

August 1, 2012

Dear Friends & Family,

“A CAMP-CRAMMED SUMMER”

(7/21) I returned home late last night from my 3rd camp of the summer, which immediately followed another camp about a half-hour away. I have a headache I am so tired, but I would't trade it for the world. I was out-side just now unloading my truck & trailer only to reload them, sorting out costumes, props, & object lessons that are needed for each particular camp. The rain just interrupted me, so I thought I'd come in & write re: this past week. The mini-camp which preceded the one I returned home from last night was for children, as young as five years old. Last week's camp was for junior-high, grades 6-8. I leave for another camp in two days in N.Y., which will once again be children. As with our senior high camp in June, we encountered campers who were deliberately resistant &/or obstinate to believing in God & the gospel. Yes, I find it hard to believe too, especially at such a tender age, despite the fact that in my travels, I preach the depravity of man regularly, so as to more clearly magnify God's sovereign, wondrous grace. And, as with senior high camp, we proceeded to preach the whole counsel of God, not toning down nor softening the message, elaborating upon His just, holy, & fierce wrath toward those who deny & defy Him. This is the scriptural backdrop for His extravagant, unfathomable, lavished grace expressed most graphically in the death of His Only Begotten & Beloved Son, The “Darling” of Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. On the Sunday evening before the campers arrived, where I encourage & impart vision to the staff, I told them that in ourselves, we had absolutely nothing with which to convert a human soul. We can endeavor to be as anointed as possible, & to be as doctrinally precise as possible [both are major quests of my life] & yet, they are no guarantee that God will move & souls will fall at His most-worthy feet. How so? Jesus was *The Anointed One, and The Word* incarnate, & yet, *most* who heard Him, rejected Him. I told the staff that the “increase” was with God. Our part was to give & water the seed of His Word. I told them that this should encourage them, not discourage them, i.e., that ultimately, our eternal “success” at camp was ultimately, & entirely dependent on the Sovereign Lord. The campers received messages re: Jesus' deity from Hebrews 1, followed by a solemn warning re: rejecting Him & His gospel that introduces Hebrews 2. They also heard re: Abraham, that God called him to kill what was most precious to him, namely, Isaac. Also preached last week was Ephesians 2:1-9, graphically highlighting man's desperate depravity & helpless plight apart from God, & God's totally free choice to have mercy on him or not. He could have chosen to spare Lucifer & his fallen angels instead of man, or, to only save Israel instead of the Gentiles, or, to save no one. “BUT God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His *great* love with which He loved us...” from vv. 4ff completed the message. Lastly, they were challenged to base their confidence of the love of God, not on performance, nor feelings, but on the cross alone. The campers broke, they wept, they humbled themselves, they laid on their faces before the Lord, they prayed for each other, & once again, as with so many times in the past, the glorious, heavy presence of God filled that little building called “Hemlock Hall”, the most precious location on earth to me. I have often said I want to be buried in the woods just next to the building. Nowhere else have I experienced & “cuddled” in God's deep, rich, sweet, thick presence than

in that sacred building. “How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord God Almighty”! The temple was lovely, but it was nothing without His presence. His presence brought the loveliness. I *would* rather be in Hell with Jesus, than in Heaven with-out Him. And, as I have often said & written, there is nowhere else in all of Christendom I’ d rather be than at the altar with a broken child or teenager. As I sat in a chair during our last chapel this past week, & then, eventually laid on the floor with the kids, my heart’ s deepest ache was to do this all year round, for the rest of my life. “My soul longs for Your courts, my heart & my flesh cry out for the Living God”. Our preparation, prayers, & ache was for that cry to come from deep within the hearts of the campers. To one degree or other I believe our gracious God answered those prayers.

"A TELL-TALE TESTIMONY"

Below is an email one of my assistant directors [& son in law] got from a parent in our church, who happened to be one of the more difficult girls to reach, along w/her cousin whom she brought: "Hello Pastor Nate, I just wanted to send you a quick note of thanks for what you do for the youth of Immanuel and other churches as well. Since my daughter...has come home from camp last night, I have seen an INCREDIBLE difference in her. I am so proud and grateful of what she has learned and become because of camp this past week. [She] came home last night on **fire for God** and so excited about worshipping God and reading her Bible. She has inspired me to spend more quiet time with Him and I am so so grateful! The changes are so evident and obvious in her I am amazed! She woke up this morning reading her Bible for a good hour and then instead of getting on her laptop in the evening looking at 'make-up' and 'how to do hair' demos, she was listening to worship music & singing and loving every minute of it, as well as I was! I have seen a HUGE difference in her cousin...as well. I am so grateful to you and your wife and the camp counselors for all you have done for these young ladies! Sincerely and lovingly in Christ, Jenn"

"GET ME TO THE CHURCH ON TIME!"

