

## **DAY 1:**

## **Ready to Care for Creation**

One of the most important people in the history of Camp Shalom is a man named, Jo Drechsler. Some of you may know him as Grandpa Jo, or maybe you have seen him walking the land. Jo is an amazing environmentalist. He can tell you every type of tree and plant in the woods of Camp Shalom.

One time when I was visiting Jo, he handed me a piece of wood and asked what I could tell him about it. I could tell the tree had been chewed on by a beaver (the marks were very clear) and it appeared to be light, like driftwood. Jo told me that this piece of wood was over 50,000 years old and that his son had dug it out of the ground in northern Alaska. They knew its age because it had been at least 50,000 years since trees had grown in that part of Alaska.

He then handed me something that felt like a huge piece of dense bone. It was about 16” inches long and 6” inches in diameter. Once again, Jo asked me what this object was. It turned out to be a section of a woolly mammoth bone that his son had found while exploring in Siberia, Russia. They found an entire woolly mammoth and the Russian nationals cut this piece off for Jo’s son before he could stop them.

How do these two objects inform our approach to caring for the environment? First, it is important to remember that the world and its climate changes without human impact. Some animals have gone extinct with little or no help from human hands. The world is much larger and more complex than humans are able to control.

The second thing these objects tell us is that while things may change and some life dies away, the world and the life in it adapts changes and moves on. The earth has an incredible way of taking care of itself. However, while these things may be true, it does not remove our Christian responsibility to care for the earth, its resources and its creatures. The Christian is to see the world as a blessing from God and understand the unique role humans play in caring for the created world.

**Read:** Genesis 1 – 2: 3

What does God do during creation to make sure that life will continue on earth?

What is the human role in creation?

Compare this role to the words found in Genesis 2:15?

How are these two roles the same and how are they different?

According to our reading, is there any form of creation that is bad?

Do you think God stopped creating on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day?

**Pray:**

O God, our Creator, Your kindness has brought us the gift of a new day. Help us to leave yesterday, And not to covet tomorrow, But to accept the uniqueness of today. Strengthen me this day to be a good steward of the gift of creation you have placed in my care. Help me to see your glory in all the beauty of creation.

## **DAY 2:      Stuffed with Stuff**

Seth's mom joined the church's Haiti committee after there was an invitation in the parish bulletin. The committee was involved with a sister church down in Haiti that was in one of the poorest areas of the country. Seth started to hear about how the church ran the only school and clinic in the area of the countryside, how most of the kids there couldn't go to school, and how almost everyone in the area lived in tin huts. When the annual mission trip came up, Seth decided to go himself and try to help the people of Haiti directly.

When he arrived, Seth was amazed by the conditions that people lived in but also how helpful they were. Even though the church in Haiti was very poor, the people of the church had built their own church, school, and clinic. When those were destroyed by a hurricane, they started building again. The supplies at the clinic weren't much, but people traveled for miles on foot to get access to the medical care they could receive there.

But what was even more amazing was how generous, friendly, and happy most of the people he met were. Even though they had very little, they would give up their only room for guests to stay in and sleep somewhere else themselves. They generously shared food and fun with everyone on the mission trip. While Seth and his group had brought down a lot of supplies with them, the people of the church shared with them everything they had. Seth made friends with many of the children of the area, playing games with them every night.

When Seth got home, he looked around his bedroom and saw all the things he had accumulated over the years and never used anymore. It was such a huge contrast from the way people in Haiti lived, and for a few days he was upset about how unfair it was that he had so much while the kids he knew back in Haiti had so little. But when he thought about it a little more, he realized that he just needed to be grateful for the many good things he had – and see how he could use them to help others.

Within the week, Seth was boxing up old clothes, games, books, and asking others to do the same so he could send things down to his new friends in Haiti.

God doesn't want any of his people to live in great poverty or need. We aren't called to give up everything we own – but we are called to share from our goods with others in need. Today's Morning Watch calls us to reflect on the possessions God has blessed us with.

### **READ:      Luke 3: 10-14**

What's your favorite possession?

How would you react to being asked to give it up?

What things do you most wish you had?

Would you use them to help others?

What do you have more than enough of?

Who have you shared your stuff with?

Is there anything you have that you could or should give away to others who need it more?

**PRAY:** Dear Lord, you give us many good gifts, and ask us to be stewards of them. Thank you for all the things I have received from you – may I take care of my goods, do my part to make sure that all have enough, and never place anything I have before you. Amen.

### **Day 3:**

### **Ready to Give From the Harvest**

Wakey – wakey, eggs and bakey! Today we will be learning about being a good steward of our food. Being a good steward of anything is simple. It means becoming more grateful and less greedy with the things we are given. More gratitude, less greediness...simple. Or is it? How thankful are we for the food God provides for us every single day? How willing are we to share it with those who have less?

I just read an article in the paper yesterday about people going hungry in Haiti. Haiti is part of a little island south of the United States where people are having a hard time with money problems. Many people there can't afford to buy a plate of rice to eat. Instead, they have to eat cookies made out of a mixture of dirt and vegetable oil. These dirt cookies are becoming more and more popular because they are only 5 cents each. The people have no other way to fill their stomachs. Some people in Haiti have to eat dirt cookies for every single meal during the day.

