

1.8.21 am Run the Race

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Date: 01 August 2021

Preacher: Gordon MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to our service this morning. It's good to see so many here with us and to those that are worshipping online with us, welcome. It's great to be able to come together and worship God.

We've got one or two intimations that I need to read, so if you just bear with me and I'll try and get through these and share as much information as possible. So the evening service this evening will be at the usual time at 6pm and this evening our session clerk Duncan McPherson will lead the service.

The prayer meeting as usual will be on Wednesday at 7.30 on Zoom and all been well. That will be taken, led by the minister, but Mr Jim Sim will be speaking to us on Wednesday evening.

The service is next Sunday at 11am and 6pm and will be conducted by the minister, who will have returned from his holidays by then.

As many will be aware, the holiday club is on this week on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday the 4th, 5th and 6th of August.

[1 : 15] If you're able to help on any or all of these dates, please speak to Lucy Tour or to Joyce King, please. Further intimation in relation to the secondary age outreach which is going to be taking place on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evening.

On Friday evening, it's hoped that the young folk will attend the beach, followed by some food at the church. And if you're able to help by donating food or preparing food on the night, please again speak to Joyce King.

It's an intimation we've been asked to give on behalf of the Lewis Christian Conference, which God willing will take place on Thursday the 12th of August through to Saturday the 14th of August.

The conference will be hosted in the main road building of Garibust Free Church and the speaker will be Reverend David Johnson, retired minister of Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church in Bangor, Northern Ireland.

Online booking will be available before the event and COVID regulations will be observed throughout the conference weekend. The theme of this year's conference will be trusting God in troubled times with three messages from the book of Habakkuk.

[2 : 33] Thursday 12th of August, the service is at 7.30pm and the subject heading is How Long, O Lord? Friday the 13th of August, again at 7.30pm.

The righteous will live by faith. And Saturday the 14th of August, again at 7.30pm. I will rejoice in the Lord. Links to the online booking forms are available on both the Garibust Free Church and the Lewis Christian Conference websites.

And we certainly encourage anyone that's available or able to link into that to do so. Let us now come before God and worship, singing in Mission Praise 975.

Mission Praise 975. Before the throne of God above. Before the throne of God above.

Have a strong, a perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love. Whoever lives and pleads for me.

[3 : 52] My name is graven on his hands. My name is written on his heart. I know that while in him he stands.

No tongue can bid me fence depart. No tongue can bid me fence depart. The symptom tempts me to despair.

And tells me of the guilt within. Upward I look and see him there. Who made an end to all my sin.

Because the sinless Savior died. My sinful soul is counted free. For God the justice satisfied.

To look on him and pardon me. To look on him and pardon me. Be you to live the wisdom of my perfect, spotless righteousness.

[5 : 09] The great unchangeable I am. The King of glory and of grace. One with himself I cannot die.

My soul is purchased with his blood. My life is hid with Christ on high. With Christ my Savior and my God.

With Christ my Savior and my God. Just before we turn to prayer.

I'd just like to welcome all the visitors that we have with us this morning. It's so nice to see so many with us. And I think it's worth making a special mention.

That one young couple that are here with us. While they're here celebrating their honeymoon. So it's nice to have you with us. And congratulations. Let us bow in prayer. Our gracious and ever-blessed Lord.

[6 : 17] We thank you that we can come into your presence this morning. And that Heavenly Father. Whether we are physically here in the building. Or whether we are tuning in online. We thank you that Heavenly Father.

That you are not bound by walls. And that Heavenly Father. That you are with us wherever we gather this morning. And we claim your promise to us. That wherever two or three are gathered.

In your name. That you are there in the midst. And that to bless. So as we gather here this morning. Heavenly Father. As we have sung your praise. And as we have recognised.

That we come before the throne of God. That Heavenly Father. That we would indeed be blessed. In knowing your hand upon us this morning. As we sing your praise.

As we read your word. As we seek Heavenly Father. To understand what your word teaches us. May each one of us Heavenly Father. Be still before you. Be still and know that you are God.

[7 : 16] That Heavenly Father. In coming into your presence. That we would acknowledge. That you are above all things. And that you are the giver. Of every good and perfect gift.

That we can thank you this morning. That your mercies are indeed new. Every morning. And great. Is your faithfulness. That Heavenly Father. No matter how far we may stray from you.

You have promised. That you will never leave us. That you will never forsake us. And as we come this morning. As Heavenly Father. We seek to find out more about you.

As we seek once again. Heavenly Father. To start this week. That Heavenly Father. That we would recognise. That sometimes we need to come. And recalibrate.

That we need to come. Heavenly Father. And acknowledge. That we are weak. That we thank you. That you are strong. That Heavenly Father. That you would indeed.

