

“Strength for the Journey”
by Rev. Frances Savill
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1 Corinthians 9:24-27
Mark 9:2-9

How many of you have trained for a special event like a marathon?
How many of you have practised for a special concert, or event, where you had to work hard over an extended period of time to prepare?
Anyone prepare for exams?

Whether we are preparing for some kind of physical test of endurance or speed, or whether it is a musical event we are preparing for, or some special test or exam, there are times when we make a special effort and prepare in a special way.

And I don't know about you, but there are times in that preparation when I can go off the rails. I want a break, or I'm finding the preparations really challenging, and I think about quitting.

There are times I wonder if all the work and effort is worth it.
And its time to stand back a little and remember what the work is for, to catch my breath and focus again, and then get back to it.

This is the kind of moment that the Apostle Paul invites us into today, and part of what this day is about. Paul reminds us that we are in a kind of race in our life of faith. And what awaits us is an eternal reward, an imperishable wreath.

Do any of you have old trophies or ribbons at home?
You worked hard, and the trophy might be cool – but it's history – it was a moment in time. This race that we're a part of now, the prize is for eternity. The prize is ours today as experience life with Jesus; what Jesus called abundant life, and the prize goes on into eternity as we experience eternal life with Him.

And we want to encourage each other to continue in faith, to persevere in growing in Christ, knowing Jesus more and more, and being found in him, growing up into the fullness of Christ. We keep our eyes on the goal of knowing Christ, and the surpassing benefit of being found in Him.

This life can feel like a marathon, and sometimes we wonder what's the point again, where are we headed. But Paul encourages us to run this race with purpose, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, hearing the cheers of the great cloud of witnesses that are waiting for us at the finish line, and surround us as we run this race.

We have a moment to consider if we are on track and running in the right direction. Do we have the right priorities, is our focus God's mission in this world, and knowing Jesus and making him known?

We have a moment to stand back, and see where've been, to remember why we do the things we do, make any course adjustments, and then go back at it again.

We have a moment to marvel that we are in this race with wonderful people surrounding us, that we are part of a great team all working together, supporting one another, encouraging one another, serving a great and mighty God who calls us to keep going, to persevere, to keep the goal in sight.

Last Sunday we gave out the pledge packages – your best intentions toward giving to God's mission at this church.

Planning our giving and giving back to God of all God has given us, is part of our journey as God's people. We give in thankfulness, in hopefulness, giving ourselves to the mission that has been given to us by Jesus.

This is a good day to be together in worship, to consider how God has been with us in the year that is past and press on in the race that God has set before us as Calvin Presbyterian Church.

This is also communion Sunday.

We come to our Lord's table. We come remembering that we are loved and forgiven, healed and the gift that is ours in Jesus.

And just for a further word of encouragement we have our gospel reading – Peter, James and John, on the mountain with Jesus, and suddenly their eyes are opened and they see the truth of Jesus, God's beloved Son, they see his glory, they see the truth that Jesus is God in the flesh, God's son, and they are to listen and follow him.

They see that Jesus is the Way.

He will lead us to the finish line in victory and joy!

So let us press on together...

Prayer:

O Lord we set apart a few moments to look around us at this congregation, these people we serve with, and we give thanks to you for each one. We celebrate all you have done in this church, in us, and in the world through us.

We come to your table, Lord, remembering your gifts to us, fix our eyes on Jesus, that we might continue this journey together. Amen.