

Which the Jews call the Book of Messianic jews beginning with verse one, two, one through 14. So then. Since we are surrounded by such great cloud of witnesses. Let us too put aside every impediment that is the sin which easily hampers our forward movement and keep running with endurance in the contest set before us. Looking away to the initiator and completer of that trusting Yeshua.

Who.

In exchange for obtaining the joy set before him. Endured execution on a stake as a criminal scorning the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of Elohim God. Yes, think about him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you won't grow tired or become despondent. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in the contest against sin. Also, you have forgotten the counsel which speaks with you as sons. My son, don't despise the discipline of adonai or become despondent when he corrects you for adonai or. God disciplines those he loves and whips everyone he accepts as a son. Regard your endurance as discipline. God is dealing with us sons. For what son goes undisciplined by his father? As legitimate sons undergo discipline, so if you don't, you're a monster, an illegitimate son, not a son. Furthermore, we had physical fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. How much more should we submit to our spiritual father and live for? They disciplined us not only for a short time and only as best they could, but He Elohim, our God disciplines us in a way that provides genuine benefit to us and enables us to share in his holiness.

Now, all discipline, while it happens, does indeed seem painful, not enjoyable, but for those who have been trained by it, it later produces its peaceful fruit, which is righteousness strength, and therefore your drooping arms and steady your tottering knees and make a level path for your feet, so that what has been injured.

Will.

Not get wrenched out of joint, but rather will be healed. Keep pursuing Shalom peace with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. The next reading, the Gospel, comes from the Book of Luke. Would you all please stand for the reading? This is Luke, chapter twelve, verses 49 through 50. This is yeshua or Jesus. I have come to set fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled. I have an immersion to undergo. How pressured I feel until it is over. Do you think I have come to bring peace in the land? Not peace, I tell you, but division. Or from now on there will be the household of five will be divided three against two, two against three. Father will be divided against son, and son against father, mother against daughter, and daughter against mother, mother in law against her daughter in law, and daughter in law against mother in law. Then to the crowds Yeshua said when you see a cloud bank rising in the west at once, you say a rainstorm is coming. And when the wind is from the south, you say there will be a heat wave, and there is hypocrites.

You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth in the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present age?

All right, well, I see a lot of kids that I saw at kids camp. What do you guys see up there? Yeah, the paintings. These kids helped make those paintings there. King Jesus is crown. We learned that Jesus is a king, but he wears a different crown than the other kings do. What were some other things you learned?

Yes.

That Jesus died for all of our sins. That's right. Yes. Addy and he loves us. Yeah, we can't learn that enough. Yes, Lucas. He rose on the third day. That's right. So you weren't even a camp. But we did talk about that, so that's really wonderful. We also learned a verse. Do you all remember what that verse was? Ephesians. Yes, Sam. That's excellent. He got it perfectly. Ephesians 210. Almost perfectly. Do you want to do it?

We are created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

That's very good. Yeah. So they learned Ephesians 2:10, for we are created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do. And so that's some of the stuff you learn when you go off to kids alive, your teachers teach you about the good works that God has prepared in advance for you to do. And then God empowers you. Remember that by his Holy Spirit to do those works. So God bless you as you go. Father, we pray for our young people. We're so grateful for them and all that they learned at kids camp this week. And we pray now you bless them and kids alive in Jesus name, amen. All right, God bless you. Matt Hilly guest is bringing us to.

All right. Good morning, everyone. Good to see you all. Yesterday. My son Mason, who's sticking around for the service today, had his first baseball practice of the fall season. He's playing football, and I was there with him. And about a third of the practice or throwing or pitching or fielding, but about a third of the practice was spent coaching the kids on base running. I don't know how many of you are familiar with baseball, but you may not know how much strategy there is in running between the bases and baseball. You may not know how much is at stake, how much of the game is won and lost in the skill and the choreography of adept base running. But it was some of the best coaching that Mason has ever gotten since he started playing baseball four or five years ago. You have to think about it when you're running the base, you have to learn how to lead off differently. At each of the three bases, there's a curve that you take as you run into first. When do you run through? When do you plant at the base? When do you lead off?

