

Sunday November 15, 2020

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Ross L)

Welcome this morning. It's good to be worshipping together. Many of you will remember or may have heard of a farmer named Cliff Young, who, in 1983, showed up at the start of an ultramarathon race from Sydney to Melbourne. Cliff was 61 years old and wore overalls and work boots. To everyone's shock, Cliff wasn't a spectator. He picked up his race number and joined the other runners.

The press told him, "You're crazy, there's no way you can finish this race." To which he replied, "Yes I can. See, I grew up on a farm where we couldn't afford horses or tractors, and the whole time I was growing up, whenever the storms would roll in, I'd have to go out and round up the sheep. We had 2,000 sheep on 2,000 acres. Sometimes I would have to run those sheep for two or three days. It took a long time, but I'd always catch them. I believe I can run this race."

When the race started, Cliff was quickly left behind, but, as the race went on, while others rested, Cliff kept his focus, persevered and kept shuffling along. He gradually caught, passed them, eventually won and a legend was created. Athletes come in all shapes and sizes, but winning athletes have a number of things in common. They do the hard yards in preparation for the race. They focus on the goal, press on to the end and persevere even when their body wants to give up.

Paul likens the Christian life to an athlete in a running race. There is a prize to be won. It requires hard preparation, focus, and perseverance to the end. The athlete does it for a trophy that will rust and fade, but we do it to receive the goal of faith which is Jesus Christ. Let us pray...

I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever' Father, creator of all things. You are near us all the time. In the rising and setting of the sun, in the power of the wind and the rain, in the beauty of the plants and flowers that surround us. We see your love in sending Jesus to take our place, his servanthood and obedience to you. We are in awe at the sacrifice you made. Thank you.

Our hearts and lives are transformed by your Holy Spirit. Your still, small voice, comforts, guides, and calls us. We want to praise and thank you. Each day you are with us, through good times and bad, in our travels and work, you are with us, in decisions we must make, You give us all that we need and the wisdom to make those decisions. Help us to acknowledge that you are a constant part of our lives throughout every day. At the end of each day you are with us, giving us rest and peace. Thank you that we can lay our fears at your feet and rest in you.

You see our failings and forgive us. We want to acknowledge that we are often so busy that we don't notice you around us, forgive us. We want to acknowledge that we focus on ourselves and don't put Jesus in his rightful place in our lives, forgive us. We want to acknowledge that we don't quieten our hearts to hear you, forgive us. We want to acknowledge that we rely on our own thoughts to make decisions, and not look to you for guidance, forgive us. We want to acknowledge that we look to worldly solutions to give us rest and peace, forgive us. Help us to live lives that reflect your love, that don't take you for granted. Transform us, through your Spirit, and empower us to serve you, today and all days. Amen

Song – All creatures of our God and King

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUZD0hgtSgE>

Song – Worthy of all praise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAWcCOryYAw>

Bible Reading – 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 (NIV)

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

²⁴ 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. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Announcements

- **Kids Church** is now being run parallel to the 10:30am service. This means that we can now fit in another 30 people to our morning services. Any questions please speak to either Suzie or Stephen.
- **Morning Tea/Supper.** Please stick around for this time of fellowship
- **Face masks.** Currently the NSW State government strongly recommended that people wear Face masks if they attend places of worship but stopped short from saying you had to wear face masks. We would strongly recommend that you do wear Face masks in church at the current time. There will be some washable facemasks available from the back of the Church if you would like one.
- **Prayer meetings.** Don't forget we now have just one prayer meeting for the church, each Monday at 7m on ZOOM. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89793950885>
- **Focus for October – Reaching Out.** A great way of reaching out to someone is simply having a meal with someone. Invite them or their family around for dinner. Have lunch with a workmate. Have coffee and cake with someone you haven't spent much time with recently. And ask them about themselves, how they are going, what their plans are for Christmas. And use the opportunities that come from this conversation to share your own life and faith Can you pray for opportunities to share your faith into the future?
- **Sermon Series** – AM services. Next week Stephen is starting a sermon series on unusual images of the Church. They will include the following

