

Joining the Team

So much of what we do nowadays seems to be about being the best at something ... about who comes "first". And lots of things are about who comes 1st, 2nd or 3rd and we've just finished watching the Olympics in Rio where it was all about winning Gold. Commentators often referred to the silver and bronze medals as "the minor placings" and the medals tables were based on how many "Gold medals" a country got first and foremost regardless of how many combined medals they won overall.

But who really comes first? That's the big question. Who are the real winners in life? The Olympics concentrates on sporting excellence but what does the Bible have to say about winning?

The first Christians like the Olympians believed that the most important thing was to be on the team, if you're not on the team you won't win.

Have you ever run a race or won a trophy or medal for running a race, or jumping a long distance or shooting the best arrows? It is a thrill to hear the shouts and cheers of encouragement of those watching. An even greater thrill when you finish high enough to win a medal or trophy.

In 1992 when the Olympics were held in Barcelona Derek Redmond, a young Britain had dreamed all his life of winning a gold medal in the 400 metres. He had worked hard for years to get to the Olympics and his dream was within his grasp he was in the semi finals and was running the race of his life. He was rounding the final turn and the finish line was in sight. Suddenly he felt a sharp pain in his leg and fell to the track with a torn muscle in his right leg.

We shall watch a "You tube clip of this in a moment but to explain what you will see. The medical attendants ran towards him but he struggled to his feet and started to hop toward the finish line on one foot in an attempt to finish the race he had started with such high hopes and was determined to finish. Suddenly a large man came out of the stands, pushed aside a security guard and ran to Derek's side. It was Jim Redmond, Derek's dad.

"You don't have to do this," he told his son. "Yes I do," said Derek. "Well then said his father, we're going to finish this together."

And they did. They stayed in Derek's lane all the way to the end with his dad brushing aside the attempts of officials to take them off the track.

At first the crowd watched in silence; then they rose to their feet and cheered, and cheered and wept.

Derek Redmond didn't win the gold medal but he walked away with the incredible memory of a loving father who, when he saw his son in pain, left his seat in the stands to help him finish the race.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2G8KVzTwfw>

{Show You tube clip}

That's what we've been looking at this morning in the songs we've sung, the memory verse and the craft we've made. It teaches us that life is like a race that has been set before us. We may struggle along the way and face many obstacles but we have a great crowd of witnesses who are cheering us on. We have a heavenly Father who loves us more than we can imagine and He will help us when the pain is too great. We have a Saviour who left His place in heaven and came to earth to show us how to run the race. And if we trust in Him completely and keep our eyes fixed on Him how can we help but finish the race?