

PITCHING TENTS

Matthew 17.1-9

How many of you like to camp?

Do you pitch the tents, cook out, and bathe in the stream?

Well, today I'm going to talk about church camp

where you either pitch tents or stay in cabins,

have your food prepared, shower in the shower, sit around a campfire,

swim in a lake, pan for gold, cut down trees, play on giant water toys,

walk some trails or climb a mountain.

And I want to encourage you or your kids to get signed up for church camp.

There are camps for all ages.

Now here is what I know about camps.

CAMP IS FIRST AND FOREMOST ABOUT BEING WITH JESUS **OR SHOULD I SAY JESUS BEING WITH US.**

Here is what I mean. This is fascinating, John 1.14,

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,

who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The “Word”, meaning Jesus became flesh.

Jesus the spirit in the heavenly realm became flesh and blood here on earth.

He came to live with us, around us, among us, and in us.

Listen to this.

The word, “dwelling,” has the same root word for tent.

So we could read the verse like this,

“The Word became flesh and pitched a tent among us,”

He pitches his tent among us and wants to pitch his tent, to camp WITHIN US!

There is a wonderful camp song,

Knock, Knock, Knock I hear Jesus knocking,

Tug, Tug, Tug, tugging at my heart strings,

Thump, thump, thump, when I hear him knocking.

First verse. “A castle is a proper place for every king to be,

But Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, chose to live in me.”

Camp is that concentrated space in time to let Jesus pitch his tent within us, to love us from the inside out.
It provides our children with an opportunity to accept Jesus in their hearts. to love and serve him.

Arla Olson, the camp nurse at WWJD loved everything about camp.
But the most meaningful was when she lead a 13 year camper to Christ.

Some years ago if children had not accepted Christ by the age of 19,
there was a great probably they never would.
A few years ago that age dropped to 14
and now Laurie Suko tells us it is 12.
It's not that the Holy Spirit can't bring people to the Lord,
it is just that we have a smaller window to work with.

FIRST-CAMPING IS ABOUT BEING WITH JESUS.
SECOND-CAMPING IS ABOUT BEING WITH FRIENDS.

Let's look at Matthew 17.1, *“After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain...”*

Peter, James, and John were the inner circle of friends for Jesus.
They were the ones he would have most trusted,
had the most fun and shared the would have shared most with.
We know in the dark hour of Gethsemane he took them with him to pray.

One of our fifth graders said, “I want to go to the same camp as my friend.”
You go with friends, see old friends, and make new ones.

Derrick Podoll and Jared tell us, “Church camp is a great place to have fun,
to be with friends, and to learn about God.

Shannon Haskell says, “Camp is a fun adventure with the Lord, with his people,
and in his creation. It is a BLAST! It is often a life changing experience.”

Speaking of change. **THIRD-CAMP IS ABOUT BEING CHANGED**

Matthew 17.2 says, "*There he was transfigured before them.*

His face shone like the sun, and his cloths became as white as light.

Jesus was changed and the disciples saw his glory.

Camp can change us, changed us to be like Jesus, to reveal his glory.

The first camp I counseled at a junior high camp called Waves of Fun.

Steve Foss now director of Lake Poinsette did a clown skit to music.

It was a mime of the creation and the fall.

In the skit it was wonderful to see the creator God have fun,

He throws the sun into the sky, the stars into the night,

and builds up the mountains.

And it was just as painful to see the pain on God's face as

He broke the bread symbolizing his Son's death.

How many of you were junior high boys once?

In the camp were all these cool, macho, rough and tough junior high boys.

That night the Holy Spirit used that skit to break through to the young people.

There were a lot of tears, tears of sorrow and sadness that turned to tears of joy.

Many, both boys and girls, invited Jesus into their hearts.

Pastor Don said something last week about our faith being best demonstrated in how we treat other people.

Well the next two days at camp, these rough + touch guys were much more tender.

They treated others with much more respect, and they co-operated with staff,

we actually got some sleep.

It was wonderful to see the miracle of that change right before our very eyes.

And I remember that night later on the beach a little guy in between sobs asking,

"Why did he have to die, why did he have to die." Great question isn't it?

That brings us to our **FOURTH POINT-CAMP IS LEARNING ABOUT JESUS.**
Verses 3, *“Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.”*

Here are two great men of faith, both witness to God’s great power on a mountaintop. One was the great lawgiver, the other God’s great lighting rod.

In Luke we overhear part of their conversation with Jesus.
They mention his departure. The word departure means exodus.
Moses delivered his people from slavery and death at the hands of Pharaoh.
You know the story; the campers love the Norwegian version of that song,
“Pharaoh, Pharaoh, Oh baby, let my people go...ya sure, you bet cha.”

Elijah delivered the land from drought, and the people from doubt on Mt. Carmel.
And he himself was delivered from death, caught up by chariots of fire.
You probably know the story and you probably know the song,
“Swing Low, sweet chariots, coming for to carry me home.”

Elijah and Moses are talking to Jesus about his departure, deliverance, + exodus.
And in his death and resurrection, he delivers us from what? Sin and Death.

Remember Danny’s question on the beach? “Why did he have to die?”

God used that moment in time to put that painful question on that boy’s heart.
God used that camp experience to give him some answers.

As we learn about Jesus, God can also correct our thinking. Listen.

In verse 4, *“Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be there.
If you wish I will put up three shelters, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”*

Peter in his excitement and with good intentions wants to worship all three.
That’s not good theology.

Many of us try to worship many “gods”
And you know I hear people say, we’re all going the same place,
some of us are just taking a different way.
I get a little uneasy when I hear that. I’m wondering what people mean.
Yes, we each have different experiences of creation, community, and crisis.
They may help us experience God but they don’t save us, they can’t save us.

