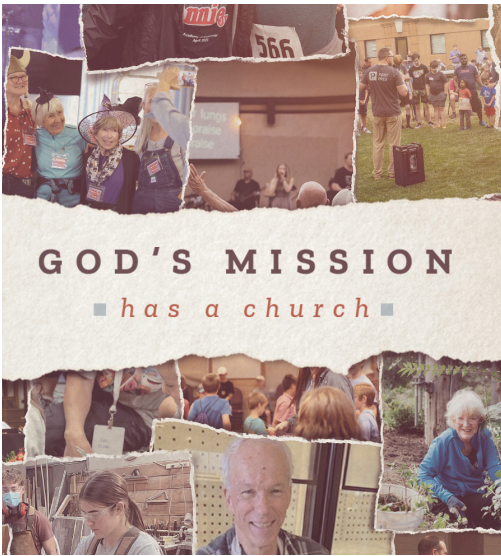




Sermon Growth Guide

February 16, 2025
God Sends a Savior



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God Sends a Savior - Hebrews 12:1-13

Key Verse: Hebrews 12:1-2a

“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.

Big Idea: Let all else fall aside as you run your race with joy at the reality of Jesus at the finish line.

Foundations

This week we continue in our theme of God's Mission Has a Church.

This passage comes at the end of a long litany of heroes of the faith. Hebrews 11 lists the multitude of prophets and Jewish forefathers who obeyed God, did what they could by faith, and gave up their faith as offerings to God.

God was leading each of these people on their individual journeys of faith. They had to trust God that He would use their lives for His Glory – whether or not that was recognized in this life. The previous passage ends with Hebrews 11:39-40, “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

Hebrews 11 sets up our passage perfectly, for we are encouraged, in running our race, of the faith and races of those who came before us. Each of these members of the Church were part of the same Mission. Jesus is the consummation of all of their labors, and He is who we focus on. Romans 12:4-5 reminds us that “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” We as the Church encourage each other in the same Mission forward.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Hebrews 12:1-13.

The author talks of being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. What does it mean to you to not be running this race alone?

Discuss how the Christian journey compares to a race. How about the finish line? Or enduring the discipline?

Applying God's Word

As we look towards our own race of faith, who can we be encouraged by? Who is in our 'great cloud of witnesses'?

What discipline might we need to undergo? Which things are hindering us from running more fully?

Witnessing God's Word

Pastor Tim talked about us not needing to become better, by firm resolve and grit, but rather needing a change of heart. What might that change of heart look like for you?

Pastor Tim talks of Jesus having each of us as His screenshot on His phone. How can we treat others so they realize it's the same for them too?

How can you join God's Mission in pointing others to the Savior?

I have shared some hard news around about my family. My niece lost her baby girl to the flu last week, and she was only ten months old. These are the moments we need to be surrounded with the faithful. Thanks for your love and prayers. "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." (Hebrews 12:1) Suddenly the Hall of Faith turns into a race in a stadium with crowds and crowds cheering us on. It reminds me of when I was a kid at field day at Broadmoor Elementary. Yes, I was a Broadmoor Brat. At least I wasn't a Canyon Creep or a Skyway Skunk. If you know, you know. We ran the race and then formed two lines at the finish to cheer everyone else on, until everyone was through. Only now, for us, on the sideline cheering us on is Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, Isaiah, all the rest. Keep running.

God's Mission Has a Church. It doesn't mean we don't figure out how to articulate our mission as a church. We do that. But our mission is God's mission. It's God's mission that matters, and we are being swept up into it by His grace. That truly changes the way we think. We are part of the great story, the grand narrative: the story of a God who made a world, a world that fell away, a God that sent a Savior, and a world ultimately repaired and remade for eternal glory. You handle all the ups and downs differently when you keep this in mind, you are able to think Christianly and hold things in perspective. John Stott wrote about how to preach controversial issues. He said the best gift the pastor can give the church is the ability to think as Christians, to develop the Christian mind. Not telling you what to think, but encouraging you how to think, to see all things as part of the great story of Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation, trusting that God's mission will not fail. Today we reach the apex of that story, the pinnacle. God Sends a Savior. Here is the decisive moment, the defining turning point, the victory that guarantees the war is won—Jesus. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only

Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17) There is a giving, a sending, a mission.

Redemption is the language of the marketplace. There are a lot of ways to talk about what Christ accomplished on the cross and redemption makes it sound like a price was paid. God bought this fallen world back. We will ask three questions. What price did Jesus pay? What did Jesus buy with what He paid? What do we do about it now? First, What price did Jesus pay? We really can't even imagine, can we? What price did Jesus pay for this mission to seek and save the lost world? Jesus is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, eternally with God, eternally God, in the heavenly realm. God looks down and makes a promise of salvation to Noah. The Father says to the Son, "You know what that's going to cost, don't you?" Yes. God makes a covenant with Abraham. "You know what that's going to cost, don't you?" Yes. The Passover when Moses leads the people out of Egypt is just a foreshadowing. "You know what this is going to cost?" Yes. We can't really imagine the journey from Heaven to Earth to be born in Bethlehem, to take on flesh, be emptied out taking human nature into Himself, to be betrayed, to be hated, to be shouted at, insulted, arrested, killed, hung on a cross to die. What did Jesus pay?

