

“Rooted in Giving – Surrounded by Grace” 11/1/2009

Kenmore UMC Hebrews 12:1-2, Revelation 21:1-6a

As we ponder all that God has done through the great cloud of witnesses we realize not only all that God has done, but also the reality of all that God will do.

Are you ready? Ready to lay aside everything that holds you back and run the race of faith with perseverance, faithfulness and focus.

Are you ready to run like all the saints who have gone before us who have passed the baton of following after the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, our Lord Jesus the Christ?

Are you ready to pass on the baton of faithfulness and grace to those who are with us and will come after us?

The race is a marathon of hope and joy, of perseverance and struggle, of heartache and sustaining grace. Of dry periods and times of refreshment and renewal.

I have run a marathon, a shortened version of the life of faith. You start out much like we do at our baptism with crowds of excited and cheering folks and eager runners all crowded together. By the time you get to the first water station you are really just hitting your stride and settling into the race and you hardly need that first sip sustaining water. As the race goes on the runners stretch out, the water breaks are more eagerly grabbed along the way, there comes times when you are almost alone and then there is another runner, or some folks along the way encouraging you on, Most often you “hit the wall” at some point when you know you just can’t go on, but there are those who have gone before you stretching way back into history thousands of years, there are those still with you, running and struggling and all those cheering you on and you go on. Any number will have to drop along the way, but even they rejoin you at the finish. And when you see the finish line before you and the crowds and the runners who have already finished are there waiting

to cheer you across. There is a renewal of energy and a final run across the finish line, exhausted, but renewed, satisfied for you have finished the race.

Our faith is a team marathon, surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who have showered us with grace, sustained us with the life giving water of faith, encouraged us by their witness and living of the faith and who have not only given us the baton, but also the task of passing it on.

We are receivers, who have received the faith by the grace of the givers before us. We are the givers, who having received the grace and faith give it on to those who come after us. WE are receivers and givers joining with the saints who have gone before us, those who are all around us and those who will come after us, ALL in a great Spirit-filled cloud of witnesses, of disciples, of people who follow Jesus.

We know where we are going, we know why we are going and we know by whose strength and love we are energized.

Truth be told, marathons don’t start at the starting line, they start at the weeks and months and years of training before hand and they don’t stop at the finish line, but rather a new day begins.

So it is with our faith, it didn’t begin with our confirming our faith, or discovering it or receiving it, it began in the disciplines of discipleship nurtured by our parents and church family, sustained by our study and prayer, energized by our praise and worship and always sustained by the grace of God in the great cloud of witnesses who surround us with God’s grace.

We have received the faith by God’s grace and God’s people who planted the seeds of faith within us; you remember them, don’t you. This day name them in your hearts, share them with one another and claim these God servants in the depth of your being. And Rooted in god’s grace given you, give yourself to your family and friends, your church and your community to seed and root the faith and love of Jesus in the hearts of all coming after you.

Rooted in Giving as God's people, Jesus' disciples  
we become receivers who give their life and faith to others.  
We do so Rooted in Giving, Surrounded by Grace.