

# KINGS NORTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Sunday 2<sup>ND</sup> January 2022 10 am

Running with perseverance - Motto text sermon.

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Welcome to all

Opening Scripture

Hymn MP 498 O God our help in ages past

Scripture Psalm 1

Prayer

Children's talk Running the race

Notices Bible reading plan, Ina, bookmarks, Wednesday BS

Covenant reading 2 Chron 34:29 - 32

Hymn MP 64 Break thou this bread of life

Communion time Read CH 420 then CH 413

Prayer

Reading Hebrews 12:1-3, 10:23-25

Hymn MP 590 Seek ye first the kingdom of God

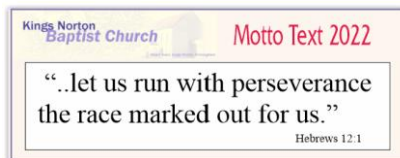
Sermon Running with perseverance

Hymn MP 501 O Jesus I have promised

Closing Prayer: Philippians 1:9-11

Close

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## Welcome and pray

A marathon is an incredibly long race of 26 miles. Have you run one yet? It should take you, with some training about 4 ½ hours. The London Marathon is in October, you've still time to get yourself ready!

The Christian life is like a marathon, **you need these (trainers)**. You must start well, - run well - and finish well - if you are to receive the prize.

■ In the London marathon sadly some who start don't finish, about a 100 who start won't make the finish line.

So in the Christian race, some start but don't finish the race. It is important in the Christian life to keep going, the prize is only for those who finish.

**Hold up motto text "let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us"**

This is what you are to do, put your name " ". In 2021 it was? **Do not grieve, for the Joy of the Lord is your strength.** They go together - Look to the Lord and you will run the race with persevere and enthusiasm, you will make it.

So this morning we are going see how we can run the race and; not give up, not slow down. not be distracted, not become ensnared, not get tripped up... but **run with perseverance the race marked out for us.**

The Christian life is described as a building work, it is likened to a farmer sowing and reaping, it is likened to an investor trying to get the best return, it's like a soldier fighting the good fight, and as Paul says several times it's like a **race**, we are running a race, do this and you will '**keep the faith**' 2Ti 4:7

The verse Hebrews 12:1 comes after the great hall of fame: those men and women of faith who had '**kept the faith**'.

From the beginning there is Abel, then Enoch, then Noah, Abraham the man of faith, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and then many others: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and on and on through time to you and I today.

Each one is introduced with the words '**by faith**'. So this race is the life of faith. In all they faced they trusted their God and followed his way. At the end it says they **were all commended for their faith** 11:39

That cloud of witnesses has continued through the last 2000 years, The Lord has had his faithful men and women placed when he wants us to live in history of the world, and where he wants us to live across the world – all according to his will and purpose, - for us to do what he has planned for us.

✚ As they were faithful in their generation - So must we be!

Paul said: “**For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep**” Ac 13:36. Those of us with everlasting life only sleep. Our life will continue through / beyond the grave. Hallelujah.

Ch 11 is full of those who served God in their generation, they stood by His promises in the tests and trials, waited on the Lord’s timing and provision, and stood against the world around them. That is how they ran their race.

Their race is now over. Now it is for the people of God today. As he had a purpose for them, a race ‘**marked out**’ for them - so he has a race ‘**marked out**’ x2 for you and I here today all who confess to follow Jesus.

What God called Abraham to do was different from what God called Noah to do. Same with Gideon and Samuel, each had a specific task, so it is with each of us. There is your race, white lines **marked out** for you.

I must stop at this point and ask? Are you on in this race? Has the Lord called you? That is the starting point. Have you heard his voice and come to the **CROSS** to be made clean and made ready for your true life’s work?

### *Hindrances*

If you have been called out of the empty way of life we were all once living and are on the track to heaven there will be what the writer describes here as: **hindrances** x2 we are told to **throw off everything that hinders**.

The problem with a race is that we can flag, become tired, lose our drive and motivation, lose our zeal to see it through to the finish line.

What stops us from running well? There are different hindrances?

#### One is being alone, being alone,

It is harder to run on your own. In the marathon there are hordes of people and you run along with the others, how much harder on your own, you have no encouragement, no challenge, nor can you tell how well you are doing.

- **Missionaries a long way from home often have little fellowship – they long for it.**

So it is for many Christian around the world living in hostile countries where to profess faith brings persecution, how they must feel it.

