

## **CALLED TO FINISH THE RACE**

Matthew 6: 19-24

In the 1968 Summer Olympic Games, John Stephen Akhwari of Tanzania was entered in the marathon. He suffered an injury during the race, but he persevered in the darkness on the streets of Mexico City, all alone, as the other runners left him behind. An hour after the race was over, he hobbled into the darkened stadium, his right leg bandaged in two places, grimacing with every step. The few thousand spectators who were lingering in the stadium noticed him and began to applaud as he limped around the track. When he finally stumbled across the finish line, holding his leg with both hands, the crowd erupted.

Filmmaker Bud Greenspan asked Akhwari after the race, "Why did you do this? You were in such pain, and you couldn't win." The runner looked at the filmmaker as if he were crazy and answered, "Mr. Greenspan, I don't think you understand. My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

How do you measure greatness when you finish last? What kept him going, painful stride after painful stride? A great vision kept him going. He wasn't running for himself; he was running for his country. How about running—sacrificing and serving—for Jesus? How about running for the gospel, which means not running for country but running for the entire world? The gospel, after all, is good news for the world: the good news that God has triumphed over evil in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and is bringing to the world his healing, loving rule. How about connecting with that vision?

God bless,  
Pastor Barbara