



Sermon – February 20, 2022
Dr. J. Josh Smith

Verses Covered This Week

Hebrews 12:1 – 3

Hebrews 10:32 – 39

Isaiah 53:5 – 7

Luke 15:

Well amen. Well take your Bibles this morning if you would and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12. I'm so thankful for the opportunity to be here with you this morning. I love your pastor. I love Phillip and Cami Bethancourt. I was thrilled when I heard the news that you voted on him online. I couldn't believe that but that was great. I'm so thankful for him. And I'm thrilled that he's here and I'm excited to see what God is doing in this church. I just love your pastor. I was thinking as I was on my way here, there's no human reason for me to have really any connection to this church. But I have deep roots here and I didn't go to school here, I've never lived here. But this church has had a very significant impact on my life. So I just started to think a little bit on why that's the case. And the truth is, it started 24 years ago when I met a girl at my brother's wedding. So this is the beginning of a Hallmark movie right here I'm about to tell you. So, my brother was getting married and one of his, the brides maids I noticed and, you know, just because of her heart and all of that. And I noticed her and I thought to myself, I think there's a potential (I'd never had a conversation with her) that she could be my wife someday. And so I began to strike up a conversation and we talked at the rehearsal dinner and then at the wedding and then we began this kind of long distance relationship. She was a student at Texas A&M and an active part of Central Baptist Church. She was being disciple by a lady named Lynlee Ueckert whose husband, Kevin, was the college pastor here. I ended up going to dinner at Kevin and Lynlee's house and met Kevin. Who then through the years introduced me to a friend named Jason Duesing who was, came through this ministry who was in my wedding. He introduced me to Nathan Lino who introduced me to Matt Carter who introduced me to Phillip Bethancourt who introduced me to Kyle Hoover. And I could go on and on about all of the people that I've known through the years that have been through this church. All of those coming through this ministry. But it's not just that I've met those people, the truth is, my closest friends in the world came through Central Baptist Church. My wife used to joke that if she wanted to find out what was going on in my life, she would follow me around when I was on the phone with one of these men. She'd just listen and I was

telling them everything. And so I'm incredibly thankful for you and for the impact that you have had on these generations of men who have impacted me. I am the man that I am today in great part to the ministry of this church. I'm very thankful for that. And I'm also thankful for that girl whom I did not marry. Just wanted you to know the rest of the story. But I'm thankful, God bless her, I don't know where she is. No idea. Um, but I'm thankful that she introduced me to everybody at this church. So, Romans 8:28 man, it just all worked out for good. Praise the Lord. I got a great wife now so.

One of the things that we can often miss when we study the word of God, and I would say particularly in a church like this, and what I mean by that is this is a church much like my own which we love the word of God. We take it seriously. We're thoughtful with the word of God. We believe not just that the word of God matters, but the words of God matter. In our understanding of Scripture, we want to think about the words carefully and you have a pastor who is a phenomenal expositor of the word of God. And so each week you're getting that and what a blessing that is to you and to this community. But one of the things in churches like that can often be missed is the emotion of the text. Not just the words of the text, but the emotion of the text. God does not speak in monotone. God has different tones of voices. The tone of voice often used in the Psalms is different than the epistles. And the truth is, tone of voice matters. I've been married, not to that first girl, but to another girl for about 20 years now and I assure you, tone of voice matters just as much as what you say. It can change the entire trajectory of the evening if the tone of voice is not right. Tone of voice matters. When we study Scripture, we actually have to think about the tone of voice. What is happening here and what is the tone of voice being used because it affects the meaning. But I think that's important in the book of Hebrews. Because when we come to this very familiar text, which all of you know in Hebrews 12, there is a specific tone of voice. It is written by a pastor of a church, the pastor loves this church, he's passionate about this church, he has seen this church make a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, but yet he's aware of the pressure that they're facing. These people had left the old covenant of Judaism and gone and embraced the new covenant of life and joy in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. But they left behind the old ways and many family members. And because of that, they're facing incredible family pressure, incredible religious pressure from the synagogue, cultural and political pressure, they're being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. And then there's just the pressure of the flesh and the devil and all of the pressure calling them back to leave their confession of faith. The author of Hebrews is pleading with them to remain faithful. You have all these warnings in the book of Hebrews that feel so heavy to us, in a sense they are, but the tone of voice really feels more like a passionate plea. Hebrews 2 says, be careful lest ye drift away. Pay very close attention, he says, pay very close attention or you might drift away. Hebrews 10 says, you have need of endurance if you're going to receive the promises of God. And there is kind of this tone of pleading and imploring for them to remain faithful to the calling that God has upon their life. Because the author knows what all of us know. And it's not that you can lose your salvation. You certainly can't lose your salvation. It's that there are a lot of people who seem to start the race but don't finish. And it's only those who persevere to the end, as Jesus says, that are evidence of true salvation. We know that from the parable of the soils. And so he wants to make sure that they hold on to the very end so everything in this passage feels like the pleading of a pastor who loves this group of people.

