

THE MARATHON

Journal Entry by Jarrod Pillsbury

www.caringbridge.org

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Last night I had a dream. No, not that one, he already had it and made that speech. I dreamed of a marathon and I was running in the race. It seemed like it was a marathon I had been running in my whole life.

I could hear the roar of the crowd and feel the adrenaline pumping through the crowd as their cheers echoed throughout the street. As I turned the next corner, I saw Jesus standing there on the sidelines holding out a cup of water for me. I went over and drank from the cup. I told him, "This is good water. What kind is it?" He said, "Living water". We both smiled at that one. I threw my cup into the garbage can (well, who wants to litter in front of Jesus??) and starting to get back into the race.

I was tired and told Jesus, "I think I'm going to walk for a while". He stepped out and said, "I'll join you my friend". As we started to walk down the street I was telling him how much pain I was in from this lifelong marathon and how it wears on me daily. Sometimes I just feel so tired of it all or of feeling like I'm by myself in this race.

Just then a crowd of runners came up from behind and quickly passed us. I started to run to keep up with them, when Jesus touched my arm gently and said, "No, you run when YOU are ready; not when you think others are watching". He told me of how far I had come in this marathon and how I couldn't quit now. "But it's just me running by myself and I am tired and hurting", I reminded Him. Jesus said that He had never left me alone, He just used different instruments to speak and touch me.

He smiled and pointed to the left sidelines. There I saw my pastor, Mike, cheering me on; a man who had stayed 6 hours in an ER and then another time 10 hours in the waiting room for me to get out of heart surgery and to comfort my wife for the day. He was yelling, "Look how far you've come, brother, look how far you've come!!" Jesus pointed a little behind me to the right, and I noticed my neighbor, Gary, who when things got hard and pain was intense would remind me that 'tomorrow is going to be a little better than today, a little better than today'. Up head, I noticed people praying for me fervently. I saw my deacon, Daryl, who had come to the hospital just to serve and love on my wife and I.

I was starting to get back a little bounce into my step now. The road wasn't seeming as long as it once did. I saw my older brother, a ferocious lion who turned into a lamb to serve me and become a human leaning post for me to lean on so I could walk down a hall once again to regain strength.

Then I saw her. My heart stopped in the excitement...My wife...My Rachee. The woman who moved into my hospital room and slept in an uncomfortable chair for weeks with little to no sleep so she could be there if I needed anything day or night. And then at home selflessly cooking meals around my schedule for me to eat whatever I asked for and asked for nothing in return. She was standing on the edge of the street cheering me on, with a radio held high over her head, playing my song.

Jesus smiled at me and said, "My child, you were never alone in this marathon. I have one more for you to see around this next corner". I could hardly wait, I was walking quickly now to see who could be there. My mind was racing. I was quickly scanning the crowd. Who could it be, who would it be, would I remember them, was it someone who knew me that I didn't know? Who? Who? Who?

I turned the corner, dropped to my knees and tears instantly flowed from my eyes. It was my boy, Nikolas, standing on the corner yelling, "Go Daddy, go, you can win this, you're invincible!" He ran out to hug me and for a moment time stood still...no noise from the crowd, no running shoes behind me, no music. Just him and me and his arms around my neck squeezing tight. A kiss on the cheek for good luck. He then turned to Jesus and hugged Him tight and said, "Thank you for taking care of my Daddy!" Jesus bent down and said, "No, thank you for taking care of him for me."

I looked at Jesus, I looked at the crowd, took a long slow deep breath and told Jesus I was ready to start running this marathon called life again no matter the pain, so that I could someday stand in front of him and say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"