- [8 : 13] In this week. And in each day ahead. That you would keep us from straying. That you would keep us. As we used to learn as children. That you would keep us from all wrong. That Heavenly Father.
- That our thoughts. That our actions. That our speech. Would all Heavenly Father. Seek to glorify you. We thank you.
- That we can come freely this morning. We thank you. That as we come into your presence. We do not have fear in our hearts. Heavenly Father. That our meeting. Will indeed be disrupted. That we recognise.
- Heavenly Father. That there are Christian brothers and sisters. Across the world. That have that fear. That know not the peace. Heavenly Father. That we have in coming here. That we pray.
- Heavenly Father. That wherever they may gather. In their ones. Or in their twos. That they would know the blessing. Heavenly Father. Of opening your scripture.
- [9 : 10] Of hearing you speak to them. Through your word. Of being able to lift up their hearts. In prayer and praise to you. Heavenly Father. We pray that.
- As we read your word this morning. As we reflect upon it. That each one of us. Heavenly Father. As we read. And as we hear. Would recognise.
- That your word speaks to us individually. That it is not a word. For the person on our left. Or on our right. But Heavenly Father. That your word speaks to us all.
- Oh Heavenly Father. We recognise. That we cannot live. By the mere temporal things. That this world has to offer us. That Heavenly Father. That we must feed upon your word.
- That we must be rooted. And grounded in it. That Heavenly Father. If we are. Indeed to know what it is. To walk in righteousness. That we must dwell.
- [10 : 06] In your word. And walk close with you. Each and every day. So as we come. To this hour of worship. We pray that you would guide us. That you would direct us.
- That you would lead us. As we speak to the children. And as the children. Go through to the Sunday school. We thank you for them. Heavenly Father. We pray for your blessing upon them.
- That Heavenly Father. The importance for each one of us. Of living our lives. As ambassadors. And as examples for you. That as these young ones look on. That Heavenly Father.
- That we would reflect your glory. That they would see something. That they would indeed desire you. To know you better. That as we teach them. To remember their creator.
- In the days of their youth. That Heavenly Father. That they would indeed remember you. That they would grow up. Acknowledging you. Loving you. Before the days of evil come.
- [11 : 02] When they say. They have no pleasure in them. That Heavenly Father. That they would come to you now. Your word teaches us. That each one of us. Must come as little children. And we pray Heavenly Father.
- That that would be the case. For us all this morning. That as we examine our hearts. That we would see our need of you. And that Heavenly Father. That we would cast aside all.
- That indeed. Stops us. From worshipping you. So be with us this morning. Bless our time together. And forgive us for our sins.
- In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Boys and girls. It's good to see some of you here this morning. And for those that are online.
- We question for you. Have any of you ever known what it is to be lost? Well. Last Sunday. I was in Edinburgh.

- [12 : 02] Myself and Gillian. And we went for a walk. On Kirstorf and Hill. And. Following the path. And following the path. And all of a sudden. The path.
- Kind of disappeared a wee bit. And we could see where the grass. Had maybe been cut. And. Kind of got out my phone. And looked. To see where we were. And we could see where this path went.
- And it turned out. We had walked further than we had realised. We had walked along the back of the zoo. We had walked past the golf course. That we were supposed to have gone down the side of. And.
- And. We ended up. At the side of this big big house. So. We were there. Thinking. Okay. If we carry on down that way.
- We're going to end up on Kirstorf and Road. And it's a long way to walk back home. So. So. Gillian said. Look. There's a path there. I can blame Gillian. Because she's here.
- [12 : 56] And she did actually say at the time. That's a good children's talk for you. We started walking up this path. It was quite narrow. And as we started walking along.
- It went round the back of this house. Through some trees. The path was getting narrower. It was getting more overgrown. There was nettles. And I don't particularly like nettles.
- Particularly when I'm out wearing my shorts. And. We carried on going. Gillian was quite confident at the start. She was actually leading us along the path.
- And then as it started getting. A bit more overgrown. She kind of took a step back. And said. You can go first. So. I carried on going. And then eventually.
- The path stopped. In the middle. Of nowhere. Couldn't see a path to the left. To the right. Or straight ahead of us. Got the phone out again.
- [13 : 57] There was no path. Where we were. It was just a track. That had obviously been there. At one time. And had overgrown. You know what we had to do. We had to turn round.
- I had to turn round. And walk back. The way we had come. It was a hot. Sunny day. Last Sunday. Exactly the same. As it was here. In fact.
- At times. It was too hot. To sit outside. So. We had to turn round. And walk back. And you know why we got lost.
- Because we strayed from the path. That we were supposed to have been on. We knew the path. That we were supposed to go. We were supposed to go down the hill. We could see. Kerstorf and Road. But we decided. That's too long a walk.
- To go back round there. Pavement's going to be hot. We need to go right along to the lights. We need to go right the way round. Let's take a shortcut. The shortcut didn't work for us. We got lost.
- [14 : 59] And we had to retrace our steps. And we had to come back onto the path. That we were supposed to be on. And we had a long. Hot walk. Back home. And it was a lesson to us. There were signs.
- Up. Telling us different ways to go. But we didn't trust them. We're going to be looking at. In the service.
- Later on. A text. From. Hebrews. Chapter 12. Which happens to be. The text. That we're going to have. For.
- The holiday club. This year. Now I didn't know this. Until the material for the holiday club. Came through last night. But there's a reason. And a purpose. For everything. And the text that we have.
- Is. Let us run. With perseverance. The race. That's marked out for us. Let us fix. Our eyes. On Jesus. The author.

