

Children's Message
2.17.08
2nd Sunday in Lent (Camp Rally Sunday)

Good morning. I do love this Sunday- I know I've said it before- but I really LOVE coming to church in my camp clothes. Maybe we should try having camp rally Sunday for a whole month next year! Don't you think that's a fabulous idea?

Seriously, though, camp rally has a real purpose that goes deeper than encouraging all of you to go to Pilgrim Hills or Temple Hills this summer. We are all on a journey, a journey of discovering just who God is for us. Some of us have been on that journey for a long time, and some of us are just starting out. And, I believe, more than ever, that our camps are part of that journey for the campers who will spend the best week of their summer there this year.

A couple of years ago I talked about our summer camps during my children's message. I had lots of our own kids who had been to the camps come and tell us about them. I asked them all kinds of questions. Like who's at camp? Where do they come from? What does the camp look like? Is there a pool? Do we sleep in tents or cabins? Do you have to stay overnight? And finally, what about the food? How's the food? Well, this year, I have a whole new perspective on summer camp. Do any of you know why? Because I went to Temple Hills last year. I mean I really went to Temple Hills last summer- for a whole week! Now I can answer every one of those questions from my own experience.

First: The kids are great! The kids in my cabin came from all over Ohio: from Cleveland to Cincinnati; from farms to cities. And yes, they are all sleep-away camps- either 3 night or 6 night camps. The camp is huge- acres and acres of fields and woods with cabins tucked into cozy groupings everywhere. There's a camp store- that's where I got this great t-shirt and dog and hat (I also landed a cold diet coke there, everyday.) Of course, there is a pool, with the nicest lifeguards I have ever met. There's a big building with a large cafeteria- that's where we ate all of our meals- I loved all of them (except maybe the meatloaf!) I think my favorite thing about the meals was that I didn't have to cook any of them!

But, the thing I want tell you about the most today is my very favorite thing that happened at camp. Our cabin (and the boys' cabin that we did everything with) was in charge of the evening vespers service up on top of the tallest hill. It was late in the evening and the sky was full of stars. All of the kids were gathered around a huge, billowing campfire. All their precious little faces were lit up by the golden glow of the fire as they led the other campers in a beautiful song that started out with the words: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. And right there, right at that moment, I knew I had travelled farther on my journey with God and I knew that my week at camp would be a part of my memories forever, as would all of the children who entered my life for just that one week.

So, yes, once again, and more than ever, I am encouraging each of you to go to one of our camps this summer. You will learn more about who God is and about how God is there, in all you do, wherever you go. Take a chance and keep travelling on your journey of discovering just who God is in your life.

Reverend Wiley, will you please lead us in a prayer?