○ 15/11	A team of athletes	1 Corinthians 9
○ 22/11	An embassy of ambassadors	2 Corinthians 5
○ 29/11	A worksite of builders	1 Corinthians 3
○ 5/12	A ship of fools	2 Corinthians 11
○ 12/12	A pile of rubbish	1 Corinthians 4
○ 3/1	A persistence (or embarrassment!) of parents	1 Thessalonians 2
- **Sunday School Presentation** will look a little different to previous years. It will be held on Sunday 6th December after the Church service outside next to the hall. More details to come.
- **Church Camp.** Session has decided not to go away next year for the church camp. At this stage we are planning to have a teaching weekend based in Charlestown in its place. More details to come.

- **Gingerbread House** is going to look a little different this year. The plan is to invite a friend to your own home and make the gingerbread houses together sometime leading up to Christmas. All you need to do is purchase the house kit from Linda Small 0422 014 250 for \$26 each (gluten free options available) and purchase your own lollies to decorate. There will be a short gospel talk that you can stream/listen to while you are making the house. You will be encouraged to post a photo of your houses on facebook and the aim is to try and invite your guest to a Christmas Day/Eve service. For more details please speak to Linda.
- **Hunter Bible Teachers Workshop.** Wednesday 18th November – 19th November 8:30 – 3:30. Simon Manchester will be talking to us about the book of Titus. For more details go to the Hunter Gospel Ministries Website.
- **Wee Waa Hampers.** Last year, our Church donated 30 Christmas hampers plus cash donations to our sister Church at Wee Waa. This year, we would like to do a follow-up gesture along the same lines, as there are still families in need within the district. So any donations of Christmas cheer can be left at the Church. Also cash donations can be made through the plate or by electronic banking, but please remember to mark it “Wee Waa”. All donations are to be in by Sunday, December 6 for delivery to Wee Waa the following weekend. For any enquiries, ring Ean Sutton on 0419 984 948

Kids Talk – Quizworx

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1J6jWkzaX-LO1OyBc0A7u0N2ii64_NePS

Song – All I need is Christ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugGucoYMMKg>

Prayer

Father God, we praise you for your mercy and power, and that it pleases you for us to bring our prayers before you. We don't deserve to come into your presence, yet through your wonderful love in Jesus, we can call upon your Name and ask that in our lives, Your will be done.

We pray particularly today for Turkey, and for the small number of Christians and missionaries working there. We pray that you would continue to call people to yourself through the New testaments translated into their language, visions and dreams. We pray for our friend Blake who is going to Turkey as a missionary and for the political situation, that you would provide for the Christians in an uncertain economic time. We pray that the discrimination shown to them in the workplace and in society and the pressure to serve Islam would not discourage them in their walk with you. Please provide places where they can worship you without fear and that during COVID they can learn about You through the internet. We think of 3rd world countries and the pressure on their health systems and economies with loss of tourism and trade. Please help the more developed countries assist them with aid and resources, and for NGO aid organisations to be able to work effectively without corruption or warlords diverting the much needed resources. We pray for the refugees often caught in the crossfire, with so little and powerless to find safety, may they find their strength in you.

We pray for kid's church and Suzie and the leaders as they settle into a new routine. Thanks that we can meet face to face and thanks for the Quizworks resources that teach about you in such an entertaining way. We pray for chaplains in schools, the defence forces, and in our sporting organisations. May they show your grace and power to those who would not usually come to a church. Help them to be bold and challenge people to turn to you, that they may be saved.

We pray for those journalists covering the religious freedom debate in Australia, that they would report fairly and rethink their personal prejudices against religious organisations and Christians. Make them see the new intolerance they are promoting. Help discussion to focus on the sort of country we are becoming, no longer a Christian country, but self absorbed rather than committed to the common good. Help us to be

united as a country rather divided over politics, and please be with our Prime minister as he leads at a difficult time.