God uses those experiences to point us to Jesus. Listen.

While he was speaking a bright cloud covered them, A voice from the cloud said, "This is my son whom I love, with him I am well please. Listen to him." Matthew 17.5

The Message, *"This is my son, marked by my love, focus of my delight. Listen to him."*

When the disciples hear this, they fell face down on the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they got up they saw no one but Jesus. Matthew 17.6-8

Creation, community, crisis, and the circumstances of life should point us to the creator, the redeemer, the savior, to the cross of Jesus the Christ.

When I was in Geddes I went to all the ballgames, plays, and whatever. The sixth graders were playing and I'm sitting with my friend Mick Varlik.

Well Mick is pretty passionate and intense about almost everything. Mick has a son Ross on the team who doesn't get to play much.

Ross is a great kid. He's one of those polite cowboys types, Good at doing anything with horses or the farm, but he wasn't a very good basketball player.

Now Mick sits there, fingers gripping the bleacher until they are white, grin tight, hoping again hope Ross gets in the game.

Everyone liked Ross so when he got in the game his teammates tried to get him the ball so he could get a basket. Believe it or not they did, he got the shot but was fouled.

Oh Oh! I know Mick is thinkin' this is a good thing

I'm thinkin' it's not.

You see I got to work with Ross and we spent some time on free throws. Ross was really teachable.

He would square off at the basket, point and plant the right foot, the left set a little behind, ball on the fingertips, elbow underneath, bend at the knees, extend the arm, and send the ball high off of the fingertips, and drop the wrist, BUT he always came up short. Always a few inches short.

I don't normally pray in these situations but
I just didn't want Mick to be disappointed, so I prayed.

Now I knew there were two other pray-ers.
One was Lynn, Mick's wife, and Kelly, their 4 year old daughter.
I knew they were praying because Lynn told me she and Kelly
prayed for me every day. And you didn't think I had a prayer.

Anyway, I'm sitting on Mick's right, Lynn and Kelly are on his left.

Ross steps to the line, squares up, points with the right, drops the left,
puts the ball on the fingertips, but instead of just bending and extending,
(I told you this kid was smart) he drops his right foot back, then swings
and steps forward with it, points and plants bends, extends,
and sends the ball high, off of the fingers with a beautiful spin,
and drops the wrist, and SWISH!!!

The next thing I know I'm being mauled.
Mick jumps up and down screaming, "Did you see that? Did you see that?"

When he wasn't mauling me he was pointing, "That's my boy!!! That's my boy!!!"

It was mauled, hair messed up, glasses cockeyed. It felt good to be mauled.

What a sweet miracle. Oh, oh! He's got another shot.
Hey, one miracle is enough for me, I'm not sure it is for Mick.

Here we go Ross squares up, swings the foot back and then forward, points and
plants, bends, extends, and sends the ball high leaving his fingertips,
and dropping his wrist. SWISH!!!

Mick is jumping up and down, mauling me, again screaming,
"Did you see that? Did you see that? That's my boy!!! That's my boy!!!"

I think Mick wanted me to know Ross had made those free throws, don't you?
I think he wanted the whole world to know Ross had made those free throws.

I wish I could tell you that it made a difference in the game.
I would love to tell you that those free throws won the game.
They didn't. Geddes was ahead 32-6 when Ross got in.

But at that moment in time, that father's focus was solely on his son.

Let's go back to the mountain. The voice of the Father God says,
"This is my son whom I love, marked by my love in whom I am well pleased, in whom I delight. Listen to him." Matthew 17.5

(Wouldn't that be great if every father said that to his kids?)

It's as if the Father God is sitting on his bleacher in the throne room of heaven saying, "That's my boy, that's my boy". Listen to him, because in this game of life, the one on that line. He does make a difference-he makes all the difference in the world. He is your Savior, your Redeemer, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He is the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Door, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, He is the Vine through which life flows. He is your Rock, Fortress, Shield, Defender, your All in All.

So many of our children don't know what we believe or why they believe what they do.

I thank God for you parents who bring your children to Sunday School, Worship, All-Stars, and Vacation Bible School.

I thank God for you parents who pray with your children or read them the Bible stories helping them learn more about Jesus.

But it is a learning process and it's hard to find the time, to make the time, isn't it?

Camp builds on what you do and provides that opportunity.

CAMP IS ABOUT LEARNING AND LISTENING TO JESUS

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And last but not least ***CAMP IS ABOUT SHARING JESUS***

Matthew 17.9, ***"As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."***

Notice they weren't to tell until after the resurrection.
Friends, it's after the resurrection, last week was the Big Easter,
This Sunday and every Sunday is a little Easter.

We're to share that Good News, we're to pitch a tent with others
And share what we've seen, heard, and experienced.

Cindy Haskell shared, "I felt God's presence like a big soft blanket
laying on my shoulders. I have experienced this before so I knew
what God wanted me to do. He wanted me to tell my story, to bring
my story to light, so he could begin the healing process to the children
that had similar experiences as mine

God, the kids, the quiet darkness, the crackling fire are moments
I will cherish forever. Jesus is alright with me.

Let's hear what a few others have to share about camp
*VIDEO-Carly Hanson, Jennifer and Janaia Janusz, Marie Volzke,
Ashley and Kierra Zerr, and Jay and Amie Koch share about camp.*

After the Son, Sand, and Surf camp here is what
Kiera Zerr had to share, "I have Jesus in my heart and it feels good."

Let's stand and sing, Pass it On.