

Teach our children well – Luke 12:13-21 – Psalm 107:8-9

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing and acceptable to you O Lord.

“I am going to see if my mom will let me come back to camp for another week this summer.” “I want to be a counsellor one day.” “I learned from my friend how to play the eukele.” “The food is great here.” “I am so glad I came after all.”

These were words I heard from campers at this years confirmation camp. The gospel was alive, love filled the air, and it was the best five days of confirmation classes for both youth and pastors.

When preparing for today’s sermon I knew I wanted to share with you some of what happened at camp that week. Especially since our communion bread today was prepared by our kids.

Psalm 107 today includes verses 8 and 9: “Let them give thanks to you, Lord, for your steadfast love and your wonderful works for all people. For you satisfy the thirsty soul and fill the hungry with good things.” I can’t help but think God was working his wonderful works for the youth, clergy and counsellors alike.

To give you an idea of how the confirmation camp came to be, last year I was talking with Janice Verch and Pastor Sue about doing an experiment by holding a synod wide Confirmation Camp opportunity at Camp Lutherlyn. It would give churches with small classes a chance to teach in a large group in a unique setting, make some friends in faith from other churches and have a lot of fun doing it. I applied to the Eastern Synod Youth and Young Adult

Committee for mission money and they gave us \$10000 grant money so 50 children could attend at \$200 a piece instead of \$400. This was a marketing incentive to participate.

All in all, we had children participating from Zion, Faith Ottawa, St. Johns Ottawa, St Peters Ottawa, Resurrection Ottawa, and Peace in Pickering. We had excellent participation from our sister churches. The first year of confirmation camp only brought out 25 campers but the participation from this many churches proved it to be a great success.

I told our young people and their parents last fall when we started confirmation that my own confirmation was fairly strict and dreadful. I say this with the utmost respect

for my pastor, Pastor Stewart. Then I said if confirmation class is going to be boring for them, it will be boring for me and I won't have that.

So camp was about more than just teaching doctrine it was about teaching creatively, participating in the camp activities, celebrating God's creation, and experiencing faith with many people their own age from many areas. The pastors taught in the morning and the camp ran the program with the theme, "We are creation."

The first day we re-enacted the baptism of Jesus. We had the campers gather at Bancroft Beach first thing in the morning. Everybody in the water, Pastor Joel Crouse was John, Pastor Ronnie Smith was Jesus and I was teaching. It was great. Then we had a swim.

The second day we talked about confession. The Apostles' Creed. They did a human hunt. They started at the dining hall. And were given clues using bible verses and were to go to the next person at another place and so on to figure out a portion of the creed. They were not

told what the topic of the day was. At the end then they had used their Bible to put together the Apostles' Creed and at Hoffman's Beach we had a discussion on what it means to believe?

The third morning was hump day which always the hardest so we watched, "Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark." Now if you have ever seen this movie you will recall that the Nazis are determined to collect the Ark of the Covenant and Indiana Jones is out to save it. Inside the Ark are the stone tablets bearing the 10 Commandments. On this particular day we went over the 10 Commandments. I gave them a sheet and asked them to keep track of all the commandments that get broken and how many times they are broken in the movie. When they asked me after the movie about the tally of commandments that were broken I told them, "I don't know." The pastor can play games too.

Thursday we spent the morning talking about God's creation and then went for a walk on a trail. We walked down the entrance way to the bog where we were privy to baby toads hopping across the road, turtles sunned themselves on logs and the mosquitos were thick. The walk took us down some old train tracks to the other road and back into the camp the back way.

Friday, we ended the day in four seasons baking bread with some helpers Ellen Vandersleen and Kim Schmidt. The youth learned again about the sacrament of Holy Communion and made bread knowing it would be shared at church on Sunday.

We worshipped everyday, led by the camp counsellors. And of course there were lots of camp-wide games and talent shows and the food was amazing!

My take home from this event was simple and that is that camp changes kids. The Small Catechism can be taught in so many ways. Just like the sacraments where something ordinary becomes extra-ordinary, Camp Lutherlyn is a sacramental place. Creation set the place for the ordinary to become extraordinary. The faith lives of youth blossomed. And this is just the beginning. Zion had 13 participate this year. I expect at least 20 next year.

So let me swing back to the psalmist:

“Let them give thanks to you, Lord, for your steadfast love and your wonderful works for all people. For you satisfy the thirsty soul and fill the hungry with good things.”
Psalm 107:8-9

We give thanks to the Lord for wonderful gifts and sacramental places.

Thanks be to God. Amen.