And with that in mind he gives these words as he comes near the conclusion of his book in Hebrews 12. I'm going to read verses 1 through 3. If you're there, say amen. It says this:

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Everything in that text of Scripture evolves around three words. The three words there towards the end of verse 1, let us run. So you can take those words and you can take everything else said in those three verses and you could find a direct connection to those three words. This is a plea to run. It says that we need to run the race. And the race that is set before us is the race of following Jesus Christ. Every person needs to come to a place in their life in which they begin the race. They make that first commitment to Jesus Christ, they acknowledge their sin, they understand that their sin has brought brokenness into their life and deserves the wrath of God. But then they discover Jesus Christ. And as they see Jesus, they realize that Jesus died so the wrath that we deserved could be absorbed by Him on the cross. We sang about that just a moment ago. And by placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ you can have your sins forgiven, the wrath of God removed, and have a right relationship with Him, not because of anything you've done, but because of what Jesus Christ has already done for you on the cross. We place our faith and trust in Jesus. But listen, the moment we do that is the moment we start the race. That's not the end of the race. That's the beginning of the race. That's when the gun fires and we begin to run. And so it is, these people have begun the race and he's saying, I want you to continue to run that race set before us, the race of trusting and following Jesus Christ. He says, as you run, I want to make sure that you get rid of all the hindrances. Is there anything, whether it's a sin or just a habit that might be slowing you down in this race with Jesus. Get rid of it. Take this seriously. Be disciplined in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't let anything slow you down from your walk, your run, with Jesus. And he says, as you're running, keep your eyes on Jesus. Because you always run the direction that you're looking. So as believers we fix our eyes on Jesus first thing in the morning and all throughout the day our heads begin to turn and we just bring them back to Jesus over and over. That's life. We just keep getting our eyes back on Jesus making sure we're going that direction. But there's a word he used three times in this text. I don't know if you noticed it. He said it first of all in verse 1. Let us run. How? With endurance. Why? Because Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, He also endured the cross. Verse 3, consider Him who endured from sinners. And so it's not just that we're to run. His real plea, his real heart is that those who are running would keep running. That they wouldn't slow down and they wouldn't stop. That they would endure until the very end. That there would not be a moment in which they stop running until they take their last breath exhausted, having given everything for the cause of Christ. Enduring until the very end. That's the feel of the text. If you can, just look back a page before at the end of chapter 10, starting in verse 32. I want to read this passage for you because it again reminds us of the feel and the importance of what he's saying here. Starting in verse 32 of chapter 10, he says this:

³²But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened

What he means by that is, remember in the past when God turned the light on and you started to see the glory of Jesus Christ which is how it happens? If any of us came to Christ it's because

God turned the light on. And what we didn't see before we now begin to see. It says remember those days? We said, what happened is:

you endured a hard struggle with suffering, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and He will not delay; ³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

I love this last verse in chapter 10.

