

## Sermon for Memorial Day—Lord of Life Lutheran Church—5/30/2004

**Title:** “Running the Race”

**Text:** Hebrews 12: 1-3

**Intro.:** *Ills.:* O.K. to cry – just keep on walking

**Theme:** On a weekend in which our local area focuses on a “race,” as believers we are always focused on a race — an eternal one — which begins when we come to faith in Jesus and ends when we cross the finish line of heaven.

### *Don't do it alone!*

- Let Jesus begin and finish the race for you
  1. We often exhibit a “*let me do it*” independence which often gets us in trouble
  2. Jesus wants to finish what he began in you
    1. Jesus is referred to as the “*beginner/founder*” and the “*completer*” of the faith (vs. 2)
    2. *God, who began this good work in you, will carry it through to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1:6*
- Take advantage of the crowd
  3. Jesus never intended for us to run alone
    1. *Ills.:* *The advantage of a running partner — pace & encouragement*
  4. Don't overlook the “*little*” word in this text — ***therefore*** (vs. 1)
    1. Pointing back to the roll call of faith's heroes who exemplify patience, perseverance, and blind trust(ch11)
    2. Let yourself be “enveloped” (cloud) in the example, testimony, and faith of past and present believers
    3. ***Ills.:* Slingshot advantage (partner drafting in the Indy 500 & Brickyard 400)**
    4. Making it your goal to spend more time with fellow believers in true Christian fellowship

### *Learning to run the race of faith, effectively*

- Lay aside, once-and-for-all, sins of the past
  1. God laid them aside in Jesus, once-for-all; so why can't you
    1. *He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. Hebrews 7:27*
    2. Not letting your past guilt or someone else's past crimes against you remain another day in your life
      - Described as a “*weight/burden*” — it is time to set it down and let it go because it is tripping your up
      - *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24*
  2. The ministry of forgiving and being forgiven
    1. *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. James 5:16*
- Keep on running the race
  1. ***Ills. A bad start but don't let it determine the race***
  2. When we fall, get up and “*keep on running*”(vs. 1)
    1. Because our individual sins do not disqualify us for heaven (only unbelief can do that)
      - *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mk 16:16*
    2. Because the “*opposition*” of others does not determine the outcome of our race
    3. Because God is able to accomplish more than we can imagine or think of
      - *God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power at work in us. Eph.3:20*
- Let your focus be undivided
  1. On Jesus not the trial so that you “*do not grow soul weary and lose your heart” (vs. 3)
    1. “*Fix your eyes*” = set boundaries
    2. ***Ills.:* Blinders on thoroughbreds running triple crown raise — not distracted by other horses***

3. We get distracted by the brokenness of our world and blessing envy toward others
4. Remember your true life is set and reserved and you have already been given every blessing in Christ
  - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Eph. 1: 3*
2. On Jesus so you see God’s life plan for you
  1. Jesus could patiently outlast the cross because of the resurrection/ascension God had already planned
    - *“who for the joyful life preplanned and set before him” (vs. 2)*
  2. We can patiently wait for the life up ahead because God has planned out our welcome home part in heaven
  3. **Ills.: How runners finish strong**

### **O.K. to Cry**

Pastor Mark Coleman loves to hike, and he passed on that love to his son, Peter. When Peter was only 5 years old, Coleman planned an easy hike on the northern part of the Appalachian Trail. Coleman would lead them around a mountain to a lake in Vermont where they would spend the night. He made thorough preparation for the trip, including coaching his son. Over and over he told him that it would be tough, and it was okay to be tired, but they had to keep on walking. They had to keep on walking. Unfortunately, the walking was longer and tougher than expected because Coleman led them over the mountain, not around it. The trail was steep and broken. Little Peter stumbled time after time on loose rocks, but they kept on walking. The hike was a burden, not a joy, but they kept on walking. Peter fell so many times that he ripped the knees of his jeans, but he kept on walking. Finally, after one fall too many, he sat and cried. As Mark approached him and began to speak, Peter cut him off: *"I know, Dad. It's okay to cry, as long as I keep on walking.* **Citation: From a sermon by Mark Coleman (3-16-03); submitted by Jeffrey Arthurs, South Hamilton, Massachusetts**

### **How Runners Finish Strong**

In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins writes: The coaching staff of a high school cross-country running team got together for dinner after winning its second state championship in two years. The program had been transformed in the previous five years from good (top 20 in the state) to great (consistent contenders for the state championship on both the boys' and girls' teams). "I don't get it," said one of the coaches. "Why are we so successful? We don't work any harder than other teams. And what we do is just so simple. Why does it work?" He was referring to their simple strategy: We run best at the end. We run best at the end of workouts. We run best at the end of races. And we run best at the end of the season, when it counts the most. Everything is geared to this simple idea, and the coaching staff knows how to create this effect better than any other team in the state. For example, they place a coach at the 2-mile mark (of a 3.1-mile race) to collect data as the runners go past. Then the coaches calculate not how fast the runners go, but how many competitors they pass at the end of the race, from mile two to the finish. The kids learn how to pace themselves and race with confidence: *"We run best at the end," they think at the end of a hard race. "So, if I'm hurting bad, then my competitors must hurt a whole lot worse!"* **Citation: Jim Collins, Good To Great (Harper Business, 2001), p. 206**

### **Hebrews 12:1-3**

<sup>1</sup>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 marked out for us. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary in your souls and lose heart. [NIV]