- [15 : 56] And perfecter. Of our faith. We don't look. To go our own way. We don't look. To go the way. That somebody else. Might have gone. We look. To what Jesus.
- Has done for us. And we fix. Our eyes. On Jesus. Because the minute. That we take our eyes. Off Jesus. We get lost. And the path. Gets difficult. Hoped. The same as the path.
- That Jillian and I. Had to go on last Sunday. It gets overgrown. There are dangers on it. But if we fix. Our eyes on Jesus. It doesn't mean. That life.
- Will be easy. But it means. That we don't have to face. These challenges. On our own. So. When you're at the holiday club. And I hope. Every one of you. Will come along.
- To the holiday club. This week. Remember that. That you fix your eyes. Upon Jesus. He's been there. Before us. And he will help us.
- [16 : 49] To run. With perseverance. The race. That has been marked out. For each. And every one of us. Before we sing. I'm just going to have a word. Of prayer for you.
- Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you. For the young ones. That are here. As we have already prayed. This morning. But we pray. In particular. Heavenly Father. That as they listen. As they now go through.
- To Sunday school. As they learn more of you. That Heavenly Father. That they will indeed. Remember their creator. That they will remember.
- All that they learn. Here in Sunday school. That it will indeed. Mold and shape them. For the men and women. That you will want them to be. That they would indeed.
- Know what it is. To trust in Jesus. To fix their eyes. Upon him. And learn. Heavenly Father. What it is. To run the race. That is marked out for them.
- [17 : 45] As individuals. Their paths. Will go in different ways. But Heavenly Father. If they fix their eyes. Upon you. These paths. Will indeed lead them. At all times.
- To you. And they will recognize. That they will not. Have to walk alone. For you have promised. That you will never leave them. Nor forsake them. Remember the holiday club.
- This week. We pray. Heavenly Father. That the young ones. Will indeed come along. That they will learn. About running the race. And that Heavenly Father. That you will be.
- With those that. Will be helping out. At the holiday club. That you will give them strength. That you will give them. Endurance. For this week. That most of all. Heavenly Father. That your word. And your love. Will be shared.
- That seeds. Will be sown. Into the lives. Of young ones. And that Heavenly Father. According to your will. And purpose. And in due season. That these seeds. Will indeed grow.
- [18 : 41] And in turn. Bear fruit for you. In Jesus precious name. Amen. We're going to sing. Now from Mission Praise.
- Come thou fount. Of every blessing. Come thou fount. Of every blessing. Tune my heart. To sing your praise. Sing your grace. Streams of mercy.
- Never ceasing. Call for songs. Of loudest praise. We'll stand and sing this. But just. As I look it up here. What I just want to. Focus on. Is the.
- The verse. At the end. Just to tie it in. With what we were. Speaking about. Where it says. Prone to wonder. Lord I feel it. Prone to leave.
- The God I love. Take my heart. Oh take and seal it. Seal it from. Your courts above. Let us not wander. From God. But help us. To stay close to him.
- [19 : 36] That our hearts. Will indeed. Be sealed. To his. Let us stand and sing. Come.
- Oh fans. Of every blessing. Tune my heart. To sing your praise. Streams of mercy.

Never ceasing. Call for songs of loudest praise. Songs of God's abundant treasure.

Sung by angels. Tongues above. Songs that tell the boundless measure. Of my Lord's unchanging love.

I remember God's great mercy. I remember God's great mercy. By his help I've safely come. And I know he will not fail me.

[20 : 42] But will surely bring me home. Jesus sought me when a stranger. Wandering far away from God.

And to rescue me from danger. Shed for me his precious blood. Through God's grace I am his debtor.

Daily I this thought renew. Let that grace for my cafeta. Find my wandering heart to you.

Prone to wonder Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Take my heart oh take and seal it.

Seal it from your courts above. Just as the children head to Sunday school.

[21 : 53] If we can look up the reading for today. Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11. And we'll read from the beginning of the chapter. And into chapter 12.

Hebrews chapter 11.

And we'll read from verse 1. Now faith is confidence in what we hope for. And assurance about what we do not see.

This is what the ancients were committed for. Commended for. By faith we understand that universe was formed at God's command. So that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.

By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous. When God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks.

[22 : 59] Even though he is dead. By faith Enoch was taken from this life. So that he did not experience death. He could not be found. Because he had been taken away by God.

For before he was taken. He was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God. Because anyone who comes to him. Must believe that he exists.

And that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. By faith Noah when he was warned about things not yet seen. In holy fear built an ark to save his family.

By his faith he condemned the world. And became heir of the righteousness that is keeping with faith. By faith Abram when called to go to a place. He would later receive as his inheritance.

Obedied and went. Even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land. Like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents as Isaac and Jacob.

[24 : 02] And were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations. Whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah who was past childbearing years.

