

RUN THE RACE—Looking to Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-2

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

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WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/looking-to-jesus/>

The Boston Marathon is one of the most famous races in our country. [here are a couple of pictures of a typical Boston race; here is a second one]. In 1980 Boston Marathon, Rosa Ruiz was declared the winner of the female category of the Boston Marathon. But after the race, suspicions grew because no one had seen her running during much of the 26.2 miles. After an investigation, she was stripped of her title. It is believed that she jumped into the race about a half-mile before the finish line.

Wouldn't life be simple if we could miss all the drudgery and hardship and just jump in for the happy-clappy fun parts? But God calls us to run the entire race. I firmly believe this generation is being road-tested as never before. How will we keep running? By looking to Jesus.

If you want to know how God cares about us during this pandemic and those who are suffering, look to Jesus. Check out Jesus in the gospels, healing people, loving people. This is how much God loves us. Look to Jesus.

Looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (NRSV), the author and finisher (KJV), the author and perfecter (NIV). The title given to Jesus as author (Greek, archepon) has many shades of meaning: author, president, pioneer, prince, leader, champion, forerunner, trailblazer, pathfinder.

This word is used twice in the Book of Acts, early in the church's life, both times by Simon Peter in a sermon. In one sermon, he says, "You killed the author of life" (Acts 3:15) and in the second he says, "You killed Jesus, but God raised and exalted him as Leader and Savior" (Acts 5:31).

So here is a lesson for followers of Christ today. We need to keep our language fresh. The early believers didn't just call Jesus Savior and Lord, they called him these other names. I know you've accepted Christ as Savior. Have you accepted him as your Leader? President? Prince? And this word trailblazer is one I use often at funerals. The picture of Jesus blazing the trail to everlasting life is a beautiful image.

But not just the pioneer. Also the perfecter of our faith. Perfecter, completer. Remember when Jesus was dying on the Cross? They heard him cry, "It is finished/completed" (John 19:30). He completes our faith. It means to fill it full. In other words, in Jesus, there is no disappointment.

Notice the flow our Bible text. We are to be aware of the cloud of witnesses but we are to look to Jesus. Keep your eyes on Jesus. The church will disappoint you. Others will let you down. But Jesus will never fail you.

I know some of you have been hurt or disappointed by the church, but in Jesus, there is no disappointment. Let me unpack that for a moment. Like some of you, I'm going through withdrawal symptoms without the beginning of the Major League Baseball season. So as a substitute, I've been watching Ken Burns' documentary history of the game. Bill Veeck once said baseball must be a great game. The owners haven't been able to kill it.

I'd like to turn that slightly and say Jesus Christ must be a great Savior. The church hasn't been able to kill him. The church will disappoint; other people will fail us. Institutions will fail to deliver. Money and possessions will let us down. Jesus will not. Looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.