

## The Marathon is Finished

A Marathon is a tough race. It's twenty six tough miles of running. And, that's about 25 more miles than most of us could do this evening. It's a race that goes on and on. And, whenever I watch a Marathon on TV, the best part is the end. The best part is when the runner can cross the finish line and shout out "I'm done, It's over, it's finished."

In the marathon of Jesus' life, this evening we are at the finish line. Jesus says: "*It is finished.*". Now, as we read these words it's important for us to understand what he means by these words. In the greek, the word τετέλεσται means 'to bring something to its goal.' This leads us to a question. If Jesus is finished. With what is he finished? If Jesus is bringing something to its goal, just what exactly is he bringing to its goal? The writer answers that question with these words: "*Heb. 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*"

Jesus is done. He is done with the suffering. He is done with his work of salvation. And this evening we take a look at that marathon. We look at its start, its middle and its finish. The marathon of Jesus' life started with the incarnation. It started that moment when God took on human flesh. That is a very difficult thought for us to wrap our minds around. It is impossible for us to fathom just what exactly he gave up in leaving heaven to take on our flesh and blood. But we know why, don't we? It the joy that Jesus had in his heart. It was the joy that he had at being tempted in our place, suffering in our place, dying in our place, running the long road of this life in our place to take away our sins.

Jesus' Marathon is finished. It started with his incarnation. And it continued with his humiliation. When Jesus says "*It is finished*", a part of his life that was finished was his humiliation. His humiliation is not so much that Jesus was persecuted and humiliated. It was that Jesus, for a time, in order to save us from our sins gave up the use of divine power. I use the pencil illustration to my catechism students. I can pick up a pencil. I can drop it. And simply because I put it down, that doesn't mean that it doesn't belong to me. I can pick it up again anytime I want or need to.

It's the same with Jesus in the marathon of this life. Most of the time, he puts down the use of his divine power. And, why? That is the important question. Why does he lay aside his divine power? He lays it aside so that he can suffer, so that he can be tempted in every way just as we but never sin, so that he can run the long, agonizing race of this life in our place.

Fork there were no shortcuts. I remember running the mile in high school. And there always came that point after the second lap where I wanted more than anything to just cut to the left and run across the middle of the field. I wanted to run straight through the long-jumpers, and high jumpers and the javelin throwers straight to the finish line. But, I never did, because that's not how you run the race.

It was the same with the Marathon that Jesus ran. Jesus told Pilate that he could call down thousands of angels to fight for him. But that wasn't his Father's will. That's not how you run the race. And that's not how you win the race. For more than thirty years Jesus ran his race in our place hiding his divinity and suffering in his humanity.

That marathon of Jesus' earthly life is finished. It started with his incarnation. It continued with his humiliation. And now he arrives at the finish line with his exaltation. If Jesus' humiliation is him setting aside his divine power and glory, then it isn't too difficult for us to see his state of exaltation, is it? It is Jesus picking up his divine power and glory and using it.

And that his what Jesus is doing here. But, if you were there on that Good Friday—if you were there seeing a bloody, naked, crushed man, would it look like Jesus had just crossed the finish line? No, from our earthly point of view, it would have looked as if Jesus were disqualified long ago. Only losers get caught. Only losers get crucified. Only losers die. But, do not be mistaken. When Jesus said "*It is finished*", it was his first step over the finish line. It was his first step of glory. It was his first step of victory.

These three words in english and one word in greek mean so much to us. Because Jesus stepped over that finish line, we too will step over that finish line. In our weakness we will sin much in this life. We will be ashamed

that this is the way God chose for us to live on this life. We will be ashamed that we have to run the long road when it seems that so many other people get shortcuts to money, glory, honor and peace. We will yearn for the finish line when it is still off in the distance and blame God that we aren't there yet.

But, in faithfulness to us, Jesus will show you your sin and weakness. He will show you that the path you are on right now is the right path. He will teach you that God is using the suffering you are enduring right now for your good. And he will remind you that because he crossed that finish line, your sins are disqualified along with all the stabs of Satan and the accusations of your sinful nature.

So then, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us: *"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. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* For Jesus' marathon is finished. It started with his incarnation. It continued with his humiliation. It concluded with his exaltation. Amen.