

Title: Built by Christ: Running the Race with Perseverance

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores the foundational truth that Jesus Christ is both the builder of His church and the author and perfecter of our faith. Drawing from Matthew 16 and Hebrews 12, the message challenges believers to examine whether they are truly allowing Christ to build their lives according to His divine script. The pastor emphasizes that being part of the church means being "called out" from the world, not to live comfortably in our humanity, but to be transformed by Christ's lordship. The sermon confronts the tendency to accept Jesus as Savior while resisting Him as Lord, and calls believers to fix their eyes on Jesus, endure hardships with perseverance, and trust God's will even when it's uncomfortable. As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, we're reminded that Christ came knowing He would die, enduring the cross for the joy set before Him—and we're called to the same faithful endurance, allowing God to write our story rather than insisting on our own script.

Key Points:

- Jesus promised to build His church on the confession that He is the Christ, the Messiah, and the gates of hell will not overcome it
- The word "church" (ekklesia) means "called out ones"—believers are called out from the world and called to get the world out of them
- Jesus is both the author and perfecter (completer) of our faith—He writes the beginning and the end of our story
- Being a Christian requires more than mental acceptance; it requires Jesus as both Lord and Savior
- We must throw off everything that hinders us and run with perseverance the race marked out for us
- Fear is a liar that keeps us from fulfilling God's plan for our lives
- Jesus endured the cross by fixing His eyes on the Father and focusing on the joy set before Him
- True worship and faithfulness aren't confined to church buildings but must be lived out in the darkness of the world
- God has written a unique script for each believer's life, with specific people and circumstances designed for our growth
- We must pray "not my will, but Yours be done" even in our darkest

circumstances

Scripture Reference:

- Matthew 16:13-18 (Primary focus: Peter's confession and Jesus' promise to build His church)
- Hebrews 12:1-2 (Running the race with perseverance, fixing our eyes on Jesus)
- Matthew 8:28 (God working all things together for good)
- Esther 4:14 (Referenced in connection with the church's outreach efforts)

Stories:

- The pastor's personal testimony of being diagnosed with portal vein thrombosis and God choosing not to deliver him from it but to use it
- The story of his wife Julie continually buying items for outreach and ministry, demonstrating sacrificial giving
- A childhood memory of playing a six-year-old preacher in a Christmas play and accidentally saying "Frankenstein" instead of "frankincense"
- References to Tom Cruise doing his own stunts as an illustration of getting into the action of faith
- The humorous ongoing exchange with his wife about "jumping in the shower" versus the fiberglass reality
- Mention of taking classes in California in January and learning about movie structure requiring emotional catharsis every eight minutes
- Olympic runners in ancient times who ran naked to avoid anything that would hinder them—illustrating throwing off everything that entangles us
- Paul writing two-thirds of his New Testament letters from prison yet still expressing joy