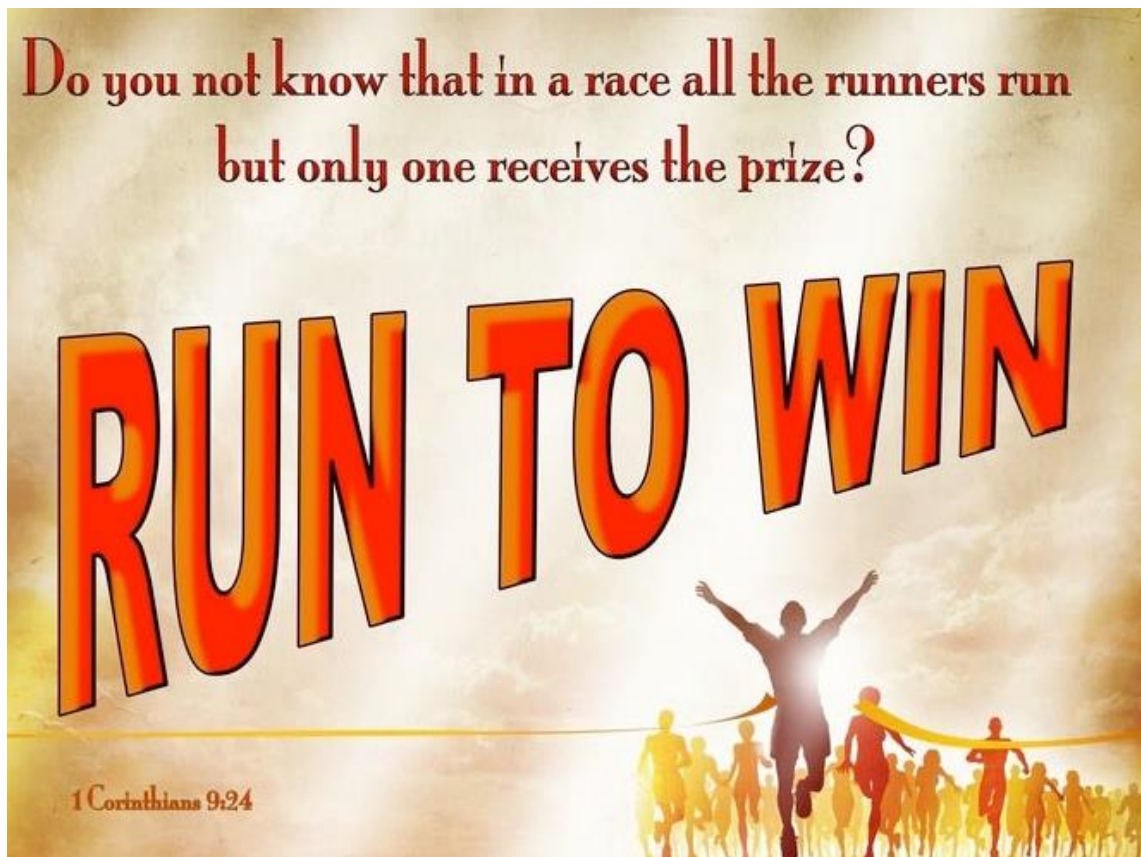


Order of Service- Run to reach the prize



Welcome: 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

Hymn:

Message 1: How do we reach the prize God has for us?

Have you ever run a race? When I was younger, I loved sport but I wasn't a great runner. Many people love running, some enjoy the weekly park run. As we start out running we start with short runs but as people get better the runs get longer and some people even run in marathons. Do you know how long a marathon is? A marathon is 26 miles and 385 yards. Wow! That is a long race.

When you complete a marathon you get a medal, when I completed the night walk I received a medal. I showed a friend my medal and they asked if I had won the race?

I answered, "Well, I wasn't the first runner to finish the race, but everyone who finished the race was a winner and received a prize." So, even though I didn't come in first, I finished the walk, and earning the medal is a great prize for completing the walk.

In the bible the Apostle Paul writes a letter telling the people in the church at the town of Philippi about the joy of being a follower of Jesus. He told them that being a follower of Jesus is like running a race and winning the prize that God has for us.

