

## Sermon Title: *Running the Race as a Disciple*

Text: Hebrews 12:1-3; Luke 12:49-53; 1 Corinthians 9:24-25

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### Introduction

We are learning what it means to be a disciple of Christ in today's world. The Bible often compares discipleship to a **race**—a race that demands focus, endurance, and purpose. But unlike a 100-meter sprint, this is a **marathon of faith**.

#### Hebrews 12:1-2 says:

*"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."*

So, what does it mean to run this race as a disciple in the 21st century?

Reading the signs of times and the Bible alongside.

### I. What is Discipleship in Today's World?

Discipleship today is **understanding the Word of God deeply** in relation to the world we live in—its issues, its conversations, its people.

But here's the challenge: **we often try to keep God in a box**.

Remember the little boy who asked his mother, *"Is God everywhere?"* She said yes. *"Is He in the kitchen?"* Yes. *"Is He in this box?"* Yes. The boy closed the box and said, *"I've got God in the box!"*

Sometimes we do the same—keeping God within our limited understanding and expectations. When life doesn't fit those boxes, our faith struggles.

**Discipleship means letting God out of our box.** It means understanding God as the **God of peace AND the God of justice**—a God who sometimes **disturbs our comfort zones** and brings division because truth disrupts false peace.

Memory

### II. The Race of Faith – Three Lessons from Hebrews

The writer of Hebrews paints a powerful picture:

*"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." (Hebrews 12:1-2)*

Here are **three truths** for running this race:

#### 1. You Are Not the First – We have a Cloud of Witnesses

- People of faith have run before us—Abraham, Moses, Joseph, the prophets, the apostles.
- They faced **pain, division, betrayal, and suffering**, yet they remained faithful.
- They **did not receive everything they hoped for**, yet their obedience paved the way for God's promises.

**Illustration:** Moses led Israel faithfully, even though he never entered the Promised Land. Joseph dreamed God's dream, yet was sold by his own brothers.

**Modern examples:** William Wilberforce fought slavery, founded the Bible Society, and championed justice. Revd. John in this parish served faithfully during the vacancy. They are not just memories; they are part of the **cloud of witnesses cheering us on**.

#### 2. You Are Not Alone – Others Run With You

There are millions of Christians running this race today—facing persecution, challenges, and doubts, yet holding on.

But there are **distractions** too.

*"Throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles."*

To run well, **travel light**. Sometimes this means letting go of unhealthy traditions, habits, even relationships that keep us from God's mission.

**Illustration:** *Like an elephant walking while the dogs bark—keep moving forward. Don't let the barking distract you.*

### 3. You Can Finish Well – With Joy and Endurance

Running this race is not easy. Jesus Himself endured the cross *"for the joy set before Him."*

Joy does not mean **the absence of struggle**—it means **the presence of purpose**.

**Illustration:**

A man climbed a mountain and fell in the dark, hanging by a rope. He prayed, *"God, help me."* God said, *"Cut the rope."* Fear held him back for hours. Finally, he cut the rope—and landed safely just five feet below.

Sometimes, to trust God is to **let go and believe He will hold us**.

Paul says in **2 Timothy 4:7-8**:

*"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."*

This is not a race for a medal that fades—but for a **crown that lasts forever**.

### III. The Cost of Discipleship – Fire and Division (Luke 12)

Jesus says, *"I came to bring fire on the earth."* Fire **purifies, transforms, and disrupts**.

- Discipleship is not about playing safe—it's about **holy risk**.
- Speaking truth may divide families. Standing for justice may cost friendships.
- But **love does not mean silent approval**; it means **speaking truth with grace**, even when it hurts.

### Conclusion: How Do We Run This Race?

- **Look back:** The cloud of witnesses—they inspire us.
- **Look around:** We run together—we are part of a great community of faith.
- **Look ahead:** Fix your eyes on Jesus—the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

**Final Illustration:**

A tightrope walker carried his manager across Niagara Falls. Halfway, a strong wind shook them. The manager looked down, panicked, and almost fell. The walker said, *"Look up. Hold tight. Trust me."* They made it safely to the other side.

That's what Jesus says to us today:

*"Look up. Hold tight. Trust Me."*

**Run with perseverance. Finish well. The crown awaits.**

### Closing Verse:

*"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." (1 Corinthians 9:24)*