

Message Series: **Forward: following Jesus for a lifetime, together**

Message Title: **Forward: with Enduring Faith**

Scripture Source: **Hebrews 12:2-3**

Date: Sunday, November 22, 2020

Teacher: John Garner

A Story of Endurance

Endurance is defined as "holding out against, sustain without impairment or yielding...to bear with patience, to continue to last..."

Sometimes it is hard to continue following Jesus, on his terms. Sometimes the pressure to compromise can be overwhelming, sometimes the disappointments of life can be soul crushing and we are left wondering...how can I continue on this path of Christ following?

Continue: *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him..."* Colossians 2:6-7. Let that phrase 'continue to live in him' take root in your mind. Especially the action verb 'continue.' That is the language of 'forward.' Continue to be obedient to Jesus day to day, continue to trust his promises and serve his purposes each day as fully as possible.

Can you recall a time when moving forward was extremely difficult for you? Maybe you are in that time now, today. Illustrate:

Motivated to Continue: Hebrews 12:2-3

In my years at Redeemer, the enduring faith of a number of people, some of you, has been used of God to humble, instruct, challenge and encourage me to face hardships with wise perspective and to cultivate an enduring faith that is mindful of others and their needs. Thank you!

The writer of this letter knows that the pressure to defect from a singular faith in Jesus is strong. And so, he challenges them to 'run with endurance' by considering the example of Jesus.

Let's delve into this passage with a teachable mind and tender heart, ready to apply truth to our very real situations.

Motivating Reality # 1: Jesus endured the cross for our sake. Hebrews 12:2

Jesus endured unimaginable suffering...alienation from God the Father because of our sin, my sin and your sin. Read Matthew 27:45-46. A cry of profound pain. An echo of angst filled the dark skies surrounding Golgotha. Jesus endured the just wrath of a holy, righteous and perfect God, paying in full the penalty our sins merited. No wonder the writer strongly and simply directs the reader to *"Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* Hebrews 12:3 Think about how and what Jesus endured to provide forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God the Father, a purpose for life and the promise of a new heaven and new earth. Jesus endured verbal abuse, physical torture, relational betrayal and the shame of a crucifixion. I treasure the Message rendering of this verse. Take these words in, humbly and thoughtfully. "When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls."

Motivating Reality # 2: A Mature Perspective can Steady Us in the Face of Hardship: Hebrews 12:4-5

The writer strongly reminds us of the importance of seeing things accurately and seeing God at work in us, refining our characters and deepening the roots of faith, hope and love.

illustrate:

Motivating Reality # 3: Suffering and Hardship will one day be done. Hebrews 12:2

Jesus has triumphed over sin, Satan and death. The complete fulfillment of that triumph awaits us. Consider Revelation 21:3-5

How Then Should We Live?

If we consider these realities and take them to heart and think and act accordingly, what will that look like and sound like in your life, my life, our life together in church family?

What **Responses** will enable us to move forward, following Christ faithfully, beginning today?

#1: Honesty about our suffering and hardship; not denial, not cursing the pain, not minimizing or overstating; but rather as honest and accurate stating of our reality as possible, acknowledging that pain can distort our perspective and that is why we need a trusted friend or two to help us sort things out.

What do you need to be honest about and name? Disappointment? Relational betrayal or harsh treatment? Personal failure and haunting regrets? Physical suffering, financial setbacks? Emotional struggles that refuse to be wished or ignored away? What 'sears your soul'?

#2: Acknowledge the inevitability of suffering and hardship. John 16:33 And the certainty of ultimate triumph, engaged in the presence of a good and loving God who will vanquish every hardship and source of suffering.

#3: Choose to endure day to day. We do have a choice friends. I don't say this glibly. I know how harrowing and painful certain experiences can and will be. Yet, the choice to continue is still before us. How do we continue and move forward with Jesus? Prayer. Psalm 62:8. The sustaining grace and strength of Christ. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, we are infused with the power of Christ by his strong and wise Spirit. And, how we need a few trusted and mature Christ followers who can help us stay the course, who can pray for us when our lips are silent, and our souls are confused and weary.

2 Corinthians 7:5-7. We endure, sometimes a moment at a time, being strengthened by the Scriptures, the promises of God, the character of God revealed to us.

#4: Care and serve others with wisdom and compassion. Be mindful of others. Philippians 2:5-7. Others matter. Their hardships and sufferings, ask God to know how to be a supportive presence along the path.

Forward: with enduring faith...focused on Jesus, strengthened by his Spirit, traveling with a few like hearted people of faith. God has given us every resource we need. What resources do you need to access today, to follow Jesus for lifetime, which begins today? Be as specific as possible! And then, step forward. Continue.

Questions for Personal Reflection and Table Talk Conversation

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CONNECT:

What truths/experiences have enabled you to move forward in the face of hardships?

ENGAGE:

Read Hebrews 12:1-4

1. We are called to run the Christian faith for a lifetime. In Paul's letter to the Colossians he writes about 'continuing' in the faith. Reflect upon Colossians 2:6-7. What stands out to you from these Scriptures?

2. Three Motivating Realities to Follow Jesus for a lifetime.

#1: Jesus endured the cross for our sake. Hebrews 12:2-3

Think carefully and thoughtfully about his example. Why does the writer want us to consider the suffering of Jesus?

#2: A Mature Perspective Can Steady Us in Hardships: Hebrews 12:4-5

We need to think as accurately about hard times as we can. What makes it hard to do that?

#3: Suffering and Hardship will one day end: Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 21:3-5

How can an eternal perspective help in the here and now challenges? What have you learned?

In light of these realities mean to inspire us to action, what responses are we wise to make?

#1: Honesty about suffering and hardship. What do you need to be honest and candid about?

#2: Acknowledge the certainty of suffering AND the reality of an end to suffering one day.
John 16:33

#3: Choose to endure, one day, one moment at a time. With help from God and trusted faith friends. Consider 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, 2 Corinthians 7:5-7, Psalm 62:8.

#4: Care and serve others along the path, in their hardship, helping them endure with hope. Consider 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Forward, by choice, with purpose and enduring faith, with the help of God's Spirit and God's people. Forward, today.