³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

You feel the passion of a father to a child saying, listen, don't shrink back, don't stop running. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Be disciplined in this race." You feel the passion of a coach speaking to the athletes that he loves saying, "Listen, I want you to finish well. I don't want you to give up. Keep running, keep running, keep running." That's exactly the feel of the text. Everything here is a call to endure until the very end. But he knows that the question is going to come. Is it worth it? Like is it worth it to endure to the very end? Well, what do we get if we make it until the end? What is the motive for finishing this race with Jesus Christ? What is it before you that you're hoping to get if you choose to run faithfully until the very end with Jesus? And he wants them to understand in the midst of everything else, that there is a really important motive for us. And motive matters. It's a good and right thing to think about what motivates us every day to run. As much as I love this text and as much as I love this word picture. To that same degree I hate running. My wife is an incredible athlete. She actually runs a boot camp on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings which I've never attended. She loves to run. And her biggest pet peeve in the world, she would tell you this if she's standing here today, is when people come up to me and ask me if I'm a runner. And the reality is, God just, I just look skinny and people ask me if I run and she just gets full of holy anger and goes, "He doesn't do anything!" It makes her so mad. She hates it. Because she works really hard and I get up, when she's outside in the cold working out, I'm drinking coffee and eating cookies every morning. I did it this morning. I ate M&Ms and coffee for breakfast. That's what I did. That's why I'm so sugared up this morning. So I don't do anything and I really hate running. I actually don't mind exercise. I just hate running. So if you were to come to me and say, Josh, I want to challenge you to run 20 miles. Well, I'd say, Well, OK, what do I get? You say, What do you mean, 'What do you get?' Well, no, what do I get? What do I get if I run 20 miles? And you say, well, just the satisfaction of knowing that you can do it. I'd say, I'm good. I don't need that. Like, I have the satisfaction of knowing I can't do that. I'm actually not one of those people that needs to put a sticker on the back of their car that tells everybody how far they can run. If that's you, I'm sorry, I just, I don't need that. Like I can do one that says, like, .01. I just, I'm good. That's no motivation for me. OK. How about a dollar a mile. Come on, this is a walkathon? You kidding me? A dollar a mile? I'm not going to run 20 miles for 20 bucks. Alright, how about a \$1,000 a mile? Alright,

let's talk. So, like let's get specifics here. Do I have to run without stopping? Can I stop like every couple of miles for a snack and a refreshing beverage? Like is there a time limit? And then I find out that I have to do it without stopping, which means I'm going to have to probably, I think I'd have to train for this and work on this just a little bit. So, I hate to tell you, but at 20 thousand I think I'm out. You say, OK, this is my last offer. \$10,000 a mile. \$200,000. I'm in. Like, I'm good. I'm doing it. I'm going to start training. I'm going to start working. No more cookies for breakfast. And so if you're asking the question, it would take 200, the answer is it would take \$200,000 for me to get to train to run 20 miles I think. I think that's about where I am. And don't judge me for taking the money. I have 5 kids and four daughters. That's a lot of weddings and a lot of college. I'm not ashamed to say for \$200,000 I would learn and change everything about my life to run 20 miles. But the reason is because at some point it became worth it to me. Like it wasn't worth it to me for the satisfaction of doing it. It wasn't worth it for \$20. It wasn't even worth it for \$20,000. But you finally got to a place where it was worth it for me. The cost was worth it. Because the reward was worth it. And that's exactly the point of this text. The point of this text is simply this, the race that we run is hard but the reward we receive is worth it. The race that we run is hard but the reward that we receive is worth it. And both parts of that are important. Because both parts we see in the life of Jesus. In the life of Jesus we see that the race that he ran was hard but the reward that He received was worth it. And because we are united with Jesus Christ, the same is true for us. Because listen, when you choose to follow Jesus Christ, not only do you choose His race, listen to this, you choose His reward.

