

"A place to meet Jesus": a sermon starter

Based on John 1: 35-42

Our church camps are a gift from God. They allow us to meet Jesus and deepen our faith with him while making connections with others in the community of faith. Camping gives us a lasting impact that allows us to take another step of faith in our faith journey. Camping touches each person at the place they are in their faith journey; whether a young child who is meeting Jesus at camp for the first time, or a seasoned Christian who is continuing to deepen their relationship with Jesus, camping. At all of our camp sites, we are given the privilege of meeting our God in the beauty and splendor of God's creation and at the same time able to connect with other people on their Christian journey. Camp allows each person to be accepted for who they are and allows them to come as they are and reconnect with God, nature and other people.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, new disciples are invited to come and see Jesus. They are invited by John to come and see this person Jesus. They are allowed to come and see for themselves who Jesus is. They are invited and the response is up to them. So they start following Jesus and Jesus asks them "What are you looking for?" Their response is "Rabbi. Where are you staying?" They are curious. They are interested and Jesus invites to them to a deeper relationship with the words, "Come and See."

Camp allows us to come and see Jesus. It allows us to initiate a relationship with Jesus or deepen our relationship with him. Camp allows us to meet Jesus on a level that cannot be done in our day to day life. We are allowed to stop and just be for a while which helps us meet Jesus.

The beauty of our camping program is its diversity. Through six camp settings and a variety of camps and programs in those places, there are many ways and opportunities for people to experience Jesus and deepen their faith journey. That is the blessing of camp. It is not just for children, not just for adults, not just for seasoned Christians. There is a program and camp for us all. Each one calls us to come and see. In the gospel story, Nathaniel was able to know Jesus because Phillip said to him "Come and See." Phillip led Nathaniel to Jesus and Nathaniel was able to come to faith because someone showed him who Jesus was.

There is another aspect to our camp program. Camping is not just for us. Camping allows us to invite someone else to come and see. Our camps and the variety of camp programs allow us the opportunity to get someone else that we know to camp. Know a child that could use a week at camp to experience God's creation and know that they are loved? There is a camp for them this summer. Know an adult who is struggling in their faith journey? There is a retreat planned for them to deepen their relationship with God. There are camps for low income families. Camps for people with disabilities. Camps for youth. Camps for families, camps for grandparents and their grandchildren. There is even a camp for Moms Pops and Tots. There is a camp for everyone you know who could use an opportunity to experience the love of God in the midst of God's creation.

Camping allows us to experience Jesus. Camping also encourages us to invite other people to come and see. At camp we will all experience community, acceptance, adventure, transformation, discipleship, hospitality and welcome, meaningful service and

most of all we will experience the one who loves us unconditionally...Jesus. Come and see what camp offers for you.