Was enabled to bear children. Because she considered him faithful. Who had made the promise. And so from this man. And he as good as dead.

Came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. And as countless as the sand on the seashore. All these people were still living by faith. When they died.

They did not receive the things promised. They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. Admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things.

Show they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left. They would have had the opportunity to return. Instead they were longing for a better country.

[25 : 02] A heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. For he has prepared a city for them. By faith Abram when tested. Offered Isaac as a sacrifice.

He had embraced the promises. He who had embraced the promises. Was about to sacrifice his one and only son. Even though God had said to him. That is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

Abram reasoned that God could even raise the dead. And so in Amaranov speaking. He did receive Isaac back from the dead. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

By faith Jacob when he was dying blessed each of Joseph's sons. And worshipped as he leaned on the top of a staff. By faith Joseph when his end was near.

Spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. And gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones. By faith Moses' parents hid from their son for three months after he was born.

[26 : 09] Because they saw he was no ordinary child. And they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses when he had grown up. Refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God. Rather to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value.

Than the treasures of Egypt. Because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt. Not fearing the king's anger. He persevered.

Because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood. So that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea on Hazan dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to do so they were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell.

[27 : 05] After the army had marched around them for seven days. By faith the prostitute Rahab. Because she welcomed the spies was not killed with those who were disobedient.

And what more shall I say. I do not have time to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah. About David and Samuel and the prophets. Who through faith conquered kingdoms.

Administered justice. And gained what was promised. Who shut the mouths of lions. Quenched the fury of the flames. And escaped the edge of the sword. Whose weaknesses was turned to strength.

Whose became powerful in battle. And routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead. Raised to life again. There were others who were tortured.

Refusing to be released. So that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging. And even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning.

[28 : 03] They were sawed in two. They were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins. Destitute. Persecuted. And mistreated. The world was not worthy of them.

They wandered in the deserts and mountains. Living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith. Yet none of them received what had been promised. Since God had planned something better.

For us. So that only together. With us. Would they be made perfect. And then in chapter 12. 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. Fixing our eyes on Jesus.

The pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him. He endured the cross. Scorning its shame. And sat down at the right hand. Of the throne of God.

[29 : 05] Consider him. Who endured such opposition for sinners. So that you will not grow weary. And lose heart. Amen. And may God. Add his blessing.

To this reading. Of this holy work. Let us once again. Bow. In prayer. Dear Heavenly Father.

We once again come before you. And acknowledge. How mighty you are. And Heavenly Father. As we read this. Of these heroes of the faith.

We recognize Heavenly Father. Both your patience with us. But your never ending love. And we come. And we thank you for that. This morning. We thank you Heavenly Father.

That. You would indeed. Come before us this morning. And that you would guide us. As we look into your word. And Heavenly Father.

[30 : 03] That you would guide us. As a shepherd. Guides as sheep. That you would take us. To the green pastures. This morning Heavenly Father. And that you would refresh. And restore our souls. Jesus. Heavenly Father.

We recognize that. While we can come. And we can. Rejoice. In a new couple being married. And we thank you for them. Being here with us this morning. We also recognize Heavenly Father.

That there are those that come. And they are. Hurting and mourning at this time. And we pray Heavenly Father. That your hand would be upon them likewise. That they would know your refuge.

That they would know your strength. And most of all Heavenly Father. That they would know you. That they would love you. That they would recognize your comfort for them at this time.

Heavenly Father. We remember those within our own congregation. That have been in hospital over these past weeks. Those that prepare to go this week. We ask for your hand to be upon them.

[31 : 07] As they have to go through Heavenly Father. The period of isolation. In preparation for going there. We pray that your hand would be upon them. And that you would guide them. That in these times of isolation.

That they can reflect upon you. And your goodness to them. And your promise Heavenly Father. That as they go into hospital. That while they may have that time of isolation.

That Heavenly Father. You have promised. And we can claim your promise to us. That you will never leave us. That you will never forsake us. That while days may be dark.

That Heavenly Father. That you are indeed the light. That comes into that darkness. And you are indeed a God of comfort. And a God of strength. We pray Heavenly Father.

For our island at this time. We have prayed many times over this past year. As we have seen the virus come and go. And Heavenly Father.

[32 : 02] Again we see the numbers over these past weeks. Have been increasing. As the number of infections increase. Heavenly Father. We pray for your hand. To be stayed upon us here.

That the numbers would not get out of control. That the NHS would not be overwhelmed. That those Heavenly Father. That are working in the front line. Would indeed know your hand of protection.

That Heavenly Father. Those that are affected by the virus. Would indeed show wisdom. Heavenly Father. And adhere to the restrictions. And the regulations that are put upon them. That we would know what it is.

To look after one another. And Heavenly Father. That you would guide us. As an island. And that we would recognise Heavenly Father.

And that we would be thankful. That while the virus is indeed here. And we have seen the. Impact that it has had across. Not just our own nation. But Heavenly Father. Across the world. That your hand of protection.

