

Devotions – July 19-25, 2015
Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp Summer Staff
Crystal Falls, MI

Sunday, July 19

Text: Jonah 3:1-4:2

³ Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ² “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. ⁴ Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” ⁵ The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

⁶ When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷ This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

“By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. ⁸ But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. ⁹ Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

⁴ But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD, “Isn’t this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

It was during Bible study one week this summer. The boys in my cabin hadn’t been saying much at all, but on that day one of my guys said to me “I think Jonah is my favorite character in the Bible. He had a hard time doing what God asks and complains like the rest of us. It’s easy for me to relate to him.”

My campers that week were fifth and sixth graders and they helped me realize how true and current Jonah’s story is. I will always remember this moment and how it strengthened my faith and proved to me that all the work I do with Fortune Lake is important.

Luther’s Prayer for Guidance

Dear Lord God,

Give us your guidance that we may rightly understand Your Word and more than that, do it. O Most blessed Lord Jesus Christ, see to it that our search after knowledge leads us to glorify you alone. If not, let us not know a single letter. Give only what we, poor sinners, need to glorify you. Amen.

By Dan Strom



Monday, July 20

Text: Psalm 33:3

Sing to him a new song, play skillfully and shout for joy.

This past week we led a children's singing program in Peshtigo, WI to end a week of Vacation Bible School. At first, during practice there were only a few kids singing, until we told them that when you sing in a group, you sound better. The kids relied on each other and the guitar and ended up singing more loudly and joyously than they had all week for their parents and for God. I saw the gift of music working through them as they sang a new song for the Lord.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord,

Help us to sing your praises every day, and in all that we do. Help us to lift our voices in your name as we sing your song of love for all to hear. In your name we pray, Amen

By Eli Mai



Tuesday, July 21

Text: Hebrews 12:1

"Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us."

I come from a "camp family." My mom likes to tell the story of how she met my dad at Fortune Lake; on the first day of staff training he almost ran her over with his car outside the chapel. My mother's mother enjoys reminding me of how she, a junior counselor, fell in love with the head lifeguard back in the summer of 1957. My dad tells a great story of how my great grandfather became the camp's first custodian; after hearing that someone was starting a Bible camp, he walked for two days in the winter of 1929 to break-in to all the buildings and fix them up in time for the pastors to see the property. While I'm not so sure that I believe *all of the details*, the sentiment is the same. We're camp people.

Last year, the gazebo where staff meetings were traditionally held had to be torn down for structural reasons. I like to blame the high school boys for doing one too many pull ups from its creaking rafters, but after 85 years it was time for it to come down. When I sat in that structure, I felt connected to all of the staff that had come before me; I was continuing my family's legacy.

This summer marks the beginning of a new building at our camp. We now have a pavilion that better suits our needs. The former staff were invited to donate money to have their name inscribed on plaques that surround the space. Now every time we gather in our pavilion, I am reminded of all of the saints who came before me, and I can look up and read all of the names. My family has its own corner, where my name is listed next to my parents, grand parents, and other relatives. For me, camp is a place where I feel surrounded by love and by not only my family, but my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let u pray:

Dear Lord,

We thank you for the gift of love that we share with others. We remember and honor all the saints that have come before us. Help us to be Christ-like servants in all that we set out to do today, and everyday. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

By Hannah Tahtinen



Wednesday, July 22

Text: Romans 5:1-8

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

I'm going to start off by giving credit to the Holy Spirit that I even ever started working at camp. After graduating high school I applied to work as general staff without so much as a second thought and when I arrived I felt so completely out of my element, that for the first time since being a camper I was homesick. The intentional Christian community that is fostered here wrapped me in its embrace and forced me out of my clearly defined comfort zones. Making the summer of 2013 an event I'll never forget.

