So, if I wanted to make a picture frame, where would I start? I would need to choose what I will make the frame out of. I could use metal. Or I could try to make it out of cardboard. I would like to make it out of wood, so I would need some boards.

In my pile of wood, I find this board that should work. But it is kind of rough, so I will need to smooth it off. It’s also too big, so I will need to trim it down to size.

This morning we are being reminded that every one of us is a work in progress. It all starts with God. He began a good work. That good work started with God making us. We are his creation. God doesn't make junk. So you are special, worthwhile, honoured to be a creation of the God of heaven.

But it’s not just that God created us. God has been shaping you. He has taken hold of your life and is making you into just the person he wants you to be. He’s smoothing off rough edges. He’s helping you to know what is right and wrong. God is at work in your life, using experiences, events, decisions, Cadets and GEMS and parents and friends to shape us into a special person. This is God's work that he is doing.

This good work also goes beyond just growing up and learning new things. It is a good work of grace and love, forgiving our sins, accepting us as his sons and daughters. God has worked his grace and love in the lives of his people, leading us to believe and trust him. We didn't choose God; he chose us. He began the good work. We are his because he has claimed us. We live for him because he claimed us first.

God has begun a good work in your life. He has chosen you, called you, saved you in Jesus Christ. God knows what he wants for you.

Trust in that saving work, the joy of forgiveness. Live your life with God who began a good work in you. Claim and live the fullness of the victory of this saving work that God began in your life.

But I was talking about making a picture frame. I have a board, but it doesn’t look much like a picture frame. It’s going to take a lot of work to cut this wood to size and make it smooth. Maybe I won’t bother. It’s too much work, so I’ll quit.

Sometimes we start things, but don’t finish them. Maybe we give up because it got too
hard. Or we lose the thrill of the newness that the project once had; it’s boring and we don’t feel like finishing. Or we get distracted with something else.

What if that happened to an athlete who wanted to compete at the Olympics, which starts on Friday? So this speed skater starts a practice routine and gets up early every morning for weeks and weeks. Then they decide that it’s not much fun to get up early, so they sleep in on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and only practice an hour on those days. Maybe they don’t like the food they have to eat and start eating more candy. After a while, they just think it’s way to much work and quit practicing.

It’s a good thing to start a project and have a plan of how we’re going to do something. It’s also important to finish well. We need to stick with something until it’s done. We need to keep going, even when the excitement wears off and the crowd goes home and the fun fades. Finishing well is about being just as determined eight minutes into the third period as at the opening face-off. Sometimes it might seem like our attention spans have been conditioned by thirty-second commercials.

Eating right and getting enough exercise is a discipline, so it’s easier to not bother. Finishing school is a hassle, so we bail out. Building a close relationship is painful, so we back off. Working through conflicts in a marriage is a tiring struggle, so we walk away. Sticking with an occupation is tough, so we change jobs.

So I can get this board, and it will take work to make it into a frame, but I stick with it. I smooth the wood. I cut it down to size so I have the kind of boards I want to use for a frame. I measure and make some cuts in it so the frame will fit together the way it is supposed to.

God has taken hold of us and has begun a good work in us. And he will not quit. What he has started he will continue. God has a plan laid out, he has a blueprint, a vision for our lives. God has an idea of where he is taking you, where he is taking this church, where he is taking our community, our country. He is going to carry it out.

We are a work in progress in God’s hands. But we’re not passive, unfeeling pieces of wood that God can do whatever he wants. We are living, breathing people. We work with God. We try to understand what he is doing. We read the Bible and learn about how God wants us to live. We ask our counselors questions and learn about how God does things in our lives. We can pray and ask God to help us know what he wants us to do in our lives, how we can become more the person he wants us to be.
Sometimes we will make mistakes. I might do that while I am making this picture frame. I might cut the board the wrong way, or something breaks while I am putting the pieces together. For me, it might be too hard to fix that board, especially if I cut it too short. Or if I glue it together, it might not be strong enough. But it doesn’t mean that I quit the project. I will find a way to continue to make the picture frame.

The wonder and joy of God’s work in our lives is that he doesn’t toss us off in a corner whenever we make mistakes. He doesn’t give up on us. God will forgive our mistakes and accept us. He sent Jesus to pay for our sins so we can know that God loves us.

We might have to learn from those mistakes, and that isn’t always easy. But we can know that God will continue to do the work that he began.

He who began a good work will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. God will never take a break from his working in our lives and in our world. He will keep working until the day of Jesus Christ. We’re all a work in progress. God is at work in your counselors to make them the people he wants them to be. Even those really old people that you might see around you, like your grandpas and grandmas, are a work in progress. They are not perfectly finished yet, to be what God wants them to be. God will keep working in our lives. Whatever we do, we do with God.

Sometimes we might get frustrated that God isn’t finished with us. We might wonder what’s going on. Maybe we think life is like a spinning top, going round and round and not seeming to get anywhere.

Life is not a vicious circle where we spin on and on. Life has a beginning and an end. We can work with God toward the goal that he has prepared us for us. God gives us something to aim for, to love him and to love others, to help others know God’s care in this world. We can be doing that until we get to that eternal glory in heaven someday.

God will continue his work until the day of the Lord. That is the day when Jesus will come again. Then he will bring salvation in all its perfection. Then we will understand fully how God has been working in our lives. Then we will continue to serve the Lord and praise him in the glory of heaven.

Just as my picture frame project will be done someday, all glued together, stained and varnished, so God’s work in us will be done, someday, either when this life is over and we die, or when Jesus comes again and we enjoy the glory of heaven.

Enjoy being a work in progress.

Amen.