[33 : 01] Has indeed been upon us. And we thank you. For the prayer of your people. Heavenly Father. That has gone up time after time. And day after day. Seeking for your protection.

Upon us here. And we do indeed acknowledge that. We pray for those in positions of authority. Heavenly Father. Prime Minister. First Minister.

Our Queen. We pray in particular. For Heavenly Father. Those that. Are making decisions around the virus. At this time. And the lifting of restrictions. Again.

That they would. Heavenly Father. Show wisdom. Heavenly Father. That they would indeed. Be dependent upon you. We have seen very little.

Acknowledgement of you. Heavenly Father. Throughout this. Virus. Coming from those. In positions of authority. Heavenly Father.

[33 : 56] We pray that. Through the prayer. Prayer of thy people. That hearts. Would indeed be changed. That they would recognize. Heavenly Father. That while they can. Indeed make decisions.

While they can. Indeed issue guidance. While they can. Change legislation. That you are in control. And that Heavenly Father. A day is coming.

When we will all. Have to bow before you. And acknowledge you. As Lord. And as King. We have to remember. Heavenly Father. That we will. Also have to acknowledge. Whether we recognize you.

As our Savior. And our Lord. Or as our judge. Heavenly Father. As we come. In the stillness. Here before you. As each one of us.

Searches our own hearts. Help us to switch off. To the things of the world. The things that so often. Come in and cloud us. The things that Heavenly Father. Fill our.

[34 : 52] Weekly day. In our secular employments. And Heavenly Father. That we would focus. On what you have to say. To us this morning. Through your word. We've prayed for the holiday club.

Already this week. Heavenly Father. For the young ones. That will gather in the morning. For the older ones. That will gather in the evening. We commit them to you again. And we ask Heavenly Father.

As we would use this. As an outreach. Within the community here. That we would indeed. See new ones coming along. Heavenly Father. That. We would know the blessing.

Of sharing your word. Of passing your word on. Heavenly Father. That through. Through. The sharing of your word. Not a message.

Heavenly Father. That we have from ourselves. But a message. That comes from your word. That lights would go on. In hearts that have been dark. That as the young ones. Go home.

[35 : 48] Heavenly Father. And share the enthusiasm. That we have seen. Over these past years. With our parents. That again. Heavenly Father. Fires would indeed. Be rekindled. And that we would see.

Heavenly Father. That hungering and thirsting. That we so often. Asked for in times past. And Heavenly Father. That you would revive us. As a church. As a community.

As an island. As a nation. That we would hunger. And thirst after righteousness. So guide us. As we come this morning. May we know.

Your blessing upon us. As we continue. And sing your praise. And break down your word. In Jesus precious name. Amen. Before we turn to.

Look at. God's word. If we can. Sing once again. And we'll sing from the metrical psalms. Psalm 119. The first part of the psalm. Verses 1.

[36 : 48] To the verse marked 8. Blessed are they. That are. That undefiled. And straight. Are in the way. Who in the Lord's. Most holy law. Do walk. And do not stray.

Blessed are they. Who too. Observe. His statutes. Are inclined. And who do seek. The living God. With their whole heart. And mind. And we'll sing down.

To verse 8. That I will keep. Thy statutes all. Firmly resolved. Have I. O do not then. Most glorious God. Forsake me. Utterly. And sing these verses.

To God's praise. God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Blessed are they that are defiled and straight out in the way.

Who in the Lord most holy law do walk and do not stay.

[38 : 01] Blessed are they who to observe his statutes are inclined.

And who do seek the living God with that whole heart and mind.

Such in his ways to walk and do not iniquity.

Thou hast commanded us to keep thy three steps carefully.

O that's thy statutes to observe.

[39 : 29] The words my ways direct. Then shall I not be shamed when I.

Thy precept all respect. Then with integrity of heart.

The will I praise and bless. When I the judgment all have learned.

Of thy view righteousness. That I will keep thy statutes whole.

Firmly resolved have I. O do not then, most gracious God.

[41 : 03] Forsake me utterly. Just before we turn again to God's word, let us pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word to us. And we pray that as we come to it, that we recognize, Heavenly Father, that we must each, speaker and hearer alike, be still and know that thou art God.

that you have a message for us Heavenly Father and we pray that not just as we speak it but as we hear it Heavenly Father that we would apply it to our lives and that we would recognise our need of you Heavenly Father each one of us must fix our eyes upon you and recognise that you have run the race before us you have set us an example you have endured to the end and Heavenly Father may we in running our race indeed fix our eyes and run with patience and perseverance the race that has been marked out for us in Jesus name, Amen as I said when we were speaking to the children the holiday club is obviously on this week and you may have seen the posters on the way in this morning the theme for the holiday club is run the race and as I alluded to earlier on the memory verse for this week for the holiday club is let us run with perseverance the race that is before us let us fix our eyes upon Jesus now I apologise if you've come to church this morning to get a break from the Olympics all that sport that's been on this past few weeks