So let's look at both sides of that this morning. The race that we run is hard but the reward we receive is worth it. First of all, let's look at the fact that the race that we run is hard. The race that we run is hard. So it says, look to Jesus who is the author and perfecter of our faith. That means that Jesus is the one that charted the course, He ran the race, He finished the race, He ran it perfectly, and He leads the way. So Jesus is not just the leader of the race, He's not just the one who motivates us on the race, Jesus goes before us and behind us and beside us. And the only reason we have the strength to run the race is because of Jesus. And so all along the way we're looking to Him and depending upon Him and receiving encouragement from Him. And that's good news because the race is hard. But just when we feel encouraged that Jesus has run the race and invites us on the race, then we begin to look a little bit at that specific race. Look at what it says. It says, He endured the cross, in verse 2, despising the shame, in verse 3, endured from sinners hostility against himself. So that's the race that Jesus ran. The race that He invites us to run with Him. He not only takes up His cross, He invites us to take up ours as well. The invitation to follow Him is to follow Him on the race that He ran. It says, first of all, the race that He ran, He endured the cross. What that means is that when He got to the cross, He didn't stop. He didn't chicken out at the cross. He didn't get all the way up to the Garden of Gethsemane and sweat drops of blood with the realization of what He was going to endure and say, "I'm out. I can't do it anymore." He didn't get right up to that moment and when they were going to put the nails in His hands and stop and say, "No, I can't do it. I can't do it. I'm done. I can't go any further." He didn't even get off the cross when He could have called myriads of angels to rescue Him before His death. He went all the way through the cross to His burial and resurrection and ascension. He endured the cross all the way through it. Never stopping. Never giving up. And that says a lot because the pain of the cross was unimaginable. I mean, just think of the physical pain of the cross. To die by crucifixion is to die by suffocation. That's the way you died. So you were nailed to this cross, your hands and your feet, and the only way that you

could get a breath is you would push up and get a breath and go back down. Every one of those breaths agonizing. Up and down. And it's not just the pain of pushing up on the feet that had been nailed to a cross. It was the fact that your back wasn't rubbing against sanded smooth mahogany. This was an old rugged cross, as we sing about. So think about every time you pushed up, your back rubbed up against the splinters of the cross and then went back down. Up and down and up and down with every single breath. And the way a person died up on a cross is they finally ran out of strength and they couldn't push up any longer and so they suffocated. The reason the soldiers went to Jesus and saw the men on His right and the left and broke their legs is because while Jesus had died, they were still taking breaths. But when they broke their legs, they couldn't push up anymore and so they died by suffocation. It sped up the process. It wasn't just the physical pain of the cross. The worst part for Jesus was the emotional and spiritual and relational pain. Jesus, at that moment, separated from His Father whom He'd been eternally united with. And that perfect union that they had had as He talks about in John 17. As You, Father, and I have been one from all eternity, may the church be one. Yet in one moment, the Father turned His back upon Jesus Christ because all of our sins were laid upon Him.

But apart from just the loneliness and separate He experience with God, just imagine the weight that He experienced of sin. Think about the shame and the guilt, the anger, the resentment that you've experienced in your life, just your life, because of your sin or the sin of others. Think about all of the things that have happened in your life because of the brokenness of others and what they have done to you and how that's affected your heart. And then think about your own sin and the consequences of your sin and the shame and the resentment, the anger, the hurt, all of that that comes from that. Just imagine that and imagine that all of that that maybe you've buried or maybe you've dealt with, all came back in one moment and just rested upon you; you'd be crushed. But just imagine that all of that from every single person in this room was all placed upon you at one time. And then imagine that all of that shame and all of that guilt and all of that anger and all of that resentment and all of the brokenness placed upon one person in one moment in time. That's exactly what happened to Jesus on the cross. That all of our guilt, all of our shame, all of our anger, all of our resentment, every bit of that placed upon Jesus. He was crushed under the weight of our sin. You say, "How do you know He was crushed under the weight of our sin?" Because it says in Isaiah 53,

