

## **Day Camp Stories – Promises and Forgiveness**

### **Week 4&5 - July 18-29**

We hovered around 50 children during week 4 and 5 of Nature Camp. After one more sighting of a rattlesnake, no more were seen. The kids had gotten into a comfortable routine. We were disrupted by storms for both Mondays-for the first we held the camp at the HS gym, and for the second we brought the kids to the conference center to ride out the rain. We were also disrupted by a visit by the Department of Health which took the leadership away from the camp for an afternoon. These disruptions, added to hot weather and the usual dynamic of what happens when adults and teenagers spend a lot of time together, led to some misunderstandings, consequences, and after some time, resolutions. Living in community is not easy, and often is dependent on a lot of talking, listening, and compromising. But within that dynamic is the promise of transformation, healing, and even forgiveness.

Children are now beginning to understand that camp is ending soon. One eight-year-old boy named Remy walked up to me at the Rafters Tuesday morning, said “I’m only going to be here for five more days,” and then proceeded to gently hug me. We talked about his vacation plans and then he said, “Next year, I might come back with my brother. He’s four.” Then, Remy made a special bead bracelet for Bonzli the camp dog, put it on him, and said he would make a matching one for me. It’s these small interactions that speak to the power of summer camp, and how giving kids time to play and make choices and build healthy relationships can have a long-lasting impact-an impact that will ripple out for years and years to come.

#### **Week 4- Promises**

Addison and Maddison chose the story of Abraham to read to the children. On the first day, in the hot gym, the story was read, and Maddison and Leana spoke beautifully of God’s promises in their own lives. The next day the children drew pictures of stars -the multitudes of children that God Promised Abraham and Sarah. And on the last day of the week, Addison asked the children to talk about promises that they want to make. “To take care of the earth,” “To take care of my kitty,” and solemnly, “to be a good man.” The children continued to ask to sing songs and requested “Rise and Shine” repeatedly.

#### **Week 5 - Forgiveness**

We were blessed to host six fabulous young adults from our friendly camp in New Jersey: Crossroads! They met with Addison and Maddison on Monday, and together selected which of the Bible Stories Crossroads would share. It was the story of the Prodigal son. As many on staff were wrestling with repairing tears in relationships, the topic of forgiveness was very timely. The Crossroads staff asked the children to talk about what it means to forgive someone, and how powerful it was that the Father in the story forgave the son that had left. The children acted out the story and were happy to play all the parts: there was quite a large section of pigs thrilled to squeal away. The children asked to sing “Mary had a Baby” on our way back to the rafters, and so we did, in procession. Early in the week a girl asked to join the Bible Stories, and we brought her in to try it out. I saw her father the next day and asked if that was ok, and he said that was fine. And on Wednesday, I received a text that another child, an older boy, wanted to join as well. We welcome and celebrate the new faces, and make sure to teach everyone our opening song: “Lord Prepare me to be a Sanctuary.” There is always room for more at Bible Stories, at Koinonia, in the Lutheran Church, and in the loving arms of Christ.