In all these things, we ask that your perfect will be done, as it is in Heaven. Through the Lord Jesus, Amen

Bible Reading – Philippians 3:12-4:1 (NIV)

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained. ¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

⁴ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Sermon – A team of Athletes <https://youtu.be/xzOwZHQP6Fc>

If you know anything about me, you will know I love my sport. I love playing it, watching it, reading about it and talking about it. I once did a men's evangelistic talk where I shared with the men present my two great loves – sport and Jesus. And afterwards someone asked me how come Kaylene and the kids didn't make it into the top two? Whoops!

Slide 2

My life has been surrounded by sport from the beginning up until now. My parents played cricket and netball into their late fifties. Our weekends revolved around getting to and from sporting events. We were taught the value of sport and being good sports. Growing up my shelves were littered with sporting trophies. And I still have them all today. Except they are in a box in a cupboard on the top shelf, under the stairs. Unmoved from when they came off the removalist truck almost 6 years ago.

Slide 3

But I do have one trophy in my study. It shows the pinnacle that I rose to when I was young and fit. Runner up in the Champions of Champions competition in 1991. Part of the second best amateur soccer team in the State of NSW. The second best! That's pretty impressive isn't it? Or at least it seemed impressive at the time. But today it seems a bit lame. Small. Did I really put all that time and effort into achieving this? It's not much of a prize is it?

And the apostle Paul wants to ask us all are we doing something similar with our lives today? Putting all our effort into a prize that frankly isn't worth it. Living for something that will not last. Working hard, striving with all our might for a prize that in a few year's time will be placed in a box never to see the light of day? Is that us? Is that you and me? Are we really chasing the best prize on offer today?

Over the next few weeks we are going to look at a short sermon series on 5 pictures of the Christian life. Five unusual illustrations that Paul uses to show us what each of us should be doing to make the most of

the salvation that God has given to us in Christ. And today we are looking at the first illustration. We are athletes competing in the race of our lives. Actually we are a team of athletes competing for the prize to end all prizes.

Slide 4

1. Prize (verse 24)

²⁴ *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.* ²⁵ *Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."*

Paul starts off by reminding us to keep our eyes on the prize. In an athletics race, there might be many runners but there is only one winner. You see some don't reach the starting line, others drop out in the midst of the race, other's finish but end up empty handed. But one gets the prize. Only one gets the prize.

Now don't forget the context of what Paul is saying these words. He is writing to the Corinthians in about 52 AD. And they would have known all about the Olympic Games which happened every 4 years in Athens. In fact Corinth held the Isthmian Games every two years and that Games would have been happening when Paul ministered in Corinth in 51 AD. And so what was the prize for winning in the Isthmian Games? A pine wreath or a stick of celery.

Slide 5

Imagine that? The reward for winning the 100m running race or the marathon is a stick of celery. That's not going to age well in a box under the stairs, is it? And that's the whole point. Paul is saying make sure the prize is worth all the effort. Make sure at the end of the day it is more useful than my trophy for coming second in the State!

And of course the prize that God puts before the Christian is much, much better than a stick of celery. Better than a cheque for a million dollar. Better than an Olympic medal. It is a crown that lasts forever. It is a reward that goes on into eternity. It is a gift that keeps on giving. It is a worthy conclusion to the race of life.

Slide 6

And that prize is not just for the winner. Paul says it but ***we do it to get a crown that will last forever***. It is not just handed out to the individual but to the team that wins. You see the picture here is not that of you and me, the individual Christian competing in the race of our lives. It is of a team of athletes, a Church full of Christians. We want every one of us to get this crown that will last forever.

Slide 7

There is a famous race in the Olympic trials of 1956. In it the young gun Ron Clarke and the older hero John Landy were facing off to race the 800m in a quality field. Clarke got off to a great start and was leading the race when he tripped and Landy was so close behind that he could do nothing but land on Clarke and his spikes dug into Clarke's left shoulder.

