

July 1, 2010

“THE ‘WEIGHT’ OF ‘WONDERFUL’S’ WORK”
or “THE ‘CRUSH’ OF CAMP”

Dear Friends & Family,

(6/18) While lying in bed this morning, I felt the “weight”. I felt the “crush”. It was the burden of knowing I head out tomorrow for my 27th camp season, my 20th at Tel Hai Camp. It will be my 40th actual camp there. Lord willing,

I will preach twice, teach four times, perform three dramas, one out of the Time Machine as “King Josiah”, another on a horse as King Herod Antipas’ cavalry captain, & another as John the Baptist for my annual “director’s field skit” on Thursday evening. There are people to inspire, orient, encourage, correct (at times), etc. There are moun-tains of bins of object lessons, props, visual aids, cost-umes, etc. to load & reload. There will be 100+ 13-16 year olds to love upon & make them each feel as though they’re the most important person in the world. Sometimes staff members are reduced to tears themselves as they are stretched beyond themselves more than they ever have been, in their efforts to minister Jesus’ love & grace to the campers. Being the pastoral director of the camp, the buck stops w/me on the human side. If it weren’t for my faithful brothers/assistant directors by my side, I would fall.

I would fall in despair, weakness, & inability. The camp would not “be” without them. They hold me up, fill in & complement my many weaknesses, & frankly, “make me look good”. I will be responsible to the Hopewell Network, whose oversight I am under, for about 130 people or so. Hence, the “weight” & “crush”. One might retort, “Well, Michael, you’ve done this so many times, & for so long, what’s the big deal?” It never gets “easier”, Beloved. If I come to the place of presumption as Samson did, “I shall go out as before...not knowing His Strength had left him...” (Jud.16:20), it shall be the end of my tenure at Tel Hai. Knowing our God to what extent I do, I believe it is His way of doing things, et al, reducing the number of our armies, so as not to boast when He gives us victory (Jud.7:2). He purposely puts His treasure in earthen human vessels instead of His holy, elect angels, so that all may see that the absolute excellence of the treasure within is solely from Him & of Him. As with His Beloved Son on Calvary’s tree, it pleased the Father to “crush” Him, (Isa.53:10) knowing that by doing so it was the greatest possible way He could glorify Him, & save a people that no man can count (Rev.9:7).

“CRAMMIN’ AT CAMP”

(6/28) I arrived home from Sr. camp, as always, very late Friday night. Saturday encompassed several post-camp emails, unloading my truck & trailer of both ministry & personal items & putting the trailer away in the backyard until Jr. Camp in August. Camp entailed for me numerous & various activities & responsibilities, besides being the pastoral director. I preached 3X, taught 4X at morning devotions, & then taught some more as I instructed the teens who attended my Bible Study Methods/Quizzing skill class. On Monday, as I mentioned above, I did ride out on horseback & did a drama, then directed, costumed, & performed in a major drama on Thursday evening. I portrayed John the Baptist preaching to the crowds, then confronting the priests from Jerusalem, then wrestling with Herod’s jailors, then engaging in an intense

exchange of words with Herod himself. I swam each day & rough-housed with the boys in the pool. One morning I played tackle football & polka-danced in the dining hall. As with every camp, much time was spent packing & loading up when Friday came. Hence, it's easy to see why a 54 year old "crashes" when he gets home. However, it was not to be this year! Unlike the previous 26 years of camp ministry, this year I had ministry the Sunday after camp! This involved heading out to PA about an hour from home very early Sunday morning, setting up, praying on site, then speaking twice to two different groups of children, the latter group mixed with teens. I then visited two different camper's homes after church. After this, I went back to camp to drop some things off & to pray "after the fact", thanking our Father for coming to us as graciously & powerfully as He did. After having driven 122 miles yesterday, I got home, only to change oil in both of our vehicles, water our plants, cook dinner, then go for a walk with Kim. Then, when I thought today would finally be my "come down" day, it was not to be! My pastor called me to his office, sharing with me a dream of his for this Sunday, July 4th. He asked if I would portray Caesar Rodney, Delaware's hero of the American Revolution before his sermon. I want so very much to "do nothing" for a bit, but, my pastor has always been there for me, without fail, & this past Saturday was his 54th birthday! (Sigh, I didn't get him a present. I guess this is it!)

"THE SWORD & THE STONES"

I preached yesterday to the children & teens re: the warnings of our Savior, the One Who loved us most, that of the entire population of the human race from Adam & Eve until the last human being is conceived, that the majority of that vast populace would not be in Heaven, but in Hell, from Mt. 7:14: "Few are those who find it" (i.e., the path that leads to eternal life). Many churches do not declare this as He did, thinking it is unloving. However, I reminded the youth that The One Who loved us most, warned us the most. I've often heard it said our Savior spoke more of Hell than Heaven. This is understandable, as we are a fallen race. I then told them that the difference between the two groups re: their eternal destinies, is that those winding up in Heaven are those who believed a collection of words called "the gospel". Given that these words, by believing them, result in you living forever in glorious bliss with the Godhead & avoiding the non-stop screaming, agony, & torment of Hell, I likened them to huge precious stones, which I held up to the kids. I then told them that the devil, via the "birds" in the parable of the Sower, is given permission by God to devour the seed of the Word of God so that those who hear it but disregard it cannot be saved (Lk. 8:12). He also roams about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may "devour". I've often said his favorite food is "soul-food". I told them that if they let go of the precious stones, they let go of Jesus, & hence, eternal life. This is why Paul exhorted Timothy to guard, by the Holy Spirit, the treasure that was within him (II Tim.1:14). This is why the apostle Jude, Jesus' half-brother, urged believers to contend for the faith. I drew out my sword, then asked a teen to try & come & get my precious stones, a.k.a., the gospel. Needless to say, while standing at the end of the point of my sword, he didn't come too close! That is what we are to do, Beloved. If we let go of the precious stones of the gospel, we no longer have the Savior, as He identifies Himself with the gospel, & the gospel alone. I then challenged the teenagers to be on the watch when they attend college. Here is where many

young people who grew up in church shipwreck their faith. Right after Jesus exhorted His hearers to “strive to enter” by the narrow gate, He warned them re: false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing. I told the kids they look just like you! Like the serpent in the Garden, they mock the Scriptures, the Lord, & all things sacred. There, many youth have lain down the sword, & lost the stones they thought they had. May He help them. Praise God, this same Jesus said He knew His sheep, & that no one could snatch them out of His or His Father’s hands (Jn.10:29). In that, we rest our case. Amen.