I am going to speak on running the race so if you bear with me most of you I'm sure won't have been able to escape the fact that the Olympics are on whether you haven't watched it as it's happened you'll have seen coverage coverage on various different news channels and each of the athletes that are competing in these games each of them have their own stories to tell how they were selected for their country how they were top of their sport the endless hours of training that they've had to put in the sacrifices they have made the sacrifices that others have made for them the funding they've received the lack of funding they've received every one of them has a story but it's only really when the race is complete and the prizes have been issued that we actually hear some of the back stories that some of these athletes have gone through some of you might have seen the coverage on Friday evening of Bethany Shriver who won the gold medal for Great Britain in the women's BMX final the commentator was sharing the story how when the Olympics were in London she was just a kid but she was inspired to get to the top of her sport we learnt of how her funding had been pooled while she was in training how she then had to get herself a part time job how she had to set up a GoFundMe page to get sport to help her through her training to pay for her to be able to go to Tokyo and despite all that she went on and she won the gold medal and her name will be added to the list of British Olympians or you may have heard of

Tom Dean the swimmer who not just won one gold medal but won two gold medals during the past year he battled Covid not just once but twice and went on as I say to win two gold medals each one of them has their own story to tell well we read through Hebrews 11 the full list well not the full list because not everybody is included in that as the writer says he doesn't have time to tell of everybody but we hear of the heroes of the faith that despite being underdogs at different times despite the fierce opposition despite the failure in their own personal lives despite being rejected being homeless or forever they endured and persevered and we have there a list of them that are remembered for their faith and I understand that later on this evening

[46 : 18] Duncan will speak further on one of them that are listed there so the writer goes on having listed all these heroes of the faith throughout chapter 11 goes on into chapter 12 to remind us that we're running a race why does he remind us of the heroes of the faith but to encourage us that while we can look at these individuals while we can read in scripture in the old testament that life wasn't always plain sailing for them that they didn't always stay on the right path they endured and they persevered and they bore a witness for God and we read at the start of chapter 12 therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses one commentator states that the writer refers to these heroes of the faith being a cloud of witnesses not just as witnesses of what has gone before but as witnesses to us running in the race now you can imagine going into a sports arena maybe not this year but in years gone past where crowds were allowed in and the place was thronged with people cheering and shouting and encouraging people along and the commentator relates that these heroes of the faith are there encouraging and wishing each and every one of us as Christians to run the race to run the race with all our might and to run so that we may reach and achieve the goal that is there for us so with that in mind what I want to look at this morning as time allows there's just a few things that we might consider about running in a race for running in a race we have to get to the start and that will be our first point this morning every race has a starting line and to participate in the race you must turn up at the starting line and for us that is coming and recognising that Jesus is our Lord and our Saviour that he has paid the price for each and every one of us and failure to grasp and believe that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour we can't then turn up at the start line it's a false start for us we're starting in the wrong place if we do not fully believe and grasp that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour that he went to the cross at Calvary for our sins we can't turn up at the start line and think oh well it's okay

I'll get to grips with this as the race goes on because if we're not at the very start of the race rooted and grounded in Jesus we haven't got the right foundation for running in the race because we won't understand what the cost will be in running in that race we can read in Luke chapter 9 and verse 57 how Jesus met many along the road and he spoke to some and as they were walking along a man said to him I will follow you wherever you go and Jesus replied foxes have dens and birds have nests but the son of man has no place to lay his head he said to another man follow me but he replied Lord first let me go and bury my father Jesus said to him let the dead bury their own dead but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God still another said

I will follow you Lord but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family Jesus replied no one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God each of these athletes that turn up at the start line for an Olympic event there's been a cost to them and there is a cost to us as Christians in getting to the start line and in running the race and if we fail to recognise what that cost is we're not running the race as it has been set out for us we're trusting in our own strength we're not fixing our eyes as we're told on Jesus Jesus has paid the price for our sins through the shedding of his blood on the cross at Calvary but for some that cost is too high to give up everything they have and again we read in Mark as Jesus started on his way a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him good teacher what must

I do to inherit eternal life why do you call me good Jesus said no one is good except God alone you know the commandments you shall not commit adultery you shall not murder you shall not steal you shall not give false testimony you shall not defraud honour your father and mother teacher he declared all these I have kept since I was a boy Jesus looked to them one thing you lack go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven then come follow me and we go on and read as the man's face fell he went away sad because he had great wealth Jesus looked around and said to his disciples how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God the disciples were amazed at his words Jesus again said children how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of

God the disciples were even more amazed and said to each other who then can be saved Jesus looked at them and said with this with man this is impossible but not with God all things are possible with God and I would ask you this morning what is it that's stopping you if you're not Christian this morning what is it that's stopping you coming to Christ for this man it was his wealth what else are you putting in the way of following Christ this morning what do you think it is that's too difficult what for you is like that camel going through the eye of the needle what do you have to give up to fully trust in God each and every one of us is guilty of making an idol of something are we prepared to give it up to fully rely on God to know what it is to trust in him and to walk with him to make him the focus of our lives the parable of the seed reminds us of the dangers of not counting the cost we can hear the word we can respond to it but very quickly when trials and troubles come we're overwhelmed by them and we don't have a grounding our roots aren't down in the word of