How do you shuffle as you lead off to give you the best chance of stealing a base without getting caught or advancing around the bases as efficiently as you can? When do you tag up? When you shift your weight? Where do you look and how do you direct your body's momentum? Running takes coaching and it takes practice. The text from Hebrews this morning by the way, if you have a Bible, I'd love to ask you to open with me to Hebrews chapter twelve. The text from Hebrews this morning offers an image of the Christian life as a race that we run. Let's read together Hebrews twelve. Beginning in verse one, he says therefore, since we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Let us run with endurance, the race that is set before us. So this morning I want to look at the whole section of both Hebrews eleven, which Patrick introduced to us last week, and the beginning of Hebrews twelve, especially the first few verses. I want to make three observations from the scripture in these sections.

So let's pray together and jump in. Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen. Okay, so my first observation from these texts is that the Christian life is a run. It's a long run. So run smart. The text says, Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Christian life is not a meandering stroll. It's not a strut or a saunter. It's my best saunter. It's the best I can do. Not much of a saunter. It's not a tourist jaunt, it's a run. Now, there are many different kinds of running. Running can be like strategic maneuvering, like my son Mason did yesterday, right? This is the way we run in sports or when we play or in competition. Consider the different ways you move around a field or a court, in baseball or football or soccer, or even field sports, like the long jump, bowling. All of those have different strategic maneuvering that is some form of running. We can also be running in the sense of fleeing, running away from something. We could be running in a chase, running after something to pursue it.

We could be sprinting a run as fast as we can to defeat the competition. We can run in the sense of leisurely, jogging, running nowhere at all for no particular reason. And then there is the long run. It's an active, purposeful, steady, marathon kind of run. It's directed, it's resolved. It is a sustained run, a long, sustained run. A run that is faithful to the path that is marked out. So there are different occasions for running, and each type of run is used for a different purpose and requires a different approach. The German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche notes this. He says that the essential thing, the essential thing in heaven and earth is that there should be a long obedience in the same direction. They're there by results and has always resulted in the long run something which has made life worth living. Listen to that again. The essential thing in heaven and earth is that there should be a long obedience in the same direction, thereby results and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made

life worth living. A long run in the same direction sounds a lot like a marathon.

And this is the sort of run that I think the text of Hebrews Twelve is speaking of, when it says, let us run with endurance the race which is set before us. The deeply beloved and respected pastor Eugene Peterson. Some of you may be familiar with him. He is the author of the message translation of the Bible. He took this notion from Nietzsche and he developed it into a whole book by the title along Obedience in the Same Direction, which he sums up, Peterson sums up in his own interpretation of our text from this morning. Right. This is how Peterson puts Hebrews Twelve. One and two. He says, do you see all these pioneers who blazed the way that's the thought of witnesses, all these veterans cheering us on. It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running and never quit. No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished the race we're in. That's how Peterson puts Hebrews twelve one and two. It's a long obedience in the same direction. So the life of faith in Christ is a long run in the same direction.

It is a marathon of marathons for the heart, the soul, the mind and the body. So run smart. The text says. It doesn't say that that way, but notice the admonition given in verse one. The text says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight. Lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. So part of what the verse is saying here is, you're going on a long run, so run smart. When you go out running, consider what might hold you back, what things might produce drag to slow you down. The King James version puts it like this says, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. Another translation says, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us. That's a nice image. I think you're trying to run and you get entangled. You get caught up in a vine or you trip over your own legs or you hit a pothole. Another translation says, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.

The RSV says, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. And other ancient translations say of the sin, they say it's the sin that so easily distracts. Imagine being on a long run and you can't look away from what's over here and you run into someone or something. So if you're going on a run and you want to run well and you want to go the distance, don't stuff weights in your pockets, don't tie ropes around your arms and legs or set out wearing a parka on a hot summer day. That's not going to help you. So the question for me and for us is what are those weights and sins? In particular, what are the spiritual fats, as Peterson puts it, that hinder you, that hinder me, that slows us down, that makes us sluggish with sin, that trip us up, that entangle us, that distracts and besets us, as the various translations put it. What are the parasitic sins that you need to throw off, stripped down and lay aside that I need to throw off, strip down? A further question we might ask when setting off a run beyond what is slowing us down might be this question what instead might help us to run better?

