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Devotion for April 22nd, 2022

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."
- Hebrews 12:1-2*

John 3:16 is often called the Gospel in a nutshell and understandably so. It's pretty hard to beat the simplicity of "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whomsoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Most anyone can remember that. But if that's the case and it certainly is, then this short passage from Scripture above is the nutshell version of the Christian life! Think about it:

For starters it calls to mind the litany of Biblical saints who faced persecution for the faith and yet by God's grace endured. The fruit of their faith is evident still today and will be so for all eternity. We are encouraged to follow them not by being like them in our behavior but rather by focusing our eyes on Jesus even as they were esteemed faithful by laying ahold of God's promise to send a Savior. It's not their actions that we are to imitate but their faithfulness in looking to Christ.

In these difficult and confusing times when everything seems to be changing, this is extremely important. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Therefore, any successful race through life is run in He who is the founder and perfecter of our faith. Keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus you see God's full plan of salvation unfold and in that plan you find your way through the trials and perils that may lie ahead.

*"Alleluia! Now we cry
To our King immortal,
Who, triumphant, bust the bars
Of the tomb's dark portal.
Come, you faithful, raise the strain
Of triumphant gladness!
God has brought His Israel
Into joy from sadness."
(LSB #487, v. 5)*

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!
Alleluia. Amen.

*God's blessings,
Rev. Kevin Loughran, Senior Pastor
Grace Lutheran Church & School*

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