⁵He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

All of the weight of all of our sin placed upon Jesus and dealt with right there. All of it cleansed by His blood. And He endured it. He made it to the end. But not only did He endure the cross, look what it says. He despised the shame. He despised the shame. Crucifixion was intended to bring shame. This is why a man would carry his cross publicly so that everyone would see him going to his death. And they would mock him and ridicule him. It feels like a sport as people gathered together to watch a man carry his cross through the street. It seems so unkind in every way. And then a man would be publicly nailed to the cross and lifted up on a hill so that everyone could see these men suffer. It was meant to shame them. And yet in all of that, Jesus

never defended Himself. Jesus never said, "I don't deserve to be up here." And they ridiculed Him and they mocked Him. They said, "He saved others. Why can't He save Himself?" He didn't say anything. He despised the shame. I just think it's interesting because it says, he endured the cross and then He endured the hostility. But when it comes to the shame, it says, He despised the shame. What does that mean? I don't know the fullness of everything it means, but I know at the very least it means something like this. It means that not only was Jesus publicly shamed by His own crucifixion, meaning that the sinless perfect Son of God was made to look like a criminal and so He was lifted up and there comes shame with that. But it's more than that. It was that Jesus was not only enduring His shame, He was enduring your shame. And when it says that He despised the shame, He hated the shame. What it means is this: that if on that cross, Jesus thought about the shame that all of us have experienced because of our sin, and it was almost as if on the cross what He said was this. He said to the devil, "You've been using shame as your primary weapon from the very beginning. It was shame that made Adam and Eve hid. It was shame that is making you hide this morning from others and from God." The weight of shame, the dysfunction of shame, all of the things you're ashamed of about yourself, externally, internally, all of that feeling of shame was put upon Jesus at one moment. And what Jesus was saying is, shame, I am so sick and tired of the havoc you're wreaking upon the people that I have created. And so I break the curse of shame on the cross right now. He hated the shame. And listen to me, church, you don't have to feel any shame any longer because Jesus already dealt with it. Despised the shame. Said He also endured the hostility. In verse 3 He endured from sinners such hostility. Just the anger and the aggression towards Him. And it wasn't just the last mile of the race, we think about that. But you know in Luke 4 it tells us the first time Jesus walked to His home synagogue, He opened a scroll and He read from Isaiah and He said, "That was written about Me." Well, it says the religious leaders run Him out of the temple and they tried to capture Him and throw Him off a cliff. This is how He started the ministry. And every day, every moment after that was just more anger, more hostility. Imagine living three years, every moment of your life knowing that the most powerful group of people want to take you down. And He endured it. He went through it. He finished with all of the hostility. Listen, that's the race Jesus ran and it was hard. Now the Hebrews that are receiving this letter, the race they're running is not much different. I mean, I read for you Hebrews 10 so they're publicly being reproached. Having the plundering of their property, they're losing everything for the cause of Christ. So the race that Jesus ran was not distant for them. They were running this race. They chose to follow Jesus and so all of the shame and the pain of persecution, all of the hostility was all poured out upon them. Now that's not true for most of us. The time and place in which we live, it's true for millions of Christians around the world, but not really for us. But can we just agree that running the race with Jesus is still hard? Isn't it hard to walk in purity? Isn't it hard to discipline our self for the purpose of godliness? Isn't it hard to give grace to people that are difficult to love? Isn't it hard to speak the truth in a generation that does not want to hear the truth and thinks that the truth is not loving but unloving? It's hard to continue to do the right thing. It's hard to do business in the right way. It's hard to have relationships that are pure. It's hard to go to work and work hard and to go to home and work hard and to love your spouse and to serve and to sacrifice. All of the things that God has called us to do. This race that we run is hard. If you're really serious about following Jesus Christ, the race is hard. And it's true for Jesus; it's true for us. The race we run is hard. And the reality is there are times in which we feel like it's not worth it. I met with a guy just recently who'd been battling sin for years and years. And he sat in my office and he said this, "I'm tired of battling sin. I've decided just to live in it for the rest of my life." I think somewhere the race got hard

and he forgot that the reward was worth it. And so, yes, it's true the race that we run is hard, but let's look at the other side. The reward that we receive is worth it.

