
A Great Cloud of Witnesses

Sermon Text: Hebrews 12:1-3
Mariner Sands Chapel

Dr. Gary Carr
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Well, we have had quite a week haven't we? Hurricane Dorian has made its mark on the Bahamas, our county, and it continues to impact the east coast. A great cloud has surrounded us, but it is not the same cloud as we are talking about in our passage today. This is our first time to worship together and it gives me real joy to have you all here today.

Our focus today is on a passage of the Bible that gives us a metaphor of our position in God's big plan to redeem the world. While God Himself may be invisible, His ways are not. The book of Romans tells us that God's ways are clearly seen through what has been created. Anyone, believer or non-believer, has a glimpse into the great majesty and order of God's creation. And while God's ways astound us, they are not hard to understand. God has made the way of salvation plain to everyone.

In these few verses, we are introduced to a metaphor of Heaven, captured as a glimpse of a stadium filled with those saints that have gone before us. (Standing room only, no empty seats.) And who are these people, but those heroes of faith mentioned in the previous chapter. Abraham, Moses, Noah, Rahab, and many others are standing all around us, cheering. Running was one of the most popular of the Olympic games. The place prepared for the race was called the stadium because its length equaled a stadion, or six hundred Greek feet (see John 11:18 Furlong). The stadium was an oblong area, with a straight wall across one end, where the entrances were, the other end being round and entirely closed. Tiers of seats were on either side for the spectators or witnesses. The starting place was at the entrance end and was marked by a square pillar. At the opposite end was the goal, where the judge sat and held the prize.

I used to think those in the heavenly stands were looking down at me, but a closer study of the text indicates that they are all looking at the goal, where the JUDGE is seated. They are looking at Jesus. And while we are still running in the race of life as a believer, the Bible says we also are to fix our gaze on Jesus. The Bible says he is the author and finisher of our faith. By those terms, the author means before there ever was a Christianity, Jesus was authoring faith on human hearts as far back as Adam. Before Christ came in the flesh, having the full forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life was something people waited for. And when Jesus came to us, completed the mission of conquering death, dying in our place on a cross, and being resurrected to new life, He perfected the way of salvation for all people...for all time. The sacrifice was made, the payment for sin's debt was paid in full, and the Holy Spirit of God would dwell inside our hearts as the new temple.

How shall we respond to such a good news? Consider Him. Strip away anything in your life that would hold you back from a devout life of faith. Endure hardship and discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness (I Tim. 4:7). Seek the things which are above (Colossians 3:2). Wear proper footwear (Ephesians 6:15); run to fulfill your calling (Philippians 3:14); run in the strength God gives to you (2 Tim 2:1); and run so as to WIN (I Corinthians 9:25).