

Jesus and the Better Path - Hebrews 12:12-17
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

It's so easy to get lost. Take a hike on a trail in the woods and it can just take a moment of watching your own feet or looking off at some animal in the distance, and the next thing you know, the trail that once was clear to identify beneath your feet is nothing more than a few rocks. If you couple exhaustion or joint pain to the fear of being lost in the woods you can find yourself in real trouble.

The beginning of Hebrews 12 compares the life of faith to a race, a runner on a trail running toward a goal. That goal is Jesus, meaning pursuing Christ while becoming more and more like Him in the journey. So the author reminds us to run our race, fixing our eyes on Jesus. He then reminded us that the race is hard, yet we can know that the pain and difficulties that come our way as we pursue Jesus are not random events with no purpose, nor are they expressions of God's anger showing up in some weird Karma. No our struggles and pain are the discipline of a loving Father who is working all things for our good and His glory.

So the author brings us back to the race, and reminds us to stay on the trail. Our passage this week points out two real and existential dangers to our journey of faith, our Christian race. The first is exhaustion because of our suffering and pain. "Lift your drooping hands and strengthen weakened knees," he writes. The picture is of the runner who is growing tired and sore, so his arms start dropping, his knees are pounding with pain as lactic acids build up in the muscles and joints. So he wants to drop out, give up, just sit down and be done. For the original hearers, this threat came as a result of family and cultural pressure and persecution to return to the Jewish way of life. Many in the race were giving up, and so many others were tired and weak. So Hebrews uses language of encouragement here, calling the runner to lift their hands, get some tape on sore joints, and keep running in on the straight path. At first, it sounds like a coach locker room speech, "C'mon Hubbard, play hurt, just keep going, don't give up, you can do it!" And, to be honest, it is that, of sorts. The writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit does challenge us to keep running this life of faith, and run the path that leads us to worship of and faith in Jesus. He is worth it. But then the author adds another interesting phrase, "So that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather healed." The word lame here is the word that is used throughout the Gospels to refer to Jesus healing people who were unable to walk, run, or jump. And here is the point, the legs to run the race of faith are legs that once could not walk, could not follow, could not run. Lame legs run the race, but the way for those once lame legs to get out of joint is to stop believing in the One who healed them to begin with. Look at this, what a glorious Word. You believe because God made blind eyes see, lame legs walk, a dead heart alive. So keep running to Jesus, He is the only one who can heal you and use your pain and struggle for glory!

Second, the author gives us a stern warning about the straight path. He doesn't want us to get on the wrong trail and end up lost in the woods. If you have ever watched a cross country meet, the running path is clearly marked with little flags and markers. A runner who doesn't pay attention to the markers, though, can end up on the wrong trail. These warnings are trail markers, reminders of what the authentic Christian faith will take on the character and values of Jesus so that we are growing more like Him. The first marker is to strive and work for peace. The off trail is that of division and fighting. This one is huge in the larger Western church world right now. We tend to be just as divided as the culture and over the same things. But the race of faith is one that pursues enemies and seeks peace. Second is the trail marker of holiness, of ever changing character and ethics. Holiness comes to life as we pursue Jesus, but so often we try to want Jesus and our sin at the same time. Third is the marker of grace, making sure we remember that we are saved and secured by the grace of Jesus. The off path is any form of spirituality that depends on human works or effort. The next marker is that of thanksgiving rather than "the root of bitterness". Resentment comes in our lives when we believe we deserve better and begin blaming others or God for the plight of life. Man, this

trail darts off quickly, its so easy to get sideways with someone who wounded us or just made us mad, and that root begins to grow. Bitterness never just affects you, rather, as the author says, "Many become defiled (stained)." Fifth is the warning about sexual immortality. There is a consistent call for those who follow Jesus to have our sexual ethics and lives transformed by the Gospel and to live lives of purity. Sex is one of the most powerful sources of idolatry and identity in our world. This is not new, the whole Roman Empire was a sexualized and free society sexually. The Christian sexual ethic is so much more than a call to stop having sex with anyone who is not your spouse. It is also a call to realize that God gave sex to picture a greater reality, that of Jesus and His church. So sexual purity within Christianity is knowing that our marriages paint a glorious image pointing people to Jesus. And finally, the author warns of idolatry and spiritual rebellion as a path away from Jesus. He wants us to stay on the path of worship of the One True God alone who is known through Jesus.

May we keep running, and not get lost in the woods as we keep our eyes on Jesus.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Genesis 44	Genesis 45	Genesis 46	Genesis 47	Genesis 48	Genesis 49	Genesis 50

Reading from this past week's sermon: Hebrews 12:12-17

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Hebrews 12:18-29

Family Worship

Song - *For God So Loved*

<https://youtu.be/jasoo3UDSwY?si=SCdV63n-iz4vuBAf>

Gospel Project

Unit: God is Gracious

Story: Samson & the Philistines

Big Picture Question: What is repentance?

Answer: Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Scripture: John 13-16

New City Catechism

Question 18: Will God allow our disobedience and idolatry to go unpunished?

Answer: No, God is righteously angry with our sins and will punish them both in this life, and in the life to come..

Verse: Ephesians 5:5-6

Hebrews 12:12-17

- What is the relationship between the Lord's discipline (in previous verses) and the call to lift our drooping hands and strengthen our weak knees? How is realizing this necessary for us to run with good posture and on a straight path?
- How are we able to run on knees that were lame? What does this tell us about the life of faith?
- What are the six markers and or alternate trails that will get us lost in the woods listed in the passage. Which one or two are most dangerous for you?
- Which is more of a danger for you right now, getting spiritually exhausted or getting lost on one of the trails? What do you need to do to keep running?
- Why do we need each other to authentically run this race and keep on the trail?

Prayer

*Pray that Christ would strengthen our spirits and keep us on the straight path.

*Pray for all of our Genesis Kids workers.