How can we ensure that we do go the distance? Anyone who's trained for a long run and I have in a former era of my life, if you've trained for a triathlon or an iron man or half ironman or marathon, that you know that preparing for a long run takes discipline. The word disciple comes from the word discipline, which means to learn long distance running requires instruction like my son was getting yesterday in his baseball game. It requires training and practice. It requires discipline. You've got to learn to go the distance on a long run. A long run is a disciplined run. It's steady, it's measured, it's deliberate. You're putting one step 1ft in front of the other. Stride for stride. Long run is a disciplined run. Discipline essential for running the race of the Christian life. For the race of the Christian life. We will need, for instance, to practice the discipline of prayer. We will need to practice regular, individual prayer and prayer together in community. We'll need to pray routinely with Jesus and in the way of Jesus our Father who art in heaven. We will need a discipline of prayer that is rooted in Scripture.

And by the way, this is the whole point of the Book of Common Prayer. The daily office in the Book of Common Prayer is all about the Scripture set to prayer scripture set to worship. We need that discipline. We need our prayers to be rooted in Scripture. We need a discipline of prayer in which we linger with God, abiding with Him, simply being close to God and listening, expecting that God has something to say to us. I don't think we can spend too much time simply listen at times when prayer is the last thing we want to do. I can relate. The discipline of prayer may simply be to say to God, I want to want you, God, or even I want to want to want you, God. And at this moment, I don't. Would

you make it so? That's a discipline of prayer for the Christian life. There's also the discipline or the practice of hearing, reading, marking, learning, inwardly digesting the Scriptures, the word of God. That's how the prayer book puts it. Hearing, reading, learning, marking, and inwardly digesting the Holy Scriptures for the Christian life. There's also the discipline of worship with the body.

That's what we're doing this morning. Receiving the sacrament of Eucharist, that's a discipline. Confessing our sins and receiving absolution, that's a discipline week after week, when we feel like doing it, when it's convenient to do it, when it comes at no cost to other loyalties in our lives, and we do it when we don't feel like doing it. That's what discipline is. When it requires us to go out of our way, or when it comes at the cost of sleep or comfort or other opportunities or obligations, that's when we do it. So Hebrew Twelve talks a lot about discipline. As Joe read, discipline is a form of love. Look at verse five with me. It says, my son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines who he loves, and chastises every son who he receives. So discipline means to learn to become a disciple by watching and imitating the Master. In this we see that there is a design to the Christian life. There's a shape of it. There's a pattern that forms tempo and cadence in the Christian life.

These all these things that I was just mentioning, just like a long run has a logic, a design, a tempo and a cadence to it, right? A long run. There's a shape to the course on which a marathon is run. There's a pattern of breathing that the more you do it, the more you get that the more your body is trained. The muscle memory to breathe in the right pattern, the pace set by the length of each stride is part of the pattern of a long run. The discipline of a long run, a sequence along the run. If you've ever done this before, you know there's a sequence of stops along the way to hydrate and refuel. If you're running a long run, imagine trying to set out on a marathon without any knowledge of the course. Just imagine that any of the wisdom that equips you enables and empowers you to run the race steadfastly to the end. Imagine just instead deciding, you know what, bumble around and just kind of figure it out as I go. Or maybe assuming that the wind is going to carry you to the finish line. That's not how long runs work.

Anybody who's done it knows that. Now, we know this is describing me in some way. We know that many people think of their careers and wealth building in quite intentional and systematic and disciplined ways to think about a path towards a desired outcome in very calculated and thoughtful, deliberate ways. We may strategize, I'll do this or that education or training which will lead to this or that career position. We deliberately map out the way through subsequent levels according to a tightly calculated timeline aimed ultimately at achieving our desired goal. It's a very disciplined approach to life. We do that. That's all well and good, but at the same time, many of us imagine our Christian life to call for much less training, practice, strategy and discipline. We sometimes consider it to be more about sort of devotional feelings, nebulous movements, sort of flat one dimensional beliefs. We sort of drift aimlessly, hoping to run into God. Imagine if a surgeon thought that way about her medical training. Maybe I'll watch some house in Gray's Anatomy and I dissected a frog in 7th grade. We'll just see what happens. Of course, that would never you never graduate from medical school if you had that perspective, right?