[54 : 16] God we may show early promise but unfortunately other things come in and choke us I'm sure many of us as children learnt Ecclesiastes 12 verse 1 remember remember remember remember your creator in the days of your youth but as a second part to that verse it's very easy to remember remember your creator in the days of your youth but as a warning to it because it's before the evil days before the days of trouble come and the years approach when I say I have no pleasure in them did you come to Sunday school when you were a child where you brought up in a home where the Bible was read where you taught to remember Christ but you've left home you've left your

Sunday school you've gone out into the world and what you thought was going to be a fulfilling life is not that fulfilling you find yourself saying I find no pleasure in life my encouragement to you is remember your creator return to your creator and come back to the start line so that you can actually run the race properly not running in your own strength but with your eyes fully fixed on Jesus each of the athletes we see at the Olympics have normally taken up their sport when they're young they've been in training for years all the hours days weeks months of training all of a sudden come to fulfilment when they reach the start line they've accepted the previous instruction of their trainer they've been supported by family and friends on the way through they've definitely had good days that's what's got them there but for every good day there's been bad days when we're walking with

Christ we're not promised that every day will be good we're not promised that life will be easy we're told that we're clay in the potter's hand and each one of us is moulded and shaped as we go through life and we're moulded and shaped for a purpose the same reason when a gymnast is training their instructor shows them how they should turn and how they should vault to make sure that they do what they're doing properly their muscles have to be trained in a certain way to be able to fulfil the routines that they have to do God is moulding and shaping each one of us for his purpose not for our purpose but for his purpose sometimes that isn't pleasurable sometimes we need to be moulded hard sometimes we need to be tried by fire the same as the potter puts the cup or the plate whatever they're making into the kiln sometimes we can feel hot but we have to remember that if we fix our eyes upon

Jesus he has gone before each and every one of us he has endured the cross for each and every one of us what we have to endure here is for God's plan and for God's purpose and he will see us through make sure that you know that you are rooted and grounded in God's work what is the race like we all know that in the Olympics there's 100 meters there's the marathon there's the steeplechase each one of them involves running our race in life isn't 100 meter dash yes there are times that we may run faster there are times that we will run slower I often think of it more like a steeplechase because every so often in the steeplechase there's a big hurdle that has to be overcome and it's not just a hurdle that has to be overcome there's a jump with water at the other end while you try and overcome the hurdle sometimes you'll fall sometimes your feet will get wet and your running will get slower as you try and recover from the injury as you try and get the water out your shoes you'll be slower you're more dependent on everything that you have learnt to get yourself there again bringing us back to the importance of being rooted and grounded in God's word as we run but when you're running would you go and run and what you're wearing today

I can look at some of the footwear and say I would certainly hope not some have got heels some have don't have heels some have laces some don't have laces when you run you have to make sure that you're wearing the right equipment time doesn't allow us to go into Ephesians and look at the armour of God but it's laid out there for us but when we do run we might go along to the race with our kit bag but we don't run with our kit bag we put it down we don't want it to burden us when we're running we might turn up to keep our muscles warm in our tracksuit but we take our tracksuit off so that we can run freely and less wind resistance when we're running everything that hinders us in life we have to lay it aside the sin that we read of that so easily beset each and every one of us we have to lay it aside and fix our eyes on Jesus to run otherwise we will not run the way that we're supposed to run we read in the

[60 : 49] NIV that it says we have to run with perseverance in the King James version it teaches us that we have to run with patience it's not going to be over quickly it's going to be a long race and we have to be patient yes there will be trials yes there will be troubles and we have to persevere through them but all the time we are fixing our eyes on the goal and that goal is to see Jesus I mentioned the 100 metre race in the 100 metre race each runner is given a lane to run in and that would be the next point are you running in your own lane in the 100 metre race you have to stay in your own lane lane you can't be appointed lane 2 and say I really want to run in lane 3 so when the starter says go

I'm actually going to move into lane 3 you'd be disqualified the writer tells us that we have to run the race that is marked out for us and the race that I have is different to the race that each and every one of you have and the danger is and can be that we look around and say why is he running so freely why is he running with so much ease why is she running with so much ease I want to be running in her lane and our focus is not on Christ our focus is on somebody else and what happens when we are moving forward and we look to the right or to the left we veer off course fix your eyes on Jesus run the race that you've been given no matter how difficult it is and I acknowledge that each and every one of us have different challenges

