church.

And here's the other neat thing about this text: when we finish our race and are summoned home, guess who's going to be there? A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES! All the saints of God and the angels, our loved ones already there, they'll gather around us and welcome us into the Father's domain. I am always reminded of the finish of the Marathon in the Olympics. They come in after about a 26-mile run, and they enter the Olympic stadium and run three laps around the track while all the spectators cheer for each

finisher. I think it's one of the most moving events in the Summer Olympics. And I think it is a little picture of what the author of Hebrews is telling us. Finish the race by keeping an eye on the Lord and joy beyond all telling awaits us.

Now, glad I am that I don't have to physically run to finish the race of life. I was not born to run like some. But in the race of life I have a singular advantage: I have a Savior who has come this way before me. He's left me the map, the resources, and his Spirit to lead, guide, and encourage me. As long as I keep my eye on Jesus, this is a race I will finish, a race that leads me home. Let's run a stretch together! God be with us. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

5-8 Graders and at least one of their parents will be meeting on the Second Wednesday of August to be orientated for our confirmation classes. Then on the following Wednesday *Grace on Wednesday* will kick off once again. Supper at 5:30. Classes 6-7:30. Encourage any parents you know to get their kids into these classes. It's one of the best ways for them to learn the stories and lessons of the Bible.