

The Road Less Traveled – July 8, 2016

I had a great time last week serving in the mission field of Taylor, TX, with about 20 of our junior high students. I have always loved the junior high mission trip. It's true that the senior high trip typically does more serious work – construction, demolition, etc. – while the junior high trip usually involves more basic things like painting and clean-up. But there is something new and fresh about the junior high trip. You typically have students who have never done the type of work that they are asked to do, and they are hesitant and unsure of themselves at the beginning of the week. But there is something magical about putting a power tool into the hands of a 12-year-old who is sure that she does not know how to use it, and then proving her wrong.

There is somehow a more significant moment of satisfaction on the junior high trip when the job is done. The students look over the work that they have done, and they are often surprised at what they accomplished. They meet the client for whom they have been working, and that puts a human face on what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ to those who are in need. It is indeed a holy moment.

What is most compelling, however, is that moment often is a convergence of all that they have learned in Sunday school and in the Youth group. A convergence of all the lessons, all the Bible verses, all of the things that we have taught them throughout their childhood. It all comes together for them, and they experience the Bible in a whole new way. The Scripture that they have studied is transformed from an ancient, dusty document to the living, breathing Word of God.

I live to bear witness to those moments. It makes the whole trip – the heat, sleeping on a narrow cot, all of it – worthwhile.

But those moments don't happen by themselves. They truly are the culmination of all that has happened before. And that's why what happens before is so vitally important.

One of those big "befores" is about to happen once again. On Sunday, we will kick off our 2016 Vacation Bible School. This is our single largest children's event of the year. This year we expect to welcome well over 300 kids between the morning session and the evening session. More than 100 adult and youth volunteers will give of their time to share the message of Christ with the youngest in our church family and in our community. For some of those attending, it will be the first time they have heard the story of Jesus and been exposed to the overwhelming love of God. For them it is a starting point in a faith journey, and only God knows where it will lead.

But we get to be God's hands and feet and voice and presence for the hours that they will spend here. We get to set them on that faith journey. That blessing is ours. All of ours.

All of us are part of the VBS team. If you have signed up to volunteer, thank you. You will be on the front lines, sharing the love of Jesus Christ with eager minds. If you are not able to physically help with VBS this year, you are still a part of the team. And we need you. How? First, be in prayer for the team members who will don the T-shirts and spend the week making disciples. Second, make a special point to be in worship on Sunday as we commission our front-line team. Be there to pray for them and to support them in their holy task. And finally, make a special point to be in worship at the 11 a.m. service on July 17 as we celebrate the week of VBS. Your presence communicates to those students – who will be on fire for Jesus – that their journey is important to this faith family and that their discipleship journey matters.

Many years ago then-First Lady Hillary Clinton was both praised and skewered for insisting that “it takes a village” to raise a child in today’s world. I am still not sure if that is true. But I do know that it takes a faith family to make a disciple. That is why we are here. That is our blessing.

See you Sunday.