But what does that have to do with us at Camp Shalom? One out of every eight persons worldwide doesn't have enough food to eat. They have to go hungry. Guess what the number of hungry people in the United States is? The same. One out of every eight persons in the United States has to go hungry too. It would be great to help out in a country like Haiti someday, but there are opportunities for us to help right now in our own neighborhoods, towns, or cities.

Food is one of the few things that every single person needs in order to survive. That's why God made sure to provide enough food for everyone to be able to eat! Did you know that there is enough food on the planet for every single person to eat 4 ½ pounds of food every day? That's more than enough food to provide for everyone! The problem is that some people can't get to it as easily as others.

It's great that we have so much good food to eat! It's right to feel thankful for our food. It's a gift from God! We have been given so much food that we have a perfect opportunity to share this gift with others who have less. Today's Morning Watch is about Jesus showing us how to be thankful for the food we have, and how to share our food with those who are going hungry.

#### **READ:**

#### **John 6: 1-13**

- Jesus used the gift of a young person to provide for 5,000 people. This boy had to be willing to share his food in order to help others. What can you offer to others who are in need?
- Was Jesus thankful? How do you know? (hint: read verse 12). What is one thing we can do to show we are thankful to God for the food we have?
- What do you think Jesus and the disciples did with the twelve baskets of leftover food?

Here's my challenge to you. With the time you have left, ask God to bring an idea to your mind about how you can help those in your hometown who have less. Next, I dare you to write down an action plan:

WHAT \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN \_\_\_\_\_

Don't feel bad if you couldn't think of anything today. Keep it in mind for the future and stay open to opportunities to help out. As we learned today, God can do miraculous things with people who are willing to be generous with small things, like a few loaves of bread and some fish.

#### **Pray:**

Dear Lord, thank you for providing for my every need. Thank you for giving me food today, so that I can have energy to enjoy my time at camp. Thank you most of all for giving your Son to pay the penalty for all my sins, so that I can spend my life with you now and forever! Please help me to see opportunities to help others who have less, and show them how much you love them. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Day 4:**

## **Ready to Give My Time**

Becca grew up Christian, and had gone to church with her family almost every weekend. As a child, Becca and her parents would say bedtime prayers together every now and then, and she felt that God was someone she could talk to when she was sad or thankful for something.

Over the years, Becca started to think that church was getting a little bit boring, and she found it harder and harder to listen to God when she prayed. On top of that, she was getting busier than ever with band, cheerleading, volleyball and school. Soon Becca started forgetting to pray for days at a time, and thought about God less and less. Eventually Becca even came up with reasons to stay home from church on Sundays.

Becca soon found it difficult to deal with problems with her family and friends, and was having a harder time enjoying herself. Her parents were a little bit worried about her, and talked with her about their concerns. Becca admitted that she felt far from her family and far from God. She and her parents agreed that she needed to always put God first, in everything that she did.

Becca's story is like that of many Christians – she meant well, but forgot to focus on God when her life got busy. As Christians, we're called to use the time that we're given for God's glory. Today's Morning Watch shows us how Jesus himself dealt with being busy.

### **READ: Mark 1:32-39**

- Why was it so important for Jesus to take time to pray during his busy day?
- What are some of the things that demand your time?
- What is the busiest part of your week?
- Are there times that you have been too busy to remember God during your day?
- How will you give more of your time to God today?

**PRAY:** Jesus, I am busy. I'm busy with commitments to my family, friends, church, school and activities. I know that I need to make time for you, but sometimes it's hard to do. Please be with me today and every day, and help me to make time for you in everything that I do. I love you Jesus, and you're the most important person in my life. Our Father...

**Day 5:**

**Ready to be A Good Steward of Me**

Your week at Camp Shalom is coming to a close this day. Soon we will be gathered around the Near Campfire singing songs, laughing together one more time and getting ready to say “goodbye.” It is always my hope that when you leave this place that you take something with you. Not necessarily something you can buy, but something you have learned this week.

A big part of living fully in Christ is to understand our role in caring for all the blessings good has placed in our care – creation, time, wealth, food. But one of the greatest blessings we ever received is ourselves. Therefore, to live fully in Christ also means to take care of ourselves.

When Sam graduated from college he wanted to do something totally different with his life before settling into the working world. He decided to join an intentional Christian community that ran a food bank and shelter for the poor in Washington D.C. It was an act of Christian service for Sam. The pay was very low, the hours long and the work emotionally draining. Sam had always been taught that this was what Christian service was like.

Wanting to give all of himself Sam rarely took a day off. He went out of his way to work extra hours. At first it gave him a lot of meaning. But as time went on Sam found it harder and harder to focus on the simplest tasks. The people, who he used to love to be around, now became a burden to him. He had a short temper and complained all the time. Sam even became very cynical about the Christian faith.

The problem was that Sam never realized that even Christ went to a lonely place to pray, be quiet and get some rest. He failed to take care of himself. All of us need quiet moments to reflect, rest to gain strength and times of prayer to hear the voice of God.

**Read: Mark 6: 30 – 32**

Where is the quiet place you like to go to think?

Where do you go to pray?

And, does it help you hear the voice of God?

**Matthew 11: 28-30**

Has Christ ever been a place of rest for you? If so, when?