Fast forwarding to May of this year; entering my third year on staff, closing my first year of living on my own; my emotional state was anything less than ideal. I didn't know how to shake my sadness, but I knew that being at camp would be a positive change of pace. Never had I thought I would need to rely on any one person, let alone an entire summer camp staff for support, but that is what the story of this summer has seemed to become. I'm finally back to seeing God working in every camper, parent, staff, guest, and most importantly I've found my happiness again. When you find yourself in a state where you can't see God's light shine, negative thoughts consume. Selfishness, greed, and vanity re-prioritize your life. Being surrounded by God's love in a place of grace has urged me to start living again, with renewed sense of peace and hope. Peace in knowing that the Holy Spirit grieves with me in my darkest hour and hope in knowing they will bring me to the light.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord,

Please know that we try to attempt to live in the light that you graciously provide. Without you, Lord, there would only be darkness; a darkness that consumes. Help us to live in a way that may someday make us worthy of your forgiveness. For we know that you demonstrate your own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, you sent Christ to die for us. Amen

By Audrey Strom



Thursday, July 23

Text: 1Timothy 4:12

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

When people think about working on the Fortune Lake staff their first thoughts go to cabin counselors, but the staff only spends part of their summers in cabins. We take turns going out into the community, visiting churches and leading Vacation Bible School (VBS). Early this summer, I had the opportunity to be part of a team that traveled to a rural church within our synod. One thing I loved about this church was how they reached into their community - they made a point of inviting families who were not part of their congregation, calling them by name. Many of the children who came had never been to church before. Though the size of their congregation was small, because of their outreach they had one of our larger VBS groups.

One of the boys of about eleven was among those who had never been; he fell into the category of campers I refer to as "too cool for school". During songs he would sit in the pew and not sing or do the actions. As the week went on I encouraged him to sing along and stand up with us. On the last day as we finished our last worship time together for the week, we were heading outside to play some group games. I fell in step with this boy. He stopped me as we walked, looked me in the eye and said "This is my favorite place." The child who I thought who seemed to not care was having a great week. He felt the love of Christ and the love of having a Christian community for the first time. I told him that this was my favorite place too, not just that church, but every time Christians are gathered in community. In the curiosity of his youth this was followed by 100 questions about camp and being a Christian. He demonstrated the capacity for youth to believe and love without question.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord,

May we have the faith and love of a child, may we open our hearts and be thirsty for your word. Help us go out into the world and show the little children your love, bring them to your community Lord.

Amen

By Madison Hager



Friday, July 24

Text: 1 John 4:7-12

"Beloved, let us love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us."

For nine years, I have been coming to this place of grace to grow and to change. I came to learn and to experience God and light in my life. But up until a year ago, I didn't feel that growth or that love. I didn't feel as though God was working in my life. Sure, I was surrounded every day by people that I loved deeply and who loved me as well, but I still felt isolated inside myself. It wasn't until I stumbled upon the words of 1 John 4. God truly is love. He is present in all forms and amounts of love and he has shown us this by giving us what we have. God has shown us love by providing us with blue sky, beautiful waters, bountiful land, and beautiful people to walk past on the streets every day, and when we show love to any of this creation, we are not only emulating God by loving, we are loving God himself for he is in everything that he places his love upon; every leaf, every toe, every speck of sand, every heavy heart and every vibrant soul. He has loved all of these and given them to the rest of creation to bestow love upon. God has shown me love by providing me with Fortune Lake and its campers and its staff. God was there the whole time. He was there in every chapel, in every zipper hug, in every inside joke and in every game of Duck Duck Goose. God is an eternally divine and loving creator and no matter who you are, you can be sure that with love in your heart, God is working through you and you are never truly alone.

Let us pray:

Gracious God,

Thank you for the opportunities we have to experience your love and your grace. Thank you for all that you have given us already, and thank you for all that is yet to come. Thank you for being ever present and loving. Help us to love others as you have loved us, help us to love all of your creation and help us to allow your love to shine into us and out of us so that we might be the image of you in the lives of others. Amen.

By Saige Matson



Saturday, July 25

Text: Romans 8:3-9

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I love Sunday afternoons at camp in the summer! Fortune Lake is buzzing with excitement and new life as a fresh group of campers arrive. For our Victory Camp weeks, it is incredible day. It feels like a big family reunion. Many of our campers come to Victory Camp year after year. It is a week for adults with disabilities to get to experience God's love and participate in many of the summer camp basics like swimming and arts and crafts. In their week together they form tight bonds and look forward to their time back together again each year. The hugs and tears of joy that fill their first moments at camp fill my heart with great joy. New campers are also welcomed warmly and the weeks are some of our most memorable of the summer. All of our hearts grow a bit bigger as we see God's love in action with our Victory Campers. They share their love freely and with great excitement. It is a blessing to be a part of these weeks.

Let us pray:

Dear Good and Gracious God,

We give you thanks for all of your children. Help us to love one another with the love you have given us. Help us to see you in those around us. Amen

By Rev Tracy Polzin