The reward we receive is worth it. The question is, what was the reward for Jesus? What was Jesus' reward? What was the prize at the end for Jesus? And listen, it is right and good to ask this question, even for us. Is it worth it and what do we get at the end? What's the reward? Well, the reward for Jesus is three words in verse 2. Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, here are the three words, for the what, say it again, for the, for the joy. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and endured from sinners such hostility. For the joy. He was looking for the joy that He believed that the reward that He received at the end of the race was worth the race and worst the cost. That the race was hard but the joy was worth it. He was looking for the joy. What was the joy for Jesus? What was it that brought Jesus so much joy? Well, I think partially it's His exaltation. Look at the end of verse 2. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. So after His death, burial, and resurrection He ascended to the right hand of the Father above all rule and power and authority and dominion and every name that is named in this age and in the age to come. And so Jesus right now in bodily form is seated at the right hand of the Father ruling and reigning over all creation waiting for the moment to return and finally save us from this world. So that's part of the joy. The joy of exaltation. I think part of the joy was the joy of the glory of the Father. Jesus' last words to His disciples in John 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, He talks a lot about how everything He's done He's done for the glory of the Father. He says it in John 14, John 17 specifically, everything I do I do that the Father might be glorified. I have accomplished everything You sent me to do, Father, so that You might be glorified. So the glory of the Father, obedience to the Father, certainly He was motivated by the joy of the Father's glory. I think there's more to it than that. I think it's not just the joy of His exaltation, the joy of obedience, the joy of the glory of the Father or doing as He says in John 17. I've accomplished everything You set out for me to accomplish. What a joy that is to know that you've perfectly pleased the Father. But there's more. Listen to me. I really believe that more than the exaltation and more than the glory, His joy is you. His joy was you. You say, "Wait a minute. I don't know about that." The reason I'm convinced of that is because not only did Jesus come to seek and to save the lost, but John 15 makes it clear that the great joy in heaven is the joy in which one of God's lost treasures has been found. Listen to this. Luke 15. Jesus is eating with tax collectors and sinners and the religious grumble. So Jesus gives them three parables. It was a parable of a man who had a hundred sheep and he lost one and he leaves the 99 and he runs as fast as he can and he finds that lost sheep. And it says, he takes that sheep and he puts it on his shoulders and he runs back and he invites all of his friends and his family and he says, "I found the sheep." And it says all of them rejoice. It says, there's a lady and she loses a coin and she searches the house. She cleans the house, turns everything upside down. She finds the coin, she invites her friends, they have a huge party and a huge celebration. Why? Because the lost coin was found. And there's a son who shamed his father and rejected his father. Essentially what the son said is, "Father, I don't love you; I love your money. And so I'm going to reject you in order to get your inheritance." He receives his portion of the inheritance bringing incredible public shame on his father. He goes out, he squanders the inheritance, he has nothing left, and while in a pigsty, he comes to his senses and thinks, "You know what? Maybe my father would let me be a servant." Filled with shame and regret, head down, he walks back to the father. Whole time kind of rehearsing what he's going to say. Just hoping that by some chance he could just be a servant in the house. And the father sees him because the father was waiting

for him. And while the son was still a distance away, the father begins to run. He pulls up his robe and he runs as fast as he can and he embraces that son. He brings him back. He puts a signet ring on his finger, a new robe on him, and he throws a party for him, and everyone is celebrating. Why? Because the lost son has come home. What we're told in those parables is this, even so, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner repents than 99 who need no repentance. The great joy of heaven is when God's lost treasures come. Hebrews 2 says that Jesus has come to bring many sons to glory. He came to rescue you. He saw the brokenness of your life and the way in which sin was wreaking havoc on you. And the way in which we continue, even knowing the pain and brokenness of sin to walk in it, bringing more brokenness upon himself. And God in a desire to save us came after us to rescue us. And His great joy is when we come back to Him and that brings glory to the Father. It's certainly the glory of the Father, but the glory the Father receives as His children come and give their life to Him. Joy motivated Jesus to the very end was that the Father would be glorified by coming to rescue you. Listen, if you might have some misconception that God doesn't care about you, just think about that. For the glory of the Father and the joy of you, Jesus endured the cross, despised the shame and all the hostilities. So question is this, if that's Jesus' joy, what's our joy?