- **Christians in Bhutan, Yemen, Somalia etc, like many other countries are not allowed to meet to worship.**

That is not true here – yet - so let us value every moment to be together.

**Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

However even here you can feel as if you are on your own – those closest, your own family are not with you in this Christian race.

Whatever the verbal profession of your husband or wife, children or other relations you know deep down you are on your own. Despite what they say their interests are essentially elsewhere, and you know it. They are not with you on this life with Jesus. They are treading another path.

It is warring when you are on your own. We need others to spur us on in this race. Heb 10 says it is in meeting likeminded believers we can help **spur one another on towards love and good deeds**.

Think of what the **spurs** do to a horse! The word is often translated ‘**stirred up**’, or ‘**provoked**’, or ‘**moving**’ each other - how we need this motivation! Meeting together should never be passive, it is not like a concert with eyes to the front with no engagement one with another. May our meetings never be like that. But that is how it was during lockdown.

**I feel for the churches who still rely on ZOOM and remote meeting and plan to continue to do so. It is not the same as meeting in person.**

An image on a screen does not allow for person to person engagement.

John said “**I have much to write to you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.**” 3Jo 1:13-14 Quite!

Paul said “**I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—**” Ro 1:11 Yes!

Each of us as Christians suffer without that important person on person interaction found in the gathering of God’s people.

Paul says “**when you come together**” 1 Cor 11:18 The Lord assumes his church will come together and He, He is present in a special way when we do so.

Let us see the value of it not just for me but for others. Over many years no-one I have ever spoken to about this considered how their absence affects others. It does, and to not meet fails to love my brother and sister as I ought. Some who profess to love Jesus are on and off, - off and on - when it comes to being together with others.

Members: you have just been reminded of your promise to not fail to meet.

4. Recognising our duties as Christians, I will seek to be present on the occasions of worship, prayer and fellowship whenever possible. Hebrews 10:24-25.

**Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

We don't have many meeting in this church, - you and I should be present. it is important - we are always better for it – see it as the privilege it is – as I have said in many places in the world it is not possible.

There are other hindrances to throw off

V1 speaks of ...**Sin that so easily entangles like that dog that got under my feet when I was running a while back and tripped me up.** Satan wants to trip you up, to throw out that obstacle, that discouragement, to trip you up.

- Years ago, (1985) I flew to Italy and drove my father back in his car. At night he had been walking and hadn't seen a low wall which sent him over and left him with a broken arm.

The answer is, as Jesus says, to **watch out**, in our Christian life we must “**watch out**” “**watch out that no-one deceives you**”. That is what sin does.

The tempter will come along and get you interested in a hobby, DIY project, computer devices, programme watching etc., etc., that will eat away both your time and your enthusiasm for the Lord's work.

The tempter will find family things for you to do on Sunday or at other times so you become one of those on/off people. Beware of those subtle demands on your time.

Beware of commitments made with non-Christian friends, who don't see things the way you do – Will it soon be a commitment you regret?

When the writer says **let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.** We tend to make two categories: **hindrances** and **sins**.

But every distraction is a **sin**. Anything that is not what pleases God is a sin, – and by implication, a hindrance. Sins are not just lying, or gluttony, but anything that grieves the Lord, **for example listening to what Ghislaine Maxwell has been doing.** It has all the ingredients to make the news, with its expose of sexual vice, the world loves it. Switch it off - This is not something a Christian should sit down and listen to, and there's much else like it. Does that hinder you running for the Lord? Certainly, x2.

**let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles,**

King Amaziah, started well but got caught up in - and distracted by adventures. When the Lord sent someone to warn him and get him back on

track Amaziah would not listen. The next King Uzziah started his race with the Lord but when things went well for him he became complacent & proud.

**BCM workers once keen – very keen, now not walking with the Lord.**

- Here in the church we are praying for one of our own who started well but has fallen away, will he listen to the Lord's entreaty to him?

What was it that got in the way? Was it worldly entanglements? Was it inner temptations? Or was it going off at a tangent with wrong beliefs?

Paul said: **I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—** Ga 1:6

Do not leave the track, don't turn off! Neither to the left or to the right!

**5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.**

So let us stay in our lane, let's not attempt a short cut, there are none in the Christian life, there's no short cut to holiness, no easy route to heaven.

