

Acts 1:12-26 ESV

The Marathon of the Christian Life!

Sunday, May 17 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, May 18 at 7 PM

Seventh Sunday of Easter

The Day of Pentecost is 5/24 – An Important Day in the Church Year!

Introduction: Dear friends in Jesus Christ: Today is the **Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon**; it started at 7 AM; people had the option of running in the full, half, or 10K marathon. In other words: 26.2, 13.1, or 6.2 miles, *so a marathon is not a sprint but a test of perseverance*; when the mind is saying “go,” the body is saying “stop” – but to stop is to fail : (

The Christian life is also a marathon. There are many reasons to say “stop,” – like ♦wrong priorities, ♦not enough time, ♦the desire for money, ♦doubts about the Bible, ♦unbelieving family and friends, and ♦our lack of understanding about God’s work in our lives. However, in the middle of our minds saying “stop,” God is at work through Word and Sacrament to keep us saying “go!” So, while many others are stopping, *I praise the Lord that YOU are going with God! “...we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved” (Heb. 10:39 NIV).*

In this sermon we will touch on the topics of ➔prayer, ➔Scripture, and ➔seeking and following the will of God. Those things must be *high priorities* for those who desire to complete the marathon of the Christian life! As we run, Jesus said: *“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door” (Luke 13:24 NIV), so we keep focused on Him!* But the Bible also says that God *“who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6 NIV), so we ultimately know that God will enable us to finish in Christ!*

1. **Prayer:** ¹² **Then they** [those who had witnessed Jesus’ ascension] **returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.** ¹³ **And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James** [the 12 minus Judas Iscariot]. ¹⁴ **All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.** // So ALL with *one mind / one purpose* were *continuing* to pray. Let’s understand that *prayer* is only *one side* of the conversation; furthermore, if it is only one-sided; then it is only a monologue, not a dialogue! Sometimes I listen to Jimmy Fallon’s monologue, but I never talk back to him so *I have no relationship with him!* The Bible and prayer should always go hand-in-hand – like ♦peanut butter and jelly, ♦grace and faith, ♦Jesus and heaven! Do you want to complete the Christian life marathon? Then *daily listen to God through His Word and talk to Him in prayer!*
2. **Scripture:** ¹⁵ **In those days** [between Jesus’ ascension and the day of Pentecost] **Peter stood up among the brothers** (the company of persons was in all about 120) **and said,** ¹⁶ **“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.** ¹⁷ **For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”**
 - a. ¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong

he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) // That field was bought with the thirty pieces of silver which was paid to Judas for betraying Jesus (Zech. 11:12-13; Mt. 25:15; 27:3, 9).

- b. ²⁰ **“For it is written in the Book of Psalms [69:25; 109:8], “May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and “Let another take his office.’²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us--one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”** // So Jesus’ followers studied the Scriptures **to understand the situation – that one of the 12 betrayed Jesus and needed to be replaced, and to know how to proceed – that the replacement needed to be a man who had been with Jesus from His baptism through His ascension.** What about us, **do we know how to run the marathon of the Christian life?** God has told us in His Word, *so let us read it every day and gather for corporate study every week!*
3. **Seeking and Following Jesus’ Will:**²³ **And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.²⁴ And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which**

Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

- The qualified candidates were Joseph and Matthias. When positions are important, *it’s good to have significant qualifications!*
- They sought to replace Judas who **“turned aside to go to his own place.”** Dr. Kretzmann wrote: **“As the words read, they may refer as well to the place of reward as to that of punishment. The disciples very properly leave the decision in this grave matter to the great Judge above, and do not themselves pronounce the condemnation...”** (NT 1:537) Jesus wants us to be ever-ready to tell the good news, but, for all who reject, Jesus will tell the bad news on the day of His return!
- They sought the Lord’s will through lots. The Bible says: **“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD”** (Prov. 16:33 ESV). So it wasn’t necessary to *test* or *question* the candidates; instead, they simply asked the Lord to show them His choice. The Lord’s will is always best; *let us know it and follow it always!*

Conclusion: So **are you feeling winded, are you ready to give up – to go the way of the world, to be separated from God and His eternal blessings?** Though the race can be long and difficult, **let us ever-rely on our great God to carry us through to paradise!** And all God’s people said: **Amen!**