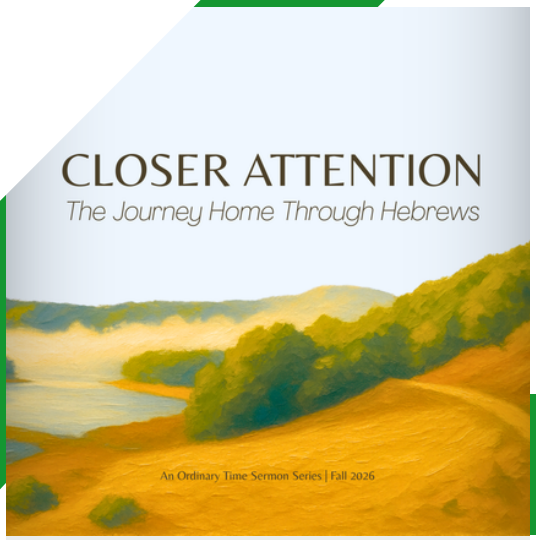


SERMON NOTES

November 1, 2026

SERMON INFO

TITLE

"Life in the Race as a Child"

PREACHER

Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt

TEXTS

Isaiah 35:1-4
Hebrews 12:1-13
John 16:20-22

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does endurance mean to you?
2. What is a time when you saw God's formative discipline in your life?
3. How do you react to suffering and discipline? With stoicism, with weariness, or with joy?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

As we journey towards the end of the book of Hebrews, Tim explained that the final chapters answer a new question that arises in light of the suffering we experience in our lives: Is there really a savior? Today, we look at what God is doing in and with our suffering.

The Christian Life is Like a Race

In our Hebrews reading, the word "endurance" is used three times, which brings to mind exercise, and, in the Hellenized world the first readers of Hebrews found themselves in, they would've thought of exercise and gymnasiums as well. We can use exercise as an illustration for our suffering. In exercise, there is a good kind of pain; muscles literally tear apart to build back better and stronger. The Christian life is not so different. Real pain is to be expected, especially because Jesus our Savior led through suffering while on the cross. But, just as Jesus' suffering had a purpose, so does ours. The purpose, however, may not be in line with our plans, but it certainly is in line with God's plan. We also can discern from Jesus' salvation for all through the cross that there is no end to which Jesus wishes to eliminate sin, thus reuniting God with his people. It is why he used something so brutal as the cross--he will use that which he hates to bring full victory over sin. With all of this in mind, we must caution ourselves against the hollow message that could follow from the notion that suffering is inherent in the Christian life; the passage is *not* saying to "just endure, buck up, etc." There is something more personal going on.

The Christian Life is Like Being a Child Under Discipline

God allows suffering in a similar way to how a father or even a coach may employ discipline. While this may not be a comforting notion to those who have not had positive experiences with either figure, we must operate on the true assumption that God is a *good* father. God loves us, and his discipline proves his love. Using that metaphor of God as a father, it helps us understand why suffering and discipline are allowed. We know from our own lives that we bring some pain or suffering in our children's lives--be it discipline, or shots, stitches, setting bones at the doctor-- to bring about greater care. Through lesser suffering, greater suffering because of deep sin and brokenness is rooted out. If there were no discipline to root out the latter type of suffering, is that really love? Would that be being treated like a true son? Discipline isn't retributive but formative. While our discipline may be imperfect, we know that God's is perfect.

Even if we know and trust his discipline to be perfect and that our suffering does have a purpose, we still resist in two ways, through stoicism or through weariness. The first, sometimes called the stoic error of pain, is when we regard God's discipline too lightly. This is a danger because we act impenetrable towards God, thinking him the greater enemy than the sin that rots us from the inside out, the very sin God tries to stamp out. The latter, the weariness or faintheartedness, is when we are not rooted, freaking out in pain, lamenting that if God truly loved us, he wouldn't do this to us. To remedy either of these reactions, we need the mature view of Jesus, who persisted through suffering, to the point of death, because of the joy set before him. We need to consider him greatly, making Jesus our joy and reward, while trusting that the suffering we experience in this life will bring about something good, all the while being made more and more in the likeness of God's own son.