

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. ¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. ²⁰But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

*[The sermon for this day will be a spoken recapitulation
of this past week's confirmation program at Lutheridge.]*

I have always appreciated the transformations that take place during a week at summer camp. For instance, when this past week at Lutheridge began with a Sunday night downpour of rain, that meant there were a lot of kids that night with faces of disappointment. However, as the week progressed through sunny days and some more rain showers, nothing could dampen the spirits of the kids I encountered.

Three students from All Saints participated in Lutheridge's confirmation program, named Kairos. We began by learning what "kairos" means. In Greek, "chronos" describes time as in minutes, hours, days, months, and years. But "kairos" means time as in "the moment"... like a special memory, or a sunset. It is used in scripture to describe when God acts or when the people of God know it is the special moment to do what is right.

The theme for the whole week of this Kairos program was exploring the sacrament of baptism. Since this was at camp, we covered the topic of baptism through discussion, songs, games, faith sharing, crafts, and a whole lot of camp goofiness. Yet, it was more than a surface level discussion; each day we dug into the radical and audacious nature of what God does in baptism.

The first day we explored baptism as "birth and belonging." Inspired by the story of Jesus' baptism, we heard how God cleans us through water and Word, and God claims us eternally. Nothing... nothing... can ever take away God's love, care, and grace. That is good news for any teenager, or any of us for that matter.

The second day was about "goodness and gift." God created everything and called it good, and every human being is created in the image of God. That means, like God, all of us

are meant to be loving, gracious, creative, caring, and forgiving. We also explored how water is a gift for all life, and this essential element is the vessel that carries God's promises to us in baptism.

The third day was about "resting in God." After everything youth have gone through in the last year or so, they appreciated knowing they can find security and rest in God, who is closer to them than their own breath.

Day four was about "enough for everyone." God's grace and love can never run out, and it is offered to all people, whether it is the woman at the well or kids struggling to discover their place in this world.

Finally, day five was about "seeing the light." Jesus is the light of the world, and in baptism we are sent to shine his light so that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

We had a white board in our meeting room. The kids were allowed to write their questions there, and the adult leaders would attempt to shine some light on the questions. Some of the questions leaned toward the silly, like "Why men?," which I am not sure will ever be sufficiently answered. Most of the questions, however, were serious and theological. "Do I need to read the whole Bible?" "If God is so loving, why do some people lack resources to survive?" "Does God still love me if I'm gay?" "Will my dog be in heaven?"

Notice how these are not light-weight questions. The campers wrote dozens of similar questions. It goes to show that these middle school age students are trying to connect God with their lived experiences, which is something all of us should do.

"Do I need to read the whole Bible?" No. It's not like anyone receives a higher status in God's eyes if they read the whole thing. It is a collection of writings from the span of centuries of people wrestling with how God connects with their lived experiences. I told the kids that if they want to read the whole thing, they should wait a little bit. The reason is

because it can be very confusing, and it is best read with some outside guidance to give context to these stories.

“If God is so loving, why do some people lack resources to survive?” The truth is that there are enough resources for everyone. What prevents some people from having the resources they need is often human greed. That opened a conversation about our statement, “We renounce the forces that rebel against God.”

“Does God still love me if I’m gay?” Absolutely yes.

“Will my dog be in heaven?” Some Christians seem to have a power trip by finding ways to limit the extent of God’s care, so they’ll say, “Dogs don’t have souls.” Yet, looking to the final chapters of scripture we are given the image of God bringing heaven down to earth, therefore forming a new heaven and a new earth, a New Creation. The passage says that all things are made new and all of creation will rejoice. So, yes, your dog will be there.

We had an activity called “Milestones” in Kairos. During this time each day, the campers can come forward, take a stone, declare a milestone they had, and throw the stone in the bucket. Upon that the whole group shouts “Milestone!” Often it can be light-hearted, like that they enjoyed the breakfast that day. But sometimes the milestones are deep. For instance, on the last day, a boy stood there and said, “My milestone is that this week taught me how much God will always love me.”

Whether that revelation is made at camp or elsewhere, I hope we all come to feel and appreciate the extent of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ. Amen.