Why would we think about discipleship that way? But we do often. This is not the image Hebrews offers to us this morning. We are called to a long run. Running requires discipline, and discipline, we will find, leads to devotion. We're called to a long run. Running requires discipline, and discipline, we will find, leads to devotion. So that's the first observation from the text. Run the race. Running well to the end requires discipline. And run smart, right? Don't be dumb when you run. Don't let yourself be weighed down by unnecessary drag of sin. Cast it off and run well. Second observation from this text is that we will need something to sustain us as we continue on this long run. What will this well, in chapter eleven, take a look there with me, we catch a glimpse of some of the giants of the faith. Patrick shared this with us last week. These giants of the faith, they are the ones who ran the race with resilience and integrity. They did not cheat. They did not take shortcuts or set out to blaze their own trail for their own sake. They model the faithfulness to the journey, a discipline, a fidelity to the way, imperfectly as it may be in every case.

Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Noah, Moses, they all ran the long run. And all are both inspired. I'm sorry, all

both inspire and instruct us by their example. When the running gets tough, and it will when your quads are screaming at you on mile 18, mile 18 is a tough one. Your ankles feel like they're going to give out on you, and your breathing is labored and your head is spinning. We remember those who have gone before us. They've run the race ahead of us and they have made it. They are the ones who have finished the race. When the adversary gets in your ear. As he does. Plants doubt in your heart. Focuses the mind's attention on the body's weariness and discomforts. Slyly suggesting that we should probably just throw in the towel. Maybe take a shorter path to the comfort and pleasure on offer by the world whispers to us if you're honest with yourself. You don't really have what it takes to run this race. You're on an arduous road to nowhere. Choose a different path. When that happens, when those lies start ringing in our ears, these witnesses run alongside us, cheering us on.

They say, you can do this. I did it. So can you. But all these giants run their race in the steps of the one who is the runner of all runners. Each of these examples spotlighted in Hebrews Eleven culminates in the one who runs the race perfectly. Look with me in verse two of chapter twelve, looking to Jesus. It says, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Remember the race that Jesus ran. Jesus was abandoned. He was spat upon, beaten, killed in the most brutal and humiliating way possible. On the cross he ran a race with nails in his hands and nails in his feet and a spear in his side and a crown of thorns on his head. That's the race he ran. So what? Sustained. Jesus. What do we see here? Scripture says it was for the joy that was set before Him that he endured. The text says that it was the joy set before Him that sustained Him to carry out the greatest act of love in the history of the universe.

What joy? The joy of obedience to the Father. The joy of restoring all that has been destroyed by sin. It was the joy of reconciling all of creation to God, of making all things new and raising new life from everything that longs to live. That's what sustained Jesus as he ran with spit and blood in his eyes and nails in his feet. What will sustain us on our long run? What will we use to make it to the finish line? Well, Hebrews twelve tells us, look to Jesus. We look to Him who is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. He is the first runner who runs the race perfectly. Look at verses three and four, consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted in your struggle against sin. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. So to the answer of the question, what will sustain us on our long run? I think it's helpful to look back at the very first line of chapter eleven. Look with me there. You'll remember this from last week. It says now faith, you know this one well anyway, this is one that probably you have memorized.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen. And the word translated assurance here in the ESV is the word for real substance. Think about that with me for just a second. The word translated assurance here in the ESP is the word for real substance. It has this quality of being tangible, something that you can get a hold of assurance, something you can get a hold of. The word translated conviction, here is the word for evidence. So here this, the first line of Hebrews eleven could be read. Now faith. Now faith is the tangible substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is not just a pleasant or a comforting or reassuring thought about a future reality. It's more substantive. Faith is a substance. You can bite into it in this moment of the journey to nourish you, to fuel you, to sustain you now as you run the next leg of the race. That's what Jesus did for him who endured from sinners such hostility that was set against him. The faith that sustained Jesus through the journey was a real tangible substance of the joy set before him.