Slide 8

Landy could have gone on, but he was concerned that his younger competitor was really hurt so he stopped to help him. He picked him up and heard Clarke say "I'm alright, Go! Run!" Which is exactly what Landy did. He was 35 metres behind the back, but he caught them. He ended up winning the race and receiving the prize due to the Australian champion.

You see we as the Church are a team of athletes. And the prize is not in winning, it is in finishing. We are called to stop and pick up those who have fallen. We are there to cry with those who are crying. We are there to hold the hand of those who are hurting. And we can do that in such a way that we still get the prize and so might the one who has fallen. We are not alone, we are in this together. We are a team of athletes who in gaining the prize will

Slide 9

2. Prepare (verse 25)

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” The athlete needs to train, he needs to **prepare**, he needs to ready himself for the game, the match, the race.

In the Isthmian Games, all competitors had to swear an oath before Zeus that they had been in strict training for 10 months prior to the commencement of the Games. That commitment involved more than just training on the track or in the gym, it involved a disciplined lifestyle with respect to diet, temperance, and drink.

Slide 10

Today a top level sportsman must involve himself in training, in preparation, if he is to keep at the top level of performance. Even when I used to play soccer or cricket I would train once or twice a week at a minimum in order to be at my best. Yet think of someone like Kate Campbell who rises and is at the pool by 4:30 am each morning. She finishes after a couple of hours, has a balanced breakfast, and then off to the gym. A remedial massage, a rest and then back in the pool for the afternoon.

I have a nephew who for the last few years has entered into the Australian Fitness Model competition. I would put up his photo on the screen but it might drive the ladies wild! But he will count every calorie. Remove every speck of fat. Train hard. Go to bed early. Avoid parties and alcohol. Stay no to many things. Basically he put his life on hold to win the prize.

Now the training is two fold, both positive and negative. Positively it is there to develop stamina, strength and skill. Negatively it seeks to reduce the liabilities which result from unhealthy lifestyles or over indulgent eating habits. And that is true of the athlete & doubly true of the Christian. If the athlete will put all that training and effort into a stick of celery, into a medal, a trophy, a winners cheque how much more should we put in for our prize?

Slide 11

We too must be prepared to work, to train, to ready ourselves. This will involve positively learning more about the Christian life and the God we serve by reading the Bible, by seeking the strength and the stamina we need by spending time in prayer and learning to trust in God’s Holy Spirit. But negatively we need to learn what to do when we fail, or fall down, or get flabby, by meditating on the great Christian themes of forgiveness, assurance, the gospel of the Lord Jesus. If we fail to do these things, we will not be fully prepared when the hurdles and difficulties of the race comes.

That very thing has been the focus of our Church throughout October. So can I ask you how much training did you do? I suspect most of us did nothing! “I know all that stuff about the Christian life. I don’t need to sharpen my skills or grow in my faith, I have too many other more important things in my life.” Well do you? More important than the Christian walk, the race of our lives? Are you chasing after that stick of celery, that trophy you will put in a box and forgetting that God is calling us all to prepare well. To put in the hard yards behind the scenes. To discipline yourself. To get rid of the sin that so easily entangles.

Slide 12

3. Prize, Prepare and thirdly Pinpoint. (Verse 26)

Yet for the athlete isn’t just about training. The race must begin and they need to focus, they need to pinpoint where they are going. That is why Paul says *“Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.”* **Pinpoint.**

The athlete doesn’t run aimlessly, they know where they are going. So they set themselves up on the starting blocks with an aim, a focus. Carl Lewis, the six time gold medal winner, would go into each race with the same mindset. Forget the crowd, forget others. *“Just get out of the blocks, run your race. Stay relax. Just run your race. Channel your energy. Focus.”*

Focus. If you focus on the goal and where you are going, you are more likely to get there. So you don't run aimlessly, you don't waste your punches, madly beating the air, no you know where you are going, you know what you are doing and you know why you are doing it.

