

Sunday, July 3, 2011
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Sermon – At Silver Lake Camp Sunday Service

I get a lot of invitations. Dinners, fundraisers, theater productions, picnics, boat rides, conferences, webinars, meetings...the list goes on and on. I keep an electronic calendar on my phone, which is synced with my computer. Each night I consult this calendar to see what my schedule is for the following day and then I consult it again in the morning to reassure myself that I haven't forgotten anything. I have the capacity, electronically, to schedule my days in 10 minute intervals, 24 hours at a time.

When I read the scripture for today and came to the passage, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" I sighed.

"Oh yes, Jesus, give me some rest. I accept your invitation."

I certainly do not have any heavy burdens, my life is quite blessed, but I was enticed by the idea of rest. After all, that is what summer is supposed to be – right – the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.

Hundreds of children will be traveling to this holy place (Silver Lake) in the next few months seeking the wonder that being part of God's creation provides. For adults, especially those who work here, the summer is the time of greatest responsibility and challenge.

Jesus continues with his invitation: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." A yoke is designed to assist an animal in distributing the weight of the cargo allowing the creature to carry more than they might be able to otherwise.

This is the experience we have when we share our burdens with God; when we let go of our worry and doubts. We spread things out so that they do not seem so heavy.

This is also the philosophy we will employ here this week when the care of dozens of children will be distributed between staff, volunteers, counselors and others.

Everything is easier when shared.

This final line is the clincher on the invitation: "I am gentle, and humble of heart and you will find rest for your soul." How can we possibly refuse or ignore an opportunity to find rest for our souls from someone who is gentle and humble of heart?

This is what we should strive to be in our lives – gentle and humble of heart. We can accept Jesus' invitation and strive to learn from him accepting that we are less than perfect though knowing that God loves us perfectly.

In the psalm that we read this morning God is described as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Again, something for us to strive for but also something for us to appreciate. Yes, we can try to be merciful, gracious and slow to anger.

We can hope to be abounding in steadfast love, but we are only human. The beauty of these words is the promise that our creator is willing and able to forgive our humanness.

We should do no less for one another.

The psalmist reminds us that: "As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more."

We are so temporary, but God and God's love is permanent.

As we gather in this magnificent space, we can't help but recognize the grandeur of God and the dependence of humans.

We are reminded of the permanence of the earth juxtaposed with the fragility of each life.

Just as the grasses come and go, so people will come and go in our lives.

The children who will come here this week will have a once-in-a-lifetime experience that they will carry with them.

As we sit here we are surrounded by nature, which provides us with so many rich metaphors for our own lives. Beauty in everyday things; diversity of people, plants and flowers; change, ever present in our lives.

Nothing is permanent except God.

No one knows everything, except God.

We are blessed to be on this journey – Let us go from this place with a renewed appreciation for the invitation God offers.

I want to close with a poem by Joy Harjo titled *Eagle Poem*:

To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can't see, can't hear;
Can't know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren't always sound but other circles of motion.
Like eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky
In wind, swept our hearts clean with sacred wings.
We see you, see ourselves and know
That we must take the utmost care
And kindness in all things.
Breathe in, knowing we are made of

All this, and breathe, knowing we are truly blessed because we were born, and die soon within a true circle of motion, like eagle rounding out the morning inside us.

We pray that it will be done.

In beauty.

In beauty.

Amen.