(7/28) Yesterday morning, I finished my last chapel of my 3rd camp in a row, which happened to be in NY. I did a Time Machine drama, preached, then packed up & loaded up my truck & headed straight for our church in DE. There was a wedding happening there yesterday that I just had to attend. The bride & groom were little kids with me in my last children’ s pastorate before I began this itinerant ministry back in 2000. When I approached the Philadelphia area, I hit the notorious “Blue Route”, which is a nemesis during rush hour. I entreated the Lord while driving to extend worship in song [the father of the bride is our worship leader], or to have pastor be “long-winded” [our pastor is not long-winded! J]. I was in a t-shirt & shorts & was very sweaty from acting, preaching, & driving in the hot late-July weather. Again, I just had to be at this wedding. Hence, I decided to go “as is”. I pulled my camp rig, “Beverly Hillbillies’ ” image & all, right up in front of the church entrance & scooted up to the balcony. Praise God, I arrived in time to see Pastor “hitch ‘em”.

“MICHAEL’ S MAGIC?”

While at this camp in NY, I had a little boy, no older than seven, approach me to make a request I have never heard in 26+ years of working with them. He asked me, “Can you make God appear?” I was taken aback. I quickly quipped that He’ s invisible. You can’ t see Him. But, if you love Him, He’ s in your heart. Somehow, it was an answer, a true answer, but I felt just a little bit that it was not enough. Well, early the next morning, soon after I awoke, I felt the Lord speak to my heart that I *could* make Him “appear”. This thought was doubly interesting, as my message for that morning was “You Become Like What You Behold”. II Cor. 4:4 says that Satan, the god of this world, has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. What is the glory of Christ? Primarily, & most importantly, it is the sum of His wondrous GodMan perfections. The text above likens seeing His glory to seeing “light”. However, most Christians have not seen visible light when they’ ve “seen” Jesus. How do we see Him? We see Him through a collection of words, through a message, called *the gospel*. We either see Him reading or hearing *words*. Jesus is *The Word*. God has chosen to reveal His Son primarily in this age via “words”. So, by reading, hearing, &/or preaching His *written Word*, illuminated by His Holy Spirit, we do actually “see” Jesus. Hence, as a preacher of the gospel, in a very real sense, I *can* make Jesus “appear”. May it be so. [Note: I also understand that a major means God uses to reveal His Son is through the Lord’ s Supper, where we proclaim His death until He comes. Also, He was seen by the two disciples He met on the Emmaus road when He “broke the bread”].

“NO ‘ASSIGNMENT’ TODAY”

Before one of my chapels in NY, I was walking up & down the aisles of chairs, laying my hand on each one, asking the Lord to touch its occupant during the service. I saw in my mind’ s eye the Lord standing up with His arms folded, representing that He, of course, as always, was in control. He had His angels surrounding the building, as, if He didn’ t, demonic forces, if allowed, would destroy us all—including children, as given his totally depraved & maleficent nature, he has no consideration nor thought of age or helplessness. The Lord even protects unbelievers—those who hate Him. If He didn’ t, Satan would quickly kill them to ensure they would be damned in the lake of fire, along with him. I’ ve often heard Christians attempt to “cancel” Satan’ s assignments as if **the devil** can just capriciously & randomly do what he wants. Satan has no assignments that are not ultimately permitted & hence ordained of God. God ordains each one to further *His* purposes. If not, He doesn’ t allow them. We see this with Job to try, purify, & perfect him—not to mention to further display the power & glory of God to him which he up to that point did not know. The Spirit Himself led Jesus into the wilderness to “use” the devil & his evil nature & wiles for His purposes—to display Jesus’ purity & love of righteousness, His power over the devil, & to make Him a “perfect” High Priest, in that He suffered & endured temptation, so that He could rightly identify & empathize with humans under the same duress. Yes, Beloved, of course—we are to “stand” against the wiles of the devil. However, our first & greatest weapon is to know he has no power or wiles to yield or hurl at us that aren’ t “delegated” by God. If God isn’ t ultimately & totally sovereign, we are

doomed. God uses Satan's evil assaults to display His glorious perfections, to make us more like Jesus [the longer I live, the more I believe our God "custom-designs" our individual trials for us!], for our good, to teach us how to fight, & to humiliate the devil by using frail, fickle, & feeble redeemed human beings to bring him & his forces down. O glorious truth! Help us, O Lord, remember these precious truths, & take them into the battles You ordain for us! As always, Kim & I are deeply indebted to the Lord for those of you whom He touches to help us continue this sacred work.

Sincerely,

Michael

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***[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship "itinerant" home missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, Immanuel Church. *Caboose!* is also an affiliate ministry of the Hope-well Net-work of Churches. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs full-time. Since 2000, he & Kim have lived by faith, having no salary, retirement, or health insurance-yet this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both visual aids & drama, to all age groups either separately or combined, as the Lord opens doors. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485].**

***Ministry/events for AUGUST & those not listed in last month's newsletter:**

July 29: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: adult service: worship team drummer; kids' church: worship leader

Aug. 7: Valley Forge Christian Retreat Center, Valley Forge, PA: Hopewell Network pastors' dinner/mtg.

Aug. 9: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: hnc camp board mtg.

Aug. 11-17: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: hnc kids' camp: pastoral director

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