If the athlete knows what his aim is, how much more should the Christian know? When we wake up each morning, we should ask ourselves what does God want me to do today? What is my aim, what am I focusing on? Am I just a breadwinner? Is my goal to be a good mother? Do I want to impress someone? Do I want to be noticed? Or do I want to please my heavenly Father? Do I want to respond to his grace, to his forgiveness, to his glorious love, by serving him in everything I do?

The Christian is like an athlete, he shouldn't be running aimlessly. But the Church is like a team of athletes, together we should be helping each other readjust our aims. And that's what we do when we meet together in small groups or in a Church service. We take our focus away from the world and back on to God. We think about His word and not just the opinions of our neighbours. We pinpoint our focus off just money, family, relationships, sport and put it onto Jesus. In the Church we have people who will coach us, mentor us and run alongside us. And we are called to coach, mentor and compete alongside others as well.

Slide 14

4. Prize, Prepare, Pinpoint and fourthly Press On.

Listen to Paul's words in Phil 3:12-4 *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me... Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*

I press on. I strain forward, I strive. The athlete extends every fibre of his or her body, they pursue their goals with everything they have. This is a real contest. There is no time for those who are half hearted. This is no time to abdicate your responsibilities. You can't compete from the comfort of the stands or from the couch in front of the TV.

Slide 15

Instead there needs to be a single minded zeal, where the athlete forgets the past and concentrates on the present. She forgets the crowd and what they are doing & concentrates on the task at hand. They forgets the pain and reaches out to the prize. The athlete knows that no one else will win the race for them, they must stand up and press on.

So how more is that true of the Christian? We need to forget about what the crowd thinks, let our neighbours think what they like. We need to ignore the cries that we are mad or silly, we know this is all worth it! We need to put aside our past failures, the times we let others down, when we were lazy or sinful or unforgiving, God has forgiven us for that. We forget what is behind us and take hold of what Christ has in his hand for us, the prize of eternal life.

Slide 16

We press on. You remember John Owen's famous line? *"Be killing sin or sin will be killing you."* Paul is saying to us the Christian life is a battle, it is a battle not against the other runners but a battle within ourselves, against sin. Don't think you can rest on your laurels. Don't think you have done enough in the past. For the Christian life is like a boxing match.

Slide 17

Temptations will come to us like a flurry of punches. All around us there are bright lights luring us away from God's ways. So don't give in to sin. Press on in the life of holiness. It is not a futile fight. So don't give up. You will not end up on the losing side because Christ Jesus has already earned you the prize. So fight on. Press on to win the prize.

Slide 18

Press on to finish the race. Many of you know the story of Eric Liddell, the British runner who refused to compete in the race for which he had trained, the 100 yards sprint in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, because as a Christian believer, he would not break the Sabbath. And instead, he entered another race, the 400 yards, for which he had not trained really very much at all.

When the starter's pistol fired, he came out of the starting blocks with all the strength he could muster. He ran the race flat out. He actually covered the first 200 yards inside the world record that his rival, Harold Abrams, had set the day before in his 200 yards' race.

But could he keep up that pace? Well yes he could. Actually he finished the second 200 yards even faster than the first 200 yards, racing home, breaking the world record and collecting the Olympic gold medal.

Slide 19

When he was asked later what happened, he famously said, "The secret of my success over 400 meters is that I ran the first 200 meters as fast as I can. Then for the second 200 meters, with God's help, I run faster." With God's help, he ran faster. God enabled him to press on. God got him to the finished line. God ultimately won him the prize.

Slide 20

5. Prize, Practice, Pinpoint, Press On and Persevere (verse 27)

"Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

You see Paul was concerned that he might not reach the finishing line. That he might be disqualified from the race. He saw that others had wandered away. He remembers that others had failed to complete the course through wrong ambition, an unwillingness to pay the cost of being a Christian, through discouragement or apathy, they may have been fooled by wrong teaching or a moral weakness. He knew that not everyone would complete the race. And he didn't want to join them.