Paul explained, "I don't mean that I am exactly what God wants me to be. I haven't reached that goal. But I continue trying to reach that goal and make it mine. That is what Jesus wants me to do. I have a long way to go, but there is one thing I do: I forget about what is past and try as hard as I can to reach the goal that God has for me."

Do you know what the prize was that Paul was talking about? It is eternal life in heaven with Christ Jesus. That is the prize that Paul was looking forward to, and it is the prize that you and I look forward to as well.

Paul continued, "I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

As followers of Jesus you and I are running the same race that the Apostle Paul ran. When we finish the race, we will claim the same prize that Paul told the Philippians about—eternal life in heaven with Jesus Christ.

Hymn:

Prayer:

Notices & Offertory prayer

Reading Philippians 3:4-14

Hymn:

Message 2:

In writing to the Corinthians Paul said, "they that run in a race, run all but only one receives the prize, so run that you might obtain."

He is telling them to run to win. Give it all you've got.

As I read these verses I think of the London Marathon, the thousands who line up at the start to run the marathon. Many have no intention of winning the race. Many have no intention of even finishing the race. There are various goals.

Some only plan to run a few miles then drop out and put on the shirt that says, "I ran in the London Marathon." Some have as their goal just to finish the race, if they are an hour behind the winner, they don't mind, they only want to say that they finished the race. Some are running to raise money for charities which drives them to finish, and there are others who are determined to win the race.

That makes me ask how is it with us as we run this spiritual race?
How many of us are just running so that you can say that you ran? How many of us just hope that we will finish? How many of us are running to win?

Paul says, run to win, give it all you've got.

Paul also noted that God wants us to keep striving and practising so that we obtain what God wants..

Those who were in training to compete in the Olympics are very disciplined. They were willing to deny themselves the fancy foods. They were willing to sweat as they push their bodies to the limits. They were willing to make all kinds of sacrifices in order to win.

Paul said they were willing to deny themselves in order to win a corruptible crown.

In those days the winners in the olympics did not even get gold medals, but just a laurel wreath. The idea if they were willing to put their bodies through such pain to win a corruptible crown how much more should we be willing to sacrifice for an incorruptible crown.

At the end of Paul's letter to Timothy he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the Lord our righteous judge shall give to me and not only to me, but to all those who do love His appearing."

He is again drawing analogies from the sports world.

I have fought a good fight. In another place in 2 Tim he said, "If a man strive for the masteries he is not crowned unless he strive lawfully."

In the book of Hebrews it also made reference to racing.

Let us lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience this race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and the Finisher of our faith.

Those who trained for the olympics in those days used to tie weights on their bodies as they trained but when it came to the race, they stripped down completely so that they had nothing to impede their running. I think of all of the weights and garbage that we so often carry around in our spiritual lives that hinder us from winning the race.

In todays reading Paul speaks of his personal life before meeting Jesus. He was carrying around a lot of extra baggage, things that he was once proud of, but once coming to the knowledge of Jesus was happy to let them go. His goal now in life was live for Jesus. He realized that when the Lord found him, that the Lord had a plan for his life. His goal now was to accomplish that plan.

For each of us the only thing that really counts in life is to do that for which God created us. Most of our personal goals as are just for us, there accomplishment fulfils us momentarily. However the emptiest moment in a persons life comes the moment after he has accomplished the goals that he had set that he thought would bring him great satisfaction.

There is an old saying that is so true, "Success never means as much to the person who has attained it. It is the chase that is exciting".

We have only one life, it will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last. The most fulfilling moment in life is when you suddenly realize that God used you to accomplish His purpose. To realize that God's hand was on your life guiding you to fulfil his purpose.

So how can I do that for which God created me?

It says in our reading to forget those things which are behind. Reach for those things which are before you. Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God.

Again we see the runner at the end of the marathon, as they round the corner, they can see the tape stretched across the road, and the crowd is cheering them

on. they are aware that there are other runners nearby who are all pressing toward that goal, they dig deep for that extra kick that might win the race.

Press toward the goal. The reward is so great. "The high calling of God"

Prayer:

Hymn

Blessing