

Devotions – July 31-August 6, 2016

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Sunday, July 31, 2016

Text: Romans 12:4-8

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Each spring as a camp director much of my time is spent praying for, worrying about, and looking for summer staff. I visit colleges and churches, read applications and conduct tons of interviews to try to find just the right group of people to be called to be part of that summer's staff. When I talk with candidates, I always tell them that putting a staff together is like putting a puzzle together. We can't have all musicians who like to be up in front all the time; there would be no one left to sit with the campers. If we had all people who liked to only do arts and crafts, we would have no one to lifeguard. If we had all people who only like to lead small group discussions, we would have no one to lead large group games. Each summer I am amazed to see how God pulls the puzzle together. The summer staff starts as a group of individuals on day one of staff training, not sure about each other, not sure about camp. As training goes on and campers arrive, they become one body, with one mission creating a Place of Grace, each contributing in their own way, with their own gifts. Our churches and communities are filled with people of differing gifts. When we see the power of them working together, we become stronger and can be God's hands doing God's work in the world.

Let us pray: *Dear God, Help us to be your hands and feet in the world. Help us to recognize in one another the wonderful gifts we each have been given. Help us to work together to shine your light in the world. Amen*



Monday, August 1, 2016

Text: Matthew 19:14

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

To go on a walk with a child means that you won't get there as fast you might otherwise. It often means taking several detours. To walk with a child also means that you will see things that you would have otherwise blown by. You will notice that the clouds look like dinosaurs. You will discover that there are flowers blooming alongside the path. You will find caterpillars, frogs, butterflies, and an unusual leaf. To take a walk with a child means that it is not about getting to the destination as quickly as possible, but finding joy in the journey. Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven belongs to children and my guess is that is in part because they can see the kingdom around us in ways that we often forget to.

Let us pray: *Dear God, we give you thanks for children. We thank you for the joy that they bring to the world. We pray that each of us would take time to see your creation with childlike wonder. Amen*



Tuesday, August 2, 2016

Text: Psalm 46:10

“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

Researchers tell us that the brains of the youngest generations of Americans and some older ones too are actually developing differently because of the high amount of use of technology. We now live in an age of 24 hour news coverage and are busier than ever. Retirees often tell me that their days are more full in retirement than they were when they were working. In all of the busyness, it can be difficult for us to hear God's voice. God call us to be still. To see God in the painting of the sunset, to be awestruck at God's creation in the creation of the wildflowers and to take time to find a place of solitude to hear God's message of love. In the quiet moments we can breathe and see life from a new perspective. We can see God is with us. We can be recharged, so that we can engage in the world in a new way.

Let us pray: *Dear God, You have created an amazing world. In your creation we can see your handiwork. In the flowers and the trees and the stars we can behold your wonder. Help us to hear your voice and feel your presence in our lives. Amen*



Wednesday, August 3, 2016

Text: Luke 15:6

And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’

Aaron is a kid who has seen a lot in his small life. His family life is tough. He doesn't have a lot of support at home. His mom works in a bar and so he spends a lot of his summer there because he doesn't have anywhere else to be or anyone else to take care of him. He showed up at camp with a big attitude hiding a lot of insecurities around what this place would be like. As he got into things and into Bible study, it was clear that he had a lot of questions about life and faith. He didn't know much about faith, but quickly clung to the promise that he is a beloved child of God and that God is with him where ever he goes. By the end of his time with us, the staff was filled with stories of grace about him. Stories of where he got the message and where he was helpful and kind. God calls each of us by name and loves us. That is a profound message of hope in a very broken world.

Let us pray: *Dear God, What a blessing it is to be one of your sheep. You will go to great lengths to find us and know that we are your beloved children.*



Thursday, August 4, 2016

Text: Psalm 150

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty firmament!

Praise him for his mighty deeds;

praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

Praise him with trumpet sound;

praise him with lute and harp!

Praise him with tambourine and dance;

praise him with strings and pipe!

Praise him with clanging cymbals;

praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

Martin Luther says that "Music is the art of the prophets and the gift of God." One Tuesday evening this summer, we had campers having worship at three different campfire rings. I was at home for the evening with the windows open. I could hear songs wafting in at different times and different volumes from all three sites. Sometimes the words were loud and clear and sometimes you could just hear that there was music, but not exactly what they were singing. I love to watch each week as the music makes its transformation from new on Sunday to a core part of the community on Friday. It is not uncommon to walk by the shower room and hear camp songs being belted out or for a group of campers to spontaneously burst into song as they walk across the field. The music is a proclamation of our beliefs, but it is also a balm to our souls. In music we find each other. They say as musicians sing together, their hearts actually begin to beat to the same beat. As we sing our love of the Lord, our hearts beat with the love God has for us.

Let us pray: *Dear God, Your love for us is higher than the mountains and deeper than the seas. Help us to sing of your love forever, knowing you are with us now and forever. Amen*



Friday, August 5, 2016

Text: Zephaniah 3:19

And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.

During Bible study with our Victory (our adults with disability) campers, I asked them who they thought the outcasts in our society might be. I was stunned when this otherwise very talkative group was silent. They looked around and had no answer. I rephrased by question a different way and then they still didn't have an answer. As I waited on them, I was struck by the fact that if I asked this question to any other group, they would be part of the answer. We closed the Bible study by singing "You are the light of the world, so shine, shine, shine where you are." As we sang, tears gathered in my eyes, because this group of campers, who the world would say are outcasts, shine their lights so brightly in the kindness and grace they show to one another and the staff. They shine so brightly in the joy and depth of their faithfulness. I thank God that I learn so much each time our Victory campers come and shine their lights here.

Let us pray: *Dear God, We give you thanks for those whom you place in our paths that we might learn from. We thank you for those who teach us through their words and those who teach us through their actions. Amen.*



Saturday, August 6, 2016

Text: Psalm 139:14

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full week.

Jessica didn't want to come to camp this summer. She had been to another camp the summer before where she had been teased by the other campers. School isn't much better for her. She struggles there to fit in and is often left out of things. After several conversations, she decided to give it a shot. The first day when she arrived you could tell that she wasn't sure about being at camp; she was hanging out on the fringes of things. By campfire that night, she was surrounded by her cabin mates and a smile was creeping onto her face. By Thursday night, she had found herself. At dinner that night the whole dining hall was chanting her name as she beamed with pride and showed off her dance moves. Each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God and often the world makes it hard for us to see that.

Let us pray: *Dear God, we give thanks for the unique ways that we are each made in your image. Help us to share the gifts that you have given with the world. Amen*