We who are running our race now, we look to Jesus, "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. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:2-3)

The pioneer and perfecter. He began it, He will finish it. Rarely do we get such a look at the motivation of Jesus' own heart. What a price to pay! Not just the cross, not just death. People die, some heroically, to save those around

them, but all of it. Coming down out of heaven and becoming vulnerable for us, taking on our frailty, then enduring opposition. Enduring shame. That hurt as much as the physical pain. It doesn't say "enduring the pain of the crucifixion" but the "shame of the cross." Enduring the cross. And why did He pay it? It tells us. "For the joy set before him." For the joy. It wasn't just to fix a problem. It wasn't just to help us get out of debt. "Okay, you've gotten yourself into a mess here. I'll come pay the man. I'll bail you out." Americans bet \$1.4 billion on the Super Bowl. 22% say they can't meet monthly expenses now because of gambling debts. Is that a good idea? It is more than paying our debts. And this is the lynchpin of the Mission of God we are talking about now: He did it for the joy set before Him. Redemption.

What did Jesus buy with what He paid? When you pay a price, you want to know what you are getting. Jesus was getting the victory over sin and death that turns the world around, saves souls, redeems creation and guarantees the mission of God will be fulfilled for eternity. When Jesus went to the cross, He was purchasing the fulfillment of every other promise, every covenant, every grace and mercy we see in the Old Testament, and He was creating the New Covenant to ensure that the people of God would have forgiveness and grace, and reconciliation with God the Father forever. Jesus knew what He was buying when He took the cup. What did He buy? Our freedom? Paying the bail, the slave-price, to set us free? Yes, but more. Our forgiveness? Taking on Himself the penal judgment, the penalty, for our crimes? Yes, but more. A covenant people purchased by holy blood? Yes, but more!

"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship." (Galatians 4:4-5) What is the joy set before Him? A family, and you in it. "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12) "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." (Galatians

3:26) "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1) "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:14-16) What was the joy set before Him? You. He wanted to adopt you, to keep you, to love you. He'd pay any price.

In the summer of 2005, I was mobilized with the Army Reserve and headed to Iraq with about 700 Soldiers. I never went, but got stuck supporting them from Richmond, Virginia. As we trained in these old WWII barracks with rows of bunkbeds, everybody had a picture. Every Soldier had a picture tucked up in the springs of the bunk over them or taped up on the inside of their footlocker. A wife. A husband. Some kids. A girlfriend. Every Soldier had a picture. "That's who I'm doing this for." A friend once said, if Jesus had a wallet—even on the cross, when He went to the cross—if Jesus had a wallet, your picture would be in it. We might update that. If Jesus had a phone, your picture would be the screenshot. It was you He was picturing as He hung on the cross. You, walking through the front door of the Father's house to live with Him in eternity. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross.

What do we do about it? Run! Run our race! "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." (Hebrews 12:1-2) Run the race. Keep going. "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:3) Those last phrases are words in the Greek for when you collapse at the end of a race and get sick. My son ran cross country in Georgia. It's hard

to cheer for a kid running cross country. They kind of disappear for a while then you see them coming your way out of the woods. When they crossed the finish line, they collapsed, and worse. Anyone know what I'm talking about? I was careful about my shoes. I think they coached them, "if you don't get sick when you finish, you didn't try hard enough!" What do we do? Shake off everything that hinders the race. Untangle the sin that trips you up. Run and don't collapse. Run with Jesus as your only goal, your only target. Runners in that time, the runners the Hebrews would imagine, they ran naked. Nothing extra to carry. Throw it all off. Run to Jesus.

But how do we do that? It is hard to change. I imagine you can think of things that hinder your race. Maybe even this week, you can look back and see something you did that feels like a burden now. Some of us face addictions. Sin feels like a chain. "Cast off the sin that so easily entangles," but that is not so easy, is it? If you believe in Jesus, you are now a child of God. God, the Father, will train you up. Fathers discipline their children. In fact, if you were not really God's child, it says, He wouldn't worry about you. You don't discipline your neighbor's kids. You don't discipline your kid's friends. Well, sometimes. But your responsibility, if you are a parent, is for your child. With God as your Father, you can expect three things: instruction, correction and love. The fact that you are feeling shaped and formed by God means it is real, it worked! You are a child of God. "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ...No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:7,11) God intends for you to change. Now that you are in the household, you will begin to learn the household rules.

How do we really change inside, throw off the sin and disentangle ourselves from the chains, and run the race freely? Look again to Jesus. Jesus didn't endure the cross to solve a problem or pay a

debt. Not alone. Jesus did it for the joy set before Him. How can you change? Look to this Jesus and let it settle in your heart, what He paid, what He bought, and what He calls you to do, and taste that joy. "In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." (Hebrews 12:4) How are you going to keep running your race carrying all that around?

At the beginning of Pilgrim's Progress, the pilgrim, Christian, is carrying a pack up the hill to the celestial city. It's full of shame, full of regret, full of sin. He believes it is his responsibility to carry it up the hill, to make up for it all. Do you think you can change by firm resolve and grit? We want to solve the problem. We want to fix the habit. You need more than that. You need a change of heart. You need a change that comes from deep inside your being. The pilgrim came to the cross: "He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and little below in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back; and began to tumble, and so continued to do so until it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more." Look to Jesus, the Author and Perfector of your faith. Run to Him and let the burdens fall.