So if Jesus' joy was that the Father would be glorified by the rescuing of sinners and if you are His joy and if all of heaven rejoices this morning if one of you would give your life to Jesus Christ and all of heaven rejoiced the moment you did give your life to Christ, and the great joy of heaven as every nation, tongue, and tribe as we also sang about this morning, gathering and worshiping God. If that's His joy, then what's your joy? What do you get at the end of the race? That answer's this. If Jesus' joy was you, your joy is Him. Your joy is Him. Matthew 13:44 says, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field and a man seeing that treasure goes and sells everything he has to buy that field. The point is this, is that if you had to sell everything to get Jesus, it'd be worth it because Jesus is always better. Jesus is always better. Like there's nothing in life that compares to Jesus. And God is passionately concerned with your joy and He wants you to experience His joy. But what He knows is this. Listen to me. Sin leads to greater brokenness and brokenness leads to greater dysfunction. And all of that leads to more sorrow and pain. And the further we run away from Jesus, the more sin and pain that we experience. I heard someone say one time that sin is self-harm. When you continue to walk in sin, you bring more harm to yourself and God, out of brokenness for you and longing for you to come to Him, knows that the only joy that you will fully receive is the joy of having a right relationship with Him. He is our greatest joy. And it is only in a right relationship with Him that we come to experience that joy. And what He is saying, church, I want you to believe by faith that if my greatest joy is you, your greatest joy is me. And there is nothing better in this broken world than life with Jesus. He's our joy.

Let me tell you how this works practically and we'll be done. The way this works practically is that as you run the race you experience some of His joy. And when you finish the race, you experience the fullness of His joy. Get this. As you run the race, you experience some of His joy. And when you finish the race, you get the fullness of His joy. Here's how I know this. Because John 15, Jesus says, if you'll abide in Me and I abide in you, then you'll bear much fruit. And at the end of that passage, He says this. These things I have told you that my joy might be in you and your joy may be full. And all abiding means, abiding just means walking with Jesus in close connection with Jesus day by day, connected to Jesus. And as you're connected to Jesus, you come to taste His joy. You do. You taste and see that the Lord is good.

You taste of the joy of Jesus. By faith I want you to believe that when you wake up in the morning and open this book and seek to walk in purity before the Lord, you get a taste of His joy. And moment by moment you get His joy and you get His joy and you taste it and it just gives you enough motivation to continue to walk with the Lord and you grow to see the sorrow of sin and how much better His joy is. And then exhausted and spent, you die. We're not supposed to die refreshed. You just exhausted yourself for the cause of Christ. At the very end you die and then you know what happens? Psalm 16 says this: in your presence is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. And every moment for all of eternity is the outpouring overflowing joy of the Lord in abundance every day. So listen, if you haven't begun the race, I want to beg you to begin it today. Listen, it doesn't matter if you know about Jesus, but have you come to a place where you've acknowledged your sin and you've said, "Lord, I need You to save me from my sin. I'm trusting Jesus and I'm making a decision to follow You." If you haven't done that, I'm pleading with you today. Make this the day where you call on the name of the Lord and start the race. If you've started it, I just don't want you to grow weary. I want you to be faithful. I want you to endure it until the very end. I want you to keep looking for the joy, for the joy, for the joy, for the joy, the taste of the joy, the fullness of the joy. It's all waiting for you and I assure you the race will get hard, but I also assure you the reward will be worth it. So keep running.

Let's bow our heads and close our eyes this morning.

With heads bowed and eyes closed, in just a moment we're going to stand and sing this final song and there'll be pastors that will come here and ministers to greet you if you want to come. And the reason we do this is because we want to give you a moment to make a decision. The truth is, when God speaks, He demands a decision. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. So I just want to plead with you, if God is stirring your heart about anything and you want to talk to someone, come. If you just want to come and kneel here and pray, come and do that. But your only responsibility right now is to do the next thing that God has called you to do. That's how the race works. You just do the next thing, you take the next step. Then God will give you the next one. And so whether it's making that decision to begin a relationship with Jesus, to believe by faith that He's better than anything else the world has to offer. To make a decision, I'm ready to run Jesus' way and follow Him. Whether you just need to be refreshed by the Lord, whatever it is, when we stand and sing in a moment, I want to encourage you. If we can minister to you, if you just want to come and pray, please do that.

Father, we give these moments to You. We ask that You'll be exalted in them. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.