I read the challenges that Beth Bethany Shriver and Tom Dean had to overcome to get there I never knew that about them until after they had finished the race not one of us knows what goes on in the life of other people that's actually shaping them to run the race the way they do we don't know the heartache that goes behind that we don't know the trials that they've had to overcome while we may see them running freely there's been a lot of sacrifice for that to happen don't take your eye off Jesus to look at somebody else that person is running looking at Jesus you continue to look at Jesus and if you are the one that's running at the front you see in Bolt when he runs with a single purpose to cross that line first he doesn't look to his right or his left he has a sense of where people are within his vision but he fixes his eyes on where he's going and each and every one of us must do that because if the front runner takes their eye off the prize they can put everybody else off course if the person that's leading if you move to a race where you may have a pace setter in and you're thinking of a marathon and the person that's running out at the front setting the pace and everybody is running behind them if they turn left when they're supposed to have gone straight on and everybody else follows them they've gone off track because they've deviated from the path that's been set for them and as

Christians the warning for each one of us is that if we're running we must fix our eyes on Jesus because there are others that are following us that we may take off course another race that we can look at is the relay race and with this I'll close in a relay race you run with a baton in the 100 metre relay I've actually quite enjoyed reading about some of this stuff over the past week in a 100 metre relay you do what you call a blind pass so it means that all the runners facing in the same direction and they don't look back to see where the next runner is coming they trust one another and they pass the baton there's actually instructions on how you pass the baton it's not just a case of throwing it it's not just a case of hoping that somebody catches it you actually have to place the baton and make sure that the person has got a grip of it before you let it go as we seek to teach the children that are coming behind us as we seek to pass the baton on to them we have a responsibility to not just throw a word at them but actually make sure that they know and understand it that they grasp it that they are then able to run with it in terms of passing the baton there are different things that we can learn we can pass it and make sure that somebody gets it and is able to run with it but there's warnings to us if we just limply pass it on in the hope that somebody's going to get it the baton can be dropped and the word is lost we each have a responsibility to carry

God's word and to share God's word if we choose not to pass the baton and the other person is there not only am I disqualified from the race but the rest of the team are disqualified the baton doesn't get passed on and we can think of that the opportunities that we've maybe missed to share God's word that we might have been the person that was brought into that person's life at that particular time to share a word from scripture to share a word of encouragement are we taking every opportunity to pass on God's word as we run in the race I know I said that was going to be a final point maybe sounding more like David McLeod on Wednesday I had the opportunity to run the Niagara Falls 10k some of you might look and say how did you get the opportunity to run the Niagara

[67 : 55] Falls 10k I thought you were in Edinburgh on holiday and if you'd gone to Canada you shouldn't actually be here because you'd gone to a country that was on the wrong list well the fact of the matter is I ran it virtually I had the opportunity to use somebody's running machine fancy big screen on it typed in my details and thought 10k I'll run the Niagara Falls 10k and on this screen in front of me there was a guy running there was a camera behind him and I ran along with him I never ran the Niagara Falls 10k I was there watching it I was running on the treadmill the treadmill went up and down if I'm being perfectly honest with you I ran 5k I gave up after 5k but there's a lesson in that ok some of us may think that we're actually running in the race but we're not actually fully participating we're resting on somebody else's laurels my wife's running in the race my son's running in the race my daughter's running in the race my father ran the race my mother ran the race

I saw what it meant for them the same as me watching on the screen what the Niagara Falls 10k looked like but I never hit the ground I was at the start line when the guy said 1 2 3 go I could see the sun beating down but I never felt the sun I could run along I could hear people talking through the speech that was done but I never actually ran the 10k I could have come in here and said well I ran the Niagara Falls 10k Wednesday and you'd have all gone it's very good but if I'm being perfectly honest with you and if we're being perfectly honest with one another there are some of us that think that we're running the Christian race but we're running it behind somebody else or in somebody else's slipstream we're not actually running in the race and there's a real danger for us we must get to the start line we must trust in Jesus we must look and fix our eyes upon Jesus every step of the way not somebody else not somebody else who's running alongside us we look at

Jesus there's a race been marked out for each and every one of us are we going to get to the start line are we going to shed everything that's hindering us in running and are we going to run with perseverance amen dear heavenly father we thank you for your word to us we thank you that your word as we have read and sung before is new every morning and heavenly father as we delve into it it teaches us something new and we pray that as we listen to your word this morning as we reflect upon it and heavenly father that we would recognize that we need to run with you each and every step of the way we need to fix our eyes upon you not being diverted by what is happening round about us we don't have to be passive in life we can still be a witness for you heavenly father even though there may be troubles around but let us recognize heavenly father that you mold and you shape us and you mold us and shape us for your purpose for the furtherance of your kingdom here on earth guide us as we park as we sing your praise in Jesus name amen we'll conclude our service by singing in mission praise in Christ alone mission praise 1072 in Christ alone my hope is found he is my light my strength my song this cornerstone this solid ground ground

Hornet What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are still, when strivings cease.

My comforter, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand. Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in hell, this babe.

[73 : 36] This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save. Till on the cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.

For every sin on him was laid, here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay, light of the world by darkness slain.

And bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave he rose again. And as he stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me.

For I am his, and he is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ. No guilt in life, no fear in death.

[75 : 06] This is the power of Christ in me. From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.

No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from his hand. Till he returns, so calls me home.

Here in the power of Christ I stand. To him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you before the glorious presence, without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Saviour.

Be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and evermore. Amen. Amen.

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