



DAY 17

Tuesday, December 18

(Candle of Joy)

HEBREWS 12:1

“...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

The Ultimate Landmark

by John Lee

John is a graduate student in computer science at MIT. He recently ran a marathon in Helsinki, Finland.

A long-distance runner will tell you that running outdoors is much more pleasant than on a treadmill. When the body is forced by a machine to run and yet not going anywhere, the mind tends to dwell on the aching muscles and the pounding heart. In the open air, the changing scenery takes the mind off the pains of the body.

Yet neither compares to running in a race. You feel as though propelled by the sheer movement of the thousands of runners alongside. Spectators line the side of the course, their cheers fortifying your determination to keep forging ahead. The road may seem to stretch on forever, but the signposts at every mile reassure you that the unseen finish line is indeed getting closer.

Then a magical moment arrives. You spot that landmark where the finish line lay—perhaps a stadium, or some other building. Be it a mere dot on the horizon, the sight of it radically changes your mindset. The remaining distance suddenly seems manageable after all. Any lingering thought of quitting the race vanishes. There is no more desire to stop for another drink. You face the next hill not with resignation, but with eagerness, knowing that the landmark will only look bigger at the top. Although the present suffering is no less real, it is relegated to the background as your mind thinks about the roaring crowd and your friends at the finish line.

Whether we are at Mile 1 or Mile 26 of our lives, “let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked

out for us” (Hebrews 12:1). Let us be reassured by the many signposts in our midst that point to our Creator. Let us be encouraged by the Paraclete as He spurs us on like those spectators. And let us rejoice that God has placed the ultimate Landmark—the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ—concretely in history, so that all may gaze upon it.

At Park Street Church we are blessed to not be running alone on our treadmills, but alongside fellow runners, all “straining toward what is ahead” (Philippians 3:13), toward that very same Landmark. May we not run aimlessly, but imitate Paul, to “press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called [us] heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

RESPOND:

DO: Challenge some Christian friends to a race on the Boston Common or elsewhere. Consider how you can spur them on spiritually as fellow runners in the Christian life.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, thank you that you humbled yourself to come to us concretely in history so that we could see the Father in seeing you (John 14:9). You are our ultimate Landmark, on whom we fix our eyes, and the One in whom we persevere until the Second Advent.