

March 25, 2020

## Wednesday reflection on Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV)

“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, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

As Christians we tend to be discouraged when we look only at the circumstances in which we find ourselves, as Peter looks at the strong wind and fear sinks us (Matthew 14:30).

This text of the book of Hebrews gives us the key to move forward when our strength already seem to fade.

The author of Hebrews encourages us to think of the analogy of a marathon to understand the dynamics of Christian life. A marathon is an athletic endurance test that consists of running a distance of 26.2 miles.

Its origin lies in the myth of a Greek soldier Filípides, who in 490 BC would have died of fatigue after having run about 40 km from Marathon - place of battle - to Athens to announce victory over the Persian army. It was a great prestige to be the winner of such a competition, not only because the athlete demonstrated his extraordinary physical skills, but also because the champion was identified with that first hero in this unique history of Greece.

In our scripture today, we want to think about what inspires the runner. Today the runner's dream is to be applauded by the audience who recognize him/her as the best among his/her peers. Such a dream, acts as a powerful stimulant for each of the athletes even in the most difficult moments of the race.

The author of Hebrews uses Jesus as an excellent illustration of this. His peak time was in Gethsemane. There he confessed to his disciples his fear and the strong desire to "abandon the race". "My soul is distressed," he told them, "to the point of death." (Matthew 26:38) He turned away and concentrated on the intense battle that had taken hold of his heart, a battle between the desire to do the Will of God and the desire to do his own will.

He finally managed to do what it took to stay in the race: he faced fear, took his eyes off the imminent agony of death to fix his sight on something that fully inspired him.

This was the joy of the moment of re-encounter with God, and therefore he cried “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Luke 22:42. Our focus should be in something more inspiring than the circumstances in which we find ourselves today, whether adverse or good.

We must look at Jesus Christ, his life, his dedication, and his resurrection, and from there find the guide to run our Race against our own fears and confusion. We wonder, in what things do we have our eyes most of the time? What things tend to discourage us today? What goals inspire our lives in this circumstances of social distancing? What goals motivate and guide our discipleship in Christ Jesus? As a church what encourages us to move forward, how do we pursue the race?

We have a purpose: "Bringing Faith into life by Loving god and all people as he loves us." And I have a goal for you: "Grow as disciples of Jesus so that in our community there will be a space of communion, mission and restoration."

Let us put our eyes on Jesus and these goals that are the direction to which we must continue to run in this time as "First UMC of Hanford", which does not pretend to have the precise recipe or the infallible answers but does continue to point to Jesus Christ and his "Good News" as the answer for today's deepest questions and problems, as it was yesterday, and as we hope it will also be tomorrow". Let it be so.

"Be a Channel of God's Grace"  
Pastor Pablo D. Róvere