

Running to Jesus

Opening Text: Mark 6:30-34, 55-56

Recap: As we saw last week, this is the story of a crowd with an appetite for the presence of Jesus. They were hungry not for physical bread but for the Bread from Heaven, Jesus. Jesus responds to that kind of hunger, He responds to appetite, not apathy. No wonder there were such demonstrations of healing and the power of God.

These people made a tremendous effort to get there: they came from all the cities, near and afar, on foot... running! They were not even running to an air-conditioned venue: they ran into the desert, putting aside personal comfort and choosing to being exposed to intense heat and the merciless sun of the desert. They so ran that they got to the meeting ahead of Jesus and His disciples. These people ran to Jesus, where do you run? What is your pursuit?

1. The whole world is running somewhere.

The book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible is a very profound book that addresses key issues of our human existence, such as the ultimate purpose of life.

In it we read about what most people pursue in life. Solomon describes most of those pursuits as “**grasping for the wind**” (he uses that expression 9 times) – in other words, pursuing things empty of true value or reality – things like the wind or a mirage.

What make you run? What do you pursue?

Everybody is running somewhere. We have all heard about “the rat race”, or “living life in the fast lane”. Well, life is fast indeed. We are here only for a moment.

Psalms 103:14-16- *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.*

2. God calls us to run in a different direction.

1 Peter 4:1-4 - *Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,² that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.³ For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.⁴ In regard to these, they think it strange that **you do not run with them** in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.*

God calls us to run differently – even if others think it strange or speak evil of us.

Hebrews 12:1-2 - *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run** with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Now that we have Jesus, we no longer run pursuing a mirage, grasping for the wind, pursuing things empty of value or purpose and that cannot satisfy. No. Now we know what purpose is, now we know the things that truly matter.

3. This is how we run:

a) We run to obtain a prize of substance – eternal and imperishable.

1 Corinthians 9:24-26 - *⁴ Do you not know that **those who run** in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ **Therefore I run thus:** not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

We run in this life, not just focused on some reward that is instant and passing (some temporal gratification) but we run focused on things that have eternal value.

In Genesis 25:29 we read how Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of stew. He valued the here and now, the instant gratification of a meal more than the benefits of his birthright.

b) We run to fulfill the purposes of God in the earth.

God isn't through with mankind. He calls us to run so His purposes and salvation reach all mankind.

Acts 8:27-30, 39-40 - *²⁷ So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." ³⁰ So **Philip ran to him**, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"*

Philip ran to catch up with a man who needed to hear the gospel. God calls us to run this type of race: the race of the gospel, the race of serving God's purposes on the earth

³⁹ Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

These are urgent purposes: so urgent that when Phillip was through with this man, God translated him in a split second to a place 50kms away.

Galatians 2:2 - *And I went up by revelation and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might **run**, or had run, in vain.*

In this passage, preaching the gospel is referred to as “running”. It is urgent that we preach the gospel.

We run because of his purpose and vision.

Habakkuk 2:2 - ... *“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.”*

God’s vision will make you run!

We run to obtain a prize from God, we run because of the purposes of God and, lastly, we run to Jesus!

c) We run to Jesus.

We run this race looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. We run like the people in our opening text, to our Great Shepherd. We run to His presence. There is nothing more satisfying than His presence.

We run like Zacchaeus:

Luke 19:4 - *So he **ran ahead** and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.*

So many people run in a frenzy to get *ahead* in life. This man ran *ahead* to see Jesus! We don’t run in the same frenzy, like headless chickens – we run to Jesus (Who is our head) and we are not chickens, we are eagles!

Isaiah 40:31 - *But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, **they shall run and not be weary**, they shall walk and not faint.*

Proverbs 18:10 - *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous **run** to it and are safe.*

Song of Solomon 1:4 - *Draw me away! **We will run after you**. The king has brought me into his chambers. We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.*

We will run to the Lover of our souls!

Conclusion

We don't run like others run in pursuit of empty things that can't satisfy:

- We run to obtain a prize
- We run to fulfill God's purposes
- We run to Jesus (we find ultimate fulfillment in the presence of Jesus).

As a concluding thought, let me just end with the words of Paul to the Galatians:

Galatians 5:7 - *You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*

Message Translation: *You were running superbly! Who cut in on you, deflecting you from the true course of obedience? This detour doesn't come from the One who called you into the race in the first place...*

The devil doesn't want you to run this race. Remember that.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 - *I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the race**, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*