

August 1, 2010

“THE MULTI-FACETED CAMP MINISTRY” or “ ROTUNDA OF A REQUIRED RESUME”

Dear Friends & Family,

Preparing for our annual Jr. Camp in August requires the skill of a pastor/shepherd, a professor, a Broadway show producer & director, a variety/game show writer & director, a costumer, an equestrian, an athlete, a puppeteer, stagehand, dancer, stunt man, game show host, stand up comedian, actor, etc...just to mention “a few”! J Preparing & delivering sermons, teachings, & illustrated messages, to feed both young & old, the latter of which includes college students (hence, the “professor”) is the duty of the pastoral director. I then produce, direct, costume & act in my director’s “field skit” every year, which, of course, always involves “equestrian” skill! For those of you from our region of the country, many of you have heard of “Sight And Sound”, a Broadway-quality Christian live theater in Lancaster, PA. I liken my field skit to a “mini” Sight And Sound production. It takes me weeks to plan & prepare for, & it is done in about 15 minutes on the field before the camp & off-site visitors! This year’s drama involves “stuntman” skill, as John The Baptist (whom I portray this year re: his arrest by King Herod Antipas’ jailors) is wrestled to the ground, apprehended, & chained like an animal. Unlike our Teen Camp in June, Junior Camp involves Bible games in the morning chapels (hence, the “game show host” requirement), puppet shows, & costumed characters, from the bizarre & funny to downright zany! Scripts & ideas must be conceived & written. I had a morning chapel skit creative “drought” so far this year until an idea came in the middle of the night this past week! The morning chapels are wired-for-sound, hi-strung, & filled with hyped-up fun, until we come to the serious part of ministry to the Lord in song & the delivery of His Word. Hence, very bad puns fly all over the place (most are mine, to all’s chagrin!) during the planned (?) mayhem. And, as with last year’s junior camp, I have packed my tap shoes, which I bought last year to tap dance with our oldest grandchild, Reagan Grace. Well, I debuted them at Jr. Camp last summer & was dragged off the stage! I can’t imagine why! J

All of this craziness does serve a definite purpose, believe it or not. We relate with the children on their level. Why? #1: Because we LIKE to! (One of my favorite aspects of camp each year is to see the staff become “children” again). #2: Playing with the children like this wears down their walls, hurts, shyness, insecurities, etc., so that they’re more prepared to listen & open up their hearts to the teachers in our two chapels each day. Again, Beloved, there is nothing like it on all the earth to me. I say once more what I have said for years—if I had my wish, I should like to be buried right outside this little building at camp called “Hemlock Hall”. It isn’t much to see. Paneled walls. Tile floor. Drop-ceiling. Oh, but to so many of us who have come into the Lord’s presence in it for so many years & witnessed His moves upon children & teens, it has become a very sacred place. Anything God comes into contact with becomes “holy”.

“I WANT TO BE A ‘SEEDY’ CHARACTER”

Last month I related how our Savior conveyed those sobering words that only a few would be saved, viz a viz, that the majority of the human race would wind up in hell (Mt. 7:13). I also shared that The One Who loved us most, warned us most re: this dreadful truth. Many in the name of “love” deny these words of the Savior or avoid them. This is actually hate. Love warns of ensuing danger. Later in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus gave His disciples insights into the “how & why” the majority of the human race will eventually wind up in the lake of fire. He said one’s “end” is directly related to “what” they listen to, & “how” they listen to it, a.k.a., truth & doctrine. Jesus basically grouped all human beings into 4 kinds—all based upon how they responded to the seed of God’s Word. He said

the parable of the Sower (Mt.13; Mk. 4; Lk. 8) was the most important of all of the parables, in that, if you don’t understand this key parable, you will be unable to understand any of them. Because the first group He described “didn’t understand” the Word they heard, the devil was given permission to take the Word away what they had heard, “so that they cannot be saved” (Lk. 8:12). This lack of understanding on their part which would lead to the damnation of their souls was not due “ignorance”, per se’, but due to their unwillingness to understand. “They have shut their eyes...lest they should see...& hear...& understand...& turn again” so that the Lord could heal them (Mt.13:15). They did not understand because they deliberately did not want to. Jesus in the gospel of John gave the same verdict: “Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil” (Jn.3:19).

The second group Jesus described as “shallow”, as “having no root in themselves”, quick to adopt new ideas, but also quick to abandon them should there arise any difficulty. The third group had a heart already filled with “thorns” when the seed of God’s Word was dropped among them. One version says that the thorns in their hearts, which Jesus likened to the worries of life, passionate desires for other things, the deceitfulness of wealth, etc. “choked the life out” the seed & rendered it fruitless. Only the fourth group of people “made it”. They listened to God’s Word, held it tightly in their grip, kept persevering in it despite hardships in doing so. Jesus said they “retained” the Word. It’s the same Greek word used for what people of a certain town Jesus ministered in did to

HIM when He was about to leave it to head for another town for mini-stry there! They “retained”, “clung to”, & “gripped” Him, to keep Him from leaving them! It is what must be done w/His Word as well in order to bear fruit & be saved.

“IT TARES ME UP AT MY ‘WHEAT’S’ END”

What has often astounded & amazed me through the years in study of the Scriptures, is how inexhaustible they are. You can study, meditate upon, & preach a portion of it for years, then see something completely new in later study. This just happened the other day re: the parable of the Sower. Perhaps no other section of the Word of God have I studied more. I noticed the other day that immediately after Jesus describes why & how the majority of the human race is not going to Heaven, He then likens these first three groups of people to “tares”, which closely resemble His people, a.k.a., the “wheat”. In fact, there is such a close resemblance that He advises His servants not to try to separate them until the end of the age. He then relates the staggering fact that tares are “everywhere”, mixed w/the wheat! This includes churches,

homes, & summer camps! I wanted to believe that many faithful Bible-believing & preaching churches wouldn't have any. This hope, however, was quickly dashed when I pondered that JESUS had many tares who followed Him! And, He was The Word incarnate & The Anointed One! In my rapidly approaching Jr. Camp discussed above, this only places more resolve in my heart to preach a clear, unadulterated gospel message to the children on opening night. I can barely relate this to you, Beloved, but it is a fact. All of the tares that will be burned in the fire as our Savior so clearly said—all of them, without exception, were once children ! May this truth ring clear in my soul as I prepare to bring Him & His Word to their precious souls. Kim & I can't thank you all enough for whatever kind & amount of support you feel to give us, i.e., prayer, encouragement, or financial. Sincerely, for Jesus' Name's sake & glory alone,  
Michael and Kim