The future joy now empowering him, now sustaining him, now energizing. He could taste now the joy of all things made new coming in the agony of gethsemane. He was nourished by the joy of cosmic resurrection to come on the cross through death and into the grave. He was sustained by the joy of overcoming the grave and conquering death once and for all. So faith is a tangible feast. I like to think about it that way. A feast of real future joy that we ingest now by grace to power us forth to the finish line because we're going to need that with the joy set before him, he endured the cross, he finished the race. So faith is the provisions, the sustenance of future joy that sustains us through the long strenuous race. Now. So this is the kind of faith that empowers us to join with the witness of Moses who we see. In chapter eleven, verse 25 it says quote Moses chose rather to share ill temperament with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. Remember all that was offered to

Moses that he turned down. He chose to share ill temperament with the people of God.

The people of Israel, then to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. The fleeting pleasures of sin he considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. So the joy set before us sustains and empowers the fleeting pleasures of sin. Do not the joy set before us as it was for Jesus sustains and empowers us now for the journey? The fleeting pleasures of sin do not sustain us. They are the weights that hold us down. So may we be a people who, for the joy of Christ set before us, reject the fleeting pleasures of sin and decline the treasures of Egypt. So running is difficult. It is not for the faint of heart. At the same time, running is exhilarating. Running this race is the only way to live life to the full. It makes me think of the way that Paul describes the true Christian as one sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Sit in that tension for just a minute. Sorrowful yet always rejoicing. That's what we're called to. That's what a race is like, a long run. It's not easy. It's exhilarating. Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Noah, Moses and all the other saints across time who ran the race with fidelity to the end.

They all formed the great cloud of witnesses. They are all witnesses. They witness. However, they are not witnesses first and foremost to their own faith. This text is not primarily about their faith. They are also not first and foremost witnesses to ours, but they are witnesses to Christ. They are witnesses to the pioneer and perfecter of the long run of faith. Sorrowful, each of them, yet always rejoicing each of them, their lives of faith, hope and love are lived as an arrow that points to Christ away from them into Christ. This is my second observation from this reading this morning. Christian life is a long run, and it's on the same road. The whole way we follow in the steps of Christ, who is the way. He sustains us on this long run with faith that is like a feast of future joy. For the present leg of the journey. Let me close. We have a race to run. Our faith is not a program of sitting still. It's not a spectator's stroll through religious life, nor is it an adrenaline empowered sprint. It's a marathon. Marathon marked by resolve, commitment, patience, passion and repentance.

It's possible to be on a marathon and make a wrong turn, and the best thing to do is not to continue down the wrong path. You're not going to make it to the finish line that way. You can run for the rest of your life down the wrong path and not make it. You got to turn around and come back. Only God knows what the next leg of this marathon looks like for each one of us. But I think of Jeremiah twelve five that says if you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out. How can you compete with horses? So train now. Train your heart, soul, mind and strength. Find your cadence now for facing whatever headwinds the next leg may bring. Remember that this may be a long run, but it is a run of a product. It's a run into the arms of the Father who runs the whole way to meet us. The long run is the run of a prodigal. It's a run into the arms of the Father who runs the whole way to me. We are propelled forward by joy set before us faith, which is more than a thought or a feeling, but faith that is the very fuel that courses through our spiritual veins, energizing our every stride.

All from the one who endured the cross for the joy set before him the great cloud of witnesses who ran the race before us and who run it with us now, whose faith and life point not to themselves but to the pioneer and perfecter of their faith. They are our family, Christian disciples. Family is redefined in Christ. Country is redefined. They are our country. Together with us, they form our us, our we that we've been looking for long. So I wonder is this the kind of disciple that our neighbors know us to be? That's my prayer for us, for me and for us as a church. May this be the kind of disciple our neighbors know us to be. May we become part of the great cloud of witnesses who spur on our neighbors to join us on this long run in Christ, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It's.