|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pressing On Toward the Goal**  *Promise: Run without despair because we have been promised the prize* Pastor Timothy A. Duesenberg Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; Luke 20:9-20 (Fifth Sunday in Lent), 4/6/25)  *But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* – v. 13b-14  **Lead In –** It is not a good sign when there is no spiritual striving, struggling, and discipline in our lives. And we can’t just pass it off by thinking that the lack of such straining is because we are relying on God’s grace, His works, and not our own. There most certainly can be peace in our souls because our salvation depends on God’s grace, but the Christian life and pilgrimage is anything but a walk in the park. As Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, “The way is hard that leads to life.” And the Apostle Paul is making that abundantly clear in our Second Reading this morning…   1. **The Christian Life Is Compared to a Race** 2. **Apostle Paul Understood Grace As Well As Anyone**    1. Our best efforts amount to rubbish …    2. Law/gospel; works/faith, merit/grace, an SOS situation!    3. Relying on our efforts results in pride or despair… 3. **What You Need to Know About the Race of Faith**    1. The goal is the resurrection to eternal life…    2. It is not optional for the Christian, it must be run…    3. Laying aside sin, enduring, and looking to Jesus… 4. **Learning from the Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare**    1. The summary of the familiar Aesop’s fable…    2. None of us deserves to be in the race    3. None of us is capable of the goal…    4. We are expected to remain in the race…   **Final Word –** We did not earn a spot on the Team of Life and in the race. But the champion in this race, the only one to reach the goal, is the coach and has elected us to be on the Team and has decided that we are to run in the race. It requires that we lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. It requires running with endurance. It requires looking to Jesus and patterning our lives after him, as did the Apostle Paul. And although our Lord has already reached the goal and captured the prize on our behalf, we can’t simply leave the race and walk away or decide to nap instead. Instead, we strain against our own sinful nature, against the world and the devil, even while our soul is at peace under God’s promises and grace.  **1Co 9:24** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.  **He 12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.  **Ga 5:7** You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?  **1Ti 4:7-8** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. | **Philippians 3:4b-14 ESV**  *Straining Toward the Goal*  4bIf anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless. 7But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.  12Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.  **Is 64:6** We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.  **Ro 3:21-22** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.  **Ep 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.  **Ph 2:12-13** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.  **Mt 24:12-13** And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to the end will be saved.  **Ro 6:3-5** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.  **1Co 15:57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. |