- ✚ As someone said "In those contests, he who broke the rules in the least matter, not only failed of the prize, even though the apparent victor, but was sometimes disgraced and punished," (See Grotius, *in loc.*)

Rugby - it looks like a 'try' but NO a rule was broken, it counts for nothing

Another reason are the sudden difficulties or hardships,

Something is thrown into your path: the harsh word, the sudden disappointment, the unexpected illness. They all tempt you to take your eyes off where you are going and lose the impetus to carry on.

The letter to the Hebrews is addressed to Jewish background believers in Rome who were starting to experience persecution. The result was they were abandoning the Christian race. They were tempted to slip back into the safe territory of Judaism, a religion which was acceptable, so as to avoid suffering for Christ.

That's why the next section is about hardships. How should we see them? v7 **endure hardship as disciple.** Experiencing hardships? The Lord is proving you – hardships mean God is treating you as sons. And as his children you will know he loves you – It is his sign that He is at work in you.

**Training - To run well you need to train!**

No-one in their right mind enters the race without having trained. To start a marathon without proper preparation is to throw away any hope of the **prize!**

You will not stay the knocks and bashes – and discouragements along the way unless you are regularly in God’s word and meditating on it, becoming familiar with the lives of those in Ch. 11, what did they face? How did they overcome? that means Bible study. And prayer, spending time with God.

Athletes are single-minded, their sights are set on the task ahead. They put a huge amount of time and effort into it. **Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever.** 1Co 9:25 All good athletes have a coach, one who has done it. - So in our race of a life-time let us – above all ...

### *Fix our eyes on Jesus*

Those in Ch. 11 with all their failings finished the race well. Yes, let us be encouraged by those who have gone before, read their biographies, catch the vision, see how they were lead through great difficulties and overcame. But above all - look to one who ran perfectly, **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.** Jesus loved the father and sought always to please him – he saw what was ahead. To Him we look, it is He we follow.

*Those greyhounds when racing chase the hare their eyes glued on it*

Jesus started well, He ran well, and He finished well. He was not knocked off course despite great and subtle temptations to do so. He finished the race and sat down on the throne in heaven. He ran well and did everything he was to do. He said: **“It is finished”**. He said to his father: **“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”** Joh 17:4

If we keep close in behind then we too can finish as he did, and receive the welcome: **‘well done good and faithful servant’**

### *That means running with - perseverance x2*

✚ As Norman Vincent Peale said: **“It's always too early to quit”**.

**Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test (and there are many ‘tests’ but called this one ‘test’ - which is this life) he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.** Jas 1:12

✚ It will be painful but – **“Pain is temporary. Giving up lasts forever”**.

Some marathon runners start with great gusto - but they underestimated the hardness of it and soon they are flagging. How are you getting on?

Jesus in the parable of the sower said there would be those who start enthusiastically, run fast at first - but don’t stay the course.

Lloyd George **There is nothing so fatal to character than half finished tasks.**

**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 1Co 9:24**

So persevere! which means we push on, - it is not a sprint but a marathon you only fail by giving up trying. This is not a race that ends at 60, you will not come to sign by the side saying ‘retirement stop here’. No, the course will change but this race continues on until we leave this world for Glory.

So let us keep going -The devil finds it much easier to hit a static target, so let us keep going and learn a lesson from the tropics - **Stop your running, ease off and you will find the mosquito attack more easily!**

Ray Kroc (founder of McDonald’s) said: **“Nothing in the world will take the place of persistence”**. **How many countries in the world don’t have MacDonald’s? How many people in the world have never eaten a McD’s?**

### *Finally you must finish well*

- In the Mexico Olympic Games of 1968 marathon runner John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania had been eclipsed by the other runners. After 30 kilometers his head is throbbing, his muscles are aching and he falls to the ground. He has serious leg injuries and officials want him to retire, but he refuses. With his knee bandaged Akwhari picks himself up and hobbles the remaining 12 kilometers to the finish line. An hour after the winner has finished, Akwhari enters the stadium. All but a few thousand of the crowd have gone home. Akwhari moves around the track at a painstakingly slow pace, until finally he collapses over the finish line. Afterward, asked by a reporter why he had not dropped out, Akwhari says, **“My country did not send me to start the race. They sent me to finish.”**

**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who after he had endured sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** in that wonderful place to end with God in heaven

What will you be saying on your deathbed? **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, .... will award to me on that day— and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”** 2Ti 4:7-8

My Christian brothers and sisters - the Jesus who said **he who stands firm to the end will be saved.** Mr 13:13 is the one who is with you every step of the way, His Spirit is our great help: he brings us into the race, He helps us along in it and He will see us through to the finishing line.