For not all athletes finish the race. Not all Churchgoers make it to the end. There is a high drop out rate of those who seem to be Christians. My own Dad, used to be a lay preacher, now his faith is nowhere. My oldest sister once went along to youth group, my younger brother used to lead a Bible Study but neither of them are moving forward in their faith.

But I actually don't think that Paul is talking about losing his salvation here. He more than anyone knew it was about God's grace. That God would keep a hold of him to the end. But what Paul is worried about is that all his efforts in preaching, sacrificing, caring, disciplining could come to nothing if towards the end of his life he went off the rails. Others might not make it to heaven if they were following him and he eventually led them astray. And so the prize that he might have received will go to another who helped these people in the faith.

Slide 21

Because the race of the Christian life is the most important thing in life. And we want to ensure we persevere until the very end. For our sakes and for the sake of others. We are not just an athlete competing in this race we are a team of athletes striving together.

So can I ask you how are you running the race at the moment? Do you ever think of the prize waiting for you eternity or are you living your life for the prize of a bigger house, a stable family, an overseas holiday, a healthier body or a stack of trophies? Are you putting in the hard yards now or are you coasting towards the finish line? Is holiness a struggle for you? Is ministering to others costing you dearly? Are you as committed to the Christian life, to the faith of others as you were in the past?

Slide 22

In the words of preacher David Strain, *"We're on the second 200 of our 400 meters' race. Some of us actually are nearer the finish line, if we're honest, then we are the starter's line. Well, how are you running? How are you running? (Slide 23) You ran well the first 200 yards, with all of your might for Jesus' sake. Do you think now you can cruise home, coast home? Are you seeking to coast your way into glory? Has zeal for Jesus grown dull? Have you decided you've done enough; it's someone else's turn to serve now? There is no retirement in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. You know that, right? There is no slackening of the pace. Liddell ran his race flat out until he crossed the finish line. How are you running your race?"*

In the words of Eric Liddell are you running faster in the second half of the race because God is helping you to run faster? Because you are so thankful for the prize that Jesus Christ has already run for you? Because you don't want to be disqualified from the race nor do you want others to drop out because they have seen our zeal for Jesus has slackened?

Slide 24

Ron Clarke, after that fall became one of the great middle distance runners of all time, but due to one thing or another he never won an Olympic Gold Medal. In 1966 he was invited to compete in Prague by Emil Zatopek, the great Czech runner of the 1950's. He ran and had a wonderful time with Zatopek and really enjoyed their time together. At the end of their time together Zatopek took Clarke to the airport, they walked past the Communist guards, right up to the steps of the plane, they shook hands and Zatopek whispered a few words and pressed a tiny package into his palms and then he was gone.

Clarke was dismayed. What had he been given? Drugs? Contraband? A message for the free world? Microfilm perhaps? He sat in the seat perspiring determined not to look at it until he got back on earth and safety. But half way across the English Channel he couldn't resist any longer. He looked cautiously over his left and right shoulders, got out the package and slowly opened it. It gleamed back at him. Slide 25 It was Zatopek's gold medal from the 1952 Olympics, newly inscribed. *To Ron Clarke, July 19, 1966.*

In the end, the prize for the race of life will be given to us like that. By grace. And that should make us even more determined in the race of life. Each one of us should race as to win the prize. We should be well prepared, well focused, press on and persevere. Not because we will then deserve the crown that will last forever. But so that everyone can see that it is not I that are doing these things but that Christ within me is doing these things.

Slide 26

Remember the words of Eric Liddell, *"The secret of my success over 400 meters is that I run the first 200 meters as fast as I can. Then for the second 200 meters, with God's help, I run faster."*

Song: O Church Arise <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x63cVewXAeg>

Song: O Jesus I have promise <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQFLOCoYaPI>

Benediction

But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead,¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Morning Tea

Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don't want to be just consumers of Church, we want to be a part of the family of